



Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
July 12, 2006
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Alex Kamola (Chair), Julie Stangell (Vice Chair), Jim Franzel, Ole Una and Lee Witter Kahn

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard, Dennis Dart, Doug Schindler; Leonard Guss and Doug McClelland

Ex officio members present: Amy Grotta and Randy Sandin

Ex officio member absent: Marilyn Cope

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Forestry and Agriculture Lead; Bill Loeber, Forester; and Linda Vane, Rural Forest Commission Liaison

Guests: Boyd Norton, Washington Department of Natural Resources Small Forest Landowner Office; John Neorr, volunteer Forest Steward at the Lake Wilderness Arboretum; Julia Larson, King County Office of Business Relations and Economic Development; and Fran Troje, Forest Watch committee of The Mountaineers.

Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Action Items:

1. Henceforth, important documents and RFC letters to the Council and Executive will be included in meeting minutes as appendices.
2. Alex will draft a letter endorsing the forestry code changes proposed by the Office of Business Relations and Economic Development and will email the draft to the RFC members for comment and approval. Linda will forward any comments made on the proposed forest code changes at the July 25 public meeting in Preston.

Motions:

Motion 1-07-06 That “the minutes of the May 10, 2006 meeting be passed.” The motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

Motion 2-07-06 That “that a letter regarding the proposed code changes be circulated to all RFC members via email, that their feedback be sought and a decision made as to whether to send a formal statement of support by the deadline.” The motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

Staff Reports

Linda Vane, RFC Staff Liaison

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, PL106-393. Alex Kamola sent a letter (Appendix A) on behalf of the commission to the King County Executive and Council requesting their support for reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Act). In response, the County Council passed Motion No. 2006-0291 expressing support for the reauthorization of the Act on July 10, 2006 [for text see <http://mkcclegisearch.metrokc.gov/mattersearch/>], and gave direction to the County's lobbyist to educate congressional representatives as to the benefits of the Act to King County and its citizens. Linda added that Executive Sims has notified staff that he also will send a letter to the congressional delegation expressing his support for the reauthorization and full funding of the Act.

Forestry Town Meeting. Linda reported that Alex sent a letter to Councilmember Larry Gossett proposing a Town Hall Meeting [<http://www.metrokc.gov/council/townhall/schedule.htm>] regarding forestry in early 2007, as per the RFC Communications Plan (adopted at the May 10, 2006 meeting).

Youth in Forestry Grants update. Linda said that the Natural Resource Stewardship Network [<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/grant-exchange/NRSN.htm>] has awarded the first round of youth in forestry grants. The two recipients are the Jefferson Advisory Council for the Student Teen Employment Preparation project in south Seattle and the Vashon Forest Stewards for a project to give high school students forestry education and training at Island Center Forest and the Stewards' sawmill. A second round of grant applications will be solicited in late summer.

RFC Recruitment. Linda reported that applications have been received for vacant positions on the RFC. Linda and Alex will be holding interviews in coming weeks. Additional applications are still being sought, especially from individuals who could represent small forest landowners who bring in income from their forests.

Bill Loeber, Forester

Taylor Mountain Forest Update. Bill reported that the timber sale on the County's Taylor Mountain Forest is approximately 60 percent complete.

Other Updates

Kahn Tree Farm Tour. Lee said that on Saturday, July 22, the Washington Farm Forestry Association will host a tour and potluck lunch at the Kahn Tree Farm. Lee and her family will be honored as the 2005 Tree Farmers of the Year by the Pierce County Chapter (includes south King County). The members of the RFC are invited.

Alex asked visitor Fran Troje to tell the commissioners a little about herself. Fran said that she is a long-time member of The Mountaineers, an organization that is interested in protecting

natural resources so that they will still be here 200 years from now. The Mountaineers has a new chapter starting on the east side [of Lake Washington], which will emphasize environmental awareness and keeping on top of forestry issues.

Alex asked John Neorr to say a few words. John said that he is the volunteer Forest Steward for the Lake Wilderness Arboretum in Maple Valley. He prepared a forest management plan for the site in Washington State University (WSU) Extension's forest stewardship class and is gradually implementing that plan. Ole Una asked if they are concerned about wildfire hazard. John said that this is the case and that the Arboretum plans to seek advice from the Maple Valley Fire Department to make fire safety a larger component of the forest management plan.

RFC - County Executive Communications

Mark Isaacson, Water and Land Resources Division Director

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Linda said that the RFC approved a plan for improving communications with the County Council at the May meeting. At the same time the commission requested staff to look into ways of facilitating communication with the County Executive's office. Linda said that the RFC, as advisors to the County Executive, are part of the executive branch along with the staff. Typically, when the RFC communicates with the County, it is to the staff and up through the management structure. The purpose of this discussion is to figure out if there are ways to improve two-way communication through that structure.

Mark Isaacson said that it is his job to act as a direct liaison to the Executive's Office when needed. His purpose in attending this meeting is to learn how he can serve the RFC better in that capacity. He said that the Executive's Office pays very close attention to the Rural Forest Commission and the Agriculture Commission. Forestry is high on the agenda for the King County Executive. By way of example, Mark described Julia Larson's work to stimulate rural economies, the preservation of the Snoqualmie Tree Farm and the vision to preserve 100,000 acres of forested land in King County. Alex asked if the Executive wants to preserve forestry, including timber harvests, as part of our economy, our aesthetics and our way of life. Mark said yes, the Executive's vision includes working forests.

Mark said he wanted to hear from the group as to how he might serve better as a liaison to the Executive and if there are any disconnects. Alex said that in terms of feedback, the commission gets it already. He has noticed that when a problem is discussed by the RFC, it shows up a couple of meetings later as an actual change, like the proposed changes in forestry-related code that Randy Sandin will present later in the agenda. Alex said that the way he sees the RFC's relationship with the Executive working mainly through formal documents and written policy recommendations. Alex added that they definitely have seen changes evolving in the regulatory end in the last half year. Alex said that the overarching goal is to make the management of forest lands in King County possible - so that it happens properly. There are many facets to this,

including permitting, economics, education and fragmentation of parcels. We are able to make progress because we are all working in cooperation, stated Alex. He commended Mark and his department for that.

Ole said that it feels good that the RFC is seeing results from their recommendations. Julie Stangel commented that to have the County Council respond to the RFC's letter regarding Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act as quickly as they did is very positive. In conclusion, Mark invited the RFC members to call him any time if there are any concerns with what is happening at the management level.

John Neorr commented that the meeting minutes are a good vehicle for communicating the RFC's work to the public. He suggested that the minutes provide some context for the issues discussed and that important documents be included in an appendix. Ole suggested that letters sent by the RFC to the Council and Executive be included as an appendix or be summarized in the minutes. Linda said she would do this.

Rural Economic Strategies - Forest Practices Permitting

Julia Larson, Office of Business Relations and Economic Development and
Randy Sandin, Department of Development and Environmental Services

Julia Larson and her colleagues are currently soliciting public comment on a package of code changes that are designed to improve business opportunities the rural area. Julia said that the driving philosophy behind the proposed code changes and the County's *Rural Economic Development Strategies* is that people should be able to make a living on their land. Julia distributed a summary of the full code change package in a *Summary Report* and copies of the proposed changes in forest practice rules in the *Public Review Draft of the Forestry Code Changes to the King County Code* (Appendix B). Both documents can be found on the King County web site [<http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/bred/business/Projects/Rural.htm>].

Julia said that the proposed forestry code changes were developed with input from the RFC. Similarly, code changes proposed for agriculture and home based businesses were developed with input from the agricultural and rural resident communities.

Randy Sandin explained the proposed code changes that would affect forest practices. He said that if approved, the code changes will allow Conversion Option Harvest Plans (COHP) on Non-conversion Class 4 permits and would amend the Critical Areas Ordinance so that with a COHP one can do certain forest practices in a wetland, riparian area or steep slope as long as it is covered by a forest management plan (KC Code Sections 16.82.140 and 21A.24.045). With these in place one could do certain forest practices and avoid a moratorium.

Kathy Creahan provided examples of how this might work, explaining that under the State Forest Practice Rules there is a six-year moratorium on development if one gets a forest practice permit

from the state. As has been pointed out by the RFC and staff, many of our landowners have a 20-acre parcel that they want to thin now and will eventually clear space for a house, but not right away. State rules would require them to wait six years before clearing space for a house. Kathy said that the County's first attempt to address this issue resulted in the County's COHP, which allows people to carve out the house site, do a forest practice on the remaining property, and make it so that the moratorium does not apply to the house site. The problem that arose, according to Kathy, is that people could not do any kind of forest practice on the future house site, no matter what condition the trees were in. People were being forced to leave the trees around their house in unhealthy condition – e.g., too close together or dying. Kathy continued, saying that the proposed change will also let people do things like thinning in critical areas that one would not normally be able to do under development standards. For example, one could do a thinning in the critical areas and do a timber harvest on the rest of the property.

Randy presented a second proposed code change that is not included in the public review packet. If adopted, this change would reduce the fee for the Class 4 Non-conversion Permit and for the COHP if the practice were smaller than 20 acres and were covered by a forest stewardship plan (KC Code Section 27.10.110). It would set a reduced fee of \$57.50 per hour for DDES staff work and a maximum fee of \$402.50. Kathy said that if the RFC supports this change they could say so in comments submitted on the proposed code changes.

Boyd Norton said that the direction in which King County is moving in is very good. Boyd asked what would happen with the DDES permitting process if state law were to change, making the Class 4 designation a Class 3 permit. Kathy said that since it is a state permit it would not affect what King County does, although there are people who now fall under the county who would be getting their permit from the state if the rule were to change.

Julia said that the final public meeting regarding the proposed code changes will be held on July 25, 2006, 7:00 p.m. at the Preston Community Center. Written comments may be made on the code change package until August 10th. If there are other issues affecting rural economies, please feel free to bring up them up any time, said Julia.

Ole moved that a letter regarding the proposed code changes be circulated to all RFC members via email, that their feedback be sought and a decision made as to whether to send a formal statement of support by the deadline. If approved, Alex would then submit the letter of support. Julie seconded and the motion passed. Julia agreed to share any comments on the forestry code changes from the July 25 public meeting with the RFC so that these can be taken into account.

Actions. Alex will draft a letter and will email it to the RFC members for review and comment with Linda's assistance. Linda will forward comments from the July 25 public meeting in Preston.

WSU Extension Survey concerning Forest Stewardship Plan Implementation

Amy Grotta, WSU Extension Forestry

Amy Grotta reported on a recent study to determine if participants in WSU Extension's Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Program [<http://king.wsu.edu/forestry/index.htm>] actually change their forest stewardship practices after taking the class. For those who are not familiar with the program, Amy explained that it is an eight-week class designed to teach landowners to write and implement their own forest management plans (also called "forest stewardship plans"). The researchers mailed surveys to the owners of roughly 1,500 properties who have participated in the program since its inception in 1992. About 60 percent responded and about one-fourth of these were completed by King County landowners. According to Amy, the survey showed that King County small forest landowners tend to be slightly younger and wealthier than the state average and that their properties tend to be much smaller than those statewide. More than half of all participants, 63 percent in King County and 58 percent statewide, completed a forest management plan after taking the course. Amy said that more King County participants reported writing plans than the rest of the state, some 53 percent in King County compared to 31 percent statewide. She said this may be because more King County residents were interested in a tax incentive program that requires forest management plans.

Amy said that participants are not only learning and writing plans, they are putting what they learn in the class into action. Some 73 percent of respondents reported that as a result of the class, they implemented a forest practice that they would not have done otherwise. In general these practices related less to commodity values like timber harvest, than to forest health or practices that enhance the amenity values of their property (e.g., creating trails, enhancing wildlife habitat). Almost half, or 45 percent, reported using the services of a consulting forester. Amy speculated that the practices related to commodity values may appear low in part because these are activities that take place over a very long timescale.

The surveys did not indicate if the forest practices that are implemented are the same as those described in written plans however, explained Amy. This is a question that has been raised by the RFC in the past. In a similar survey of northwest Washington class participants in 2001, researcher Andy Perleberg found that writing a forest management plan and implementing practices are statistically independent. Perleberg found that while 50 percent of class participants completed plans, 85 percent of plan writers implemented practices and 90 percent of non-plan writers implemented practices. Amy said that this means that the education is what is important, not the content of the plan.

Boyd pointed out that at the time that the early plans were written, there was a state cost share program in place to help pay for the plans and for their implementation. That money has dried up so this may have weakened the connection between plan writing and implementation. Julie asked how we can get small forest landowners to make the leap from taking the class to doing forest practices. Amy said that King County and WSU Extension are planning to promote collaboration among residents of specific geographic areas like the Tolt Highlands where there

are shared needs, communicate with people via an electronic bulletin board and survey consultants regarding customer needs. Kathy added that along with these efforts, WSU and King County will offer a workshop for consultants to help them better serve very small landowners and to understand code changes. Julie said that she liked the idea of a bulletin board organized by geographic area. E.g., a small property with a half dozen trees to take out could find another local landowner who also needs a few trees felled. Collaboration would be more economical for both.

Stewardship Plan Standards (Discussion)

Alex Kamola, RFC Chair

The discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Suggestions for future agendas

1. Fire danger in forested areas posed by fireworks and possible King County fireworks ban.
2. King County's distribution of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 funds between Title II and Title III.
3. Carbon credits as an emerging industry and the potential for participation by King County.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is September 13, 2006, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Preston.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

206-296-8042 or linda.vane@metrokc.gov

Appendix A

Rural Forest Commission Minutes – July 12, 2006



King County
Rural Forest Commission
201 South Jackson Street, Suite 600
Seattle, WA 98104-3855
206-296-8042 206-296-0192 Fax

June 20, 2006

Alex Kamola
Chair
Green River Forestry
Services, Inc.

The Honorable Larry Phillips
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Julie Stangell
Vice Chair
Hancock Timber
Resource Group

Dear Councilmember Phillips:

Doug McClelland
Washington State
Department of Natural
Resources

The King County Rural Forest Commission (KCRFC) discussed the federal “Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act” (PL 106-393) at our May 2006 meeting. The Secure Rural Schools Act has been in effect for six years, and is now before Congress for reauthorization or modification. I am writing on behalf of the KCRFC to make sure you are aware of the importance of the reauthorization of this bill, and to encourage you to express your support for continuation of the Secure Rural Schools program to our congressional representatives.

Jean Bouffard
Rural Cities Representative

Jim Franzel
Mt. Baker/Snoqualmie
National Forest

National Forest System lands represent 25 percent of King County and encompass 363,856 acres. The KCRFC concluded that the funding from the act is significant for King County because in addition to providing millions of dollars for roads and schools, it provides opportunities for important forest-related projects that otherwise would not be funded.

Lee Witter Kahn
Forest Landowner

Leonard Guss
Leonard Guss
Associates, Inc.

Prior to enactment of the Secure Rural Schools legislation in 2000, 25 percent of the timber harvest receipts from harvest on federal lands were shared with the counties where the harvest occurred. Since federal lands are exempt from county property taxes, counties such as King County essentially received this revenue from Congress in lieu of property taxes. Much of this “25 percent fund” revenue was directed to funding schools and roads. National Forest System lands in King County returned over \$2 million annually in timber harvest revenue to the County.

Alan “Ole” Una
Forest Landowner

Dennis Dart
International
Forestry Consultants

In the 1990s, timber harvest receipts on federal land in the Northwest declined dramatically as a result of the Northwest Forest Plan, appeals and litigation, wilderness designation, and increased protection for threatened and endangered species. As an example, harvest levels on the Mount

Doug Schindler
Mountains to Sound
Greenway Trust

Baker-Snoqualmie Forest diminished from over 300 million board feet (MMBF) annually to current levels around 8 MMBF. Corresponding to reduced harvest receipts during the '90s, the 25 percent fund pass-through to counties dropped dramatically. After several stop-gap annual funding bills, Congress passed the landmark Secure Rural Schools Act in 2000, which restored county funding to historic high levels and no longer tied it to federal timber harvest receipts. A county could choose the option of receiving the full payment if it agreed to dedicate 15 to 20 percent to improvements on federal land (Title II) or to county forest-related projects (Title III). King County chose the full payment option, dedicating 20 percent (approximately \$450,000) per year to Titles II and III.

King County's Title III projects have included the Urban Forestry Program grants to community groups for urban forest restoration and enhancement, especially in low-income communities; the WSU Extension youth forestry leadership program known as ORCA; support to the sheriff's department for search and rescue on federal land; and new in 2006, a program to develop community forest fire safety plans. These projects have direct benefits to urban and rural communities in the county.

The Title II projects funded in King County have included much needed improvements to recreation infrastructure on Forest Service land, including hiking trail improvements, new restrooms, and trailhead signage. They also include resource conservation projects such as waterways cleanup, noxious weed control, restoration of overused riverfront campsites, and stewardship and youth education programs. Other King County Title II projects include support to the Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center, fire lookout restoration, Chinook salmon acclimation ponds, and a partnership with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe to restore huckleberry production in traditional berry-gathering locations.

The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest is the fourth most visited national forest in the country. The USDA Forest Service Snoqualmie Ranger District has struggled to keep up with ever expanding recreation use while allocated recreation funding has declined. Title II funds have helped counter the funding reductions and implement some of the most needed projects.

The KCRFC would prefer that these programs be supported by a percentage of the income from timber sales on federal forest lands, but in the absence of these sales we support the Secure Rural Schools Act. The Rural Forest Commission urges you to inform our congressional representatives that reauthorization and continued full funding (not a slow phase out) of the Secure Rural Schools Act are important to King County.

Thank you for considering our recommendation. Please do not hesitate to contact the KCRFC if we can be of additional assistance on this or other matters.

Sincerely,

Alexander Kamola, Chair
King County Rural Forest Commission

cc: King County Councilmembers
ATTN: Shelley Sutton, Policy Staff Director
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council
Pam Bissonnette, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Mark Isaacson, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division, DNRP
King County Rural Forest Commission Members

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

FORESTRY CODE CHANGES TEXT

TO THE KING COUNTY CODE

Part of the
2006 Rural Economic Strategies Code Changes Package

(Please see the “2006 Rural Economic Strategies Code Changes Package – Summary Document” for the introduction, public review and input process, and summary of the forestry code changes.)

RURAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES – FORESTRY CODE CHANGES

16.82.140 Class IV-G forest practices—six-year moratorium.

A. Under a Class IV-G forest practice, all clearing not otherwise exempted under this chapter shall be subject to this chapter. All such clearing subject to the state Environmental Policy Act, chapter 43.21C RCW, and King County shall accept or assume lead agency status. The department shall consolidate its review of the Class IV-G application with its SEPA review and its review of associated King County development permits or approvals.

B. Except as otherwise provided in subsections D. and E. of this section, for six years after the forest practice commenced, the department shall deny a development proposal on a site when the activity was:

1. A Class II, III or IV special forest practice, as defined in chapter 76.09 RCW;
2. A nonconversion Class IV-G forest practice, as defined in K.C.C. chapter 21A.06: or
3. Undertaken without forest practices or county authorization.

C. Subsection B. of this section applies to a development proposal for:

1. The subdivision of land;
2. The preparation or construction of a new residential or commercial structure; and
3. Any other development proposal that is not related to ongoing forestry.

D. The department may approve a development proposal on a site subject to subsection B. of this section if:

1.a. The applicant demonstrates that the forest practice or clearing on the harvested portion of the site was consistent with the Conversion Option harvest Plan reviewed and approved by King County (~~and incorporated as a condition of the state's forest practice permit~~);

b. Forest management activities conducted within aquatic areas, wetlands, steep slopes and wildlife habitat areas are limited to specific silvicultural prescriptions to improve forest health identified in a forest management plan approved by King County; and

c. The forest practice is conducted as a:

(1) Class IV-G nonconversion forest practice, as defined in K.C.C. chapter 21A.06, that has been approved by the county;

(2) Class II, III or IV-S forest practice pursuant to a Washington State Department of Natural resources forest practices permit; or

(3) Class I forest practice, as defined in chapter 76.09 RCW, only for purposes of precommercial thinning and pruning; or

2. The director ((~~of~~)) determines that:

a. the applicant was the unknowing subject of criminal trespass, timber theft or fraud;

b. the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the department that:

(1) those portions of the clearing not in compliance with the applicable King County regulations can be fully restored to the extent that functions shall be improved over those existing before the clearing; and

(2) the unharvested portion of the property is not required to satisfy tree retention or other mitigation requirements; and

c. the applicant has an approved mitigation plan to restore the areas cleared without complying with applicable King County regulations.

E. The department may approve a development proposal on the unharvested portion of a site subject to subsection B. of this section if:

1. The applicant demonstrates that the clearing on the harvested portion of the site was conducted consistent with a forest management plan approved by King County and the forest management plan excluded the area proposed for development; and

2. The forest practice is conducted as a:

a. Class IV-G nonconversion forest practice, as defined in K.C.C. chapter 21A.06, that has been approved by the county;

b. Class II, III or IV-S forest practice pursuant to a Washington state Department of Natural resources forest practices permit; or

c. Class I forest practice, as defined in chapter 76.09 RCW, only for purposes of precommercial thinning and pruning.

F. In all cases, lifting or waiving of the six-year moratorium is subject to compliance with all county ordinances. (Ord. 15053 § 13, 2004: Ord. 12878 § 1, 1997: Ord. 11618 § 6, 1994: 9614 § 102, 1990).