



Clean Water Advisory Committee

April 18, 2024

Committee Members in Attendance: Lynn Bahrych, Jenny DeGroot, Vicki Heater, Ann Jarrell, Judy Meyer, Kimbal Sundberg

Ex-officio, County support staff, and members of public: Raquel Callans, Krista Davis, Tyler Davis, Susan Eshelman, Kelly Hamilton, Doug McCutchen, Laura Pitts, Melissa Rohde, Buck Smith, Kendra Smith, Cathi Winings, Cindy Wolf

9:02AM **Convene meeting** *Kimbal Sundberg*

9:02 AM **Public Comment** *none*

9:02 AM **Business Operations**

- Approve April 18th Agenda – no additions/corrections, the agenda is approved
- Approve February 22nd Minutes – no additions/corrections, all in favor, the minutes are approved

9:03 AM **Staff & Agency Updates**

- Ecology

Kelly Hamilton

Washington declared drought on April 16 for most of the state, including San Juan County. That means at less than 70% water supply and at risk of undue hardship. Ecology can distribute drought response grants; we've made \$4.5million available as such, the declaration also allows emergency water rights transfers with 15 days to process drought emergency response applications and transfers, allowing applicants to skip public notice process. Snowpack is low. Streams are low in many basins, below 75% of normal. Sharing some links, <https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/news/2024-news-stories/april-16-drought-declaration> <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Water-availability/Statewide-conditions/Drought-response>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ecydroughtsurvey>

[NWCC iMap \(usda.gov\)](#)

Kim: Does this mean there's funding available for water issues? continue processing water rights applications?

Kelly: yes, for public entities, not for private landowners. And yes, we'll continue processing applications in SJC.

Jenny: can you remind us how we can know when new water rights are up for review in key watersheds?

Kelly: Michelle Curtis in our NW office processes the applications. And we have a new system you can sign up for that will notify for new applications, that doesn't necessarily mean we'll be working on those right away.

<https://appswr.ecology.wa.gov/waterrighttrackingssystem/WaterRights/PublicPages/WaterRightPublicPostings.aspx?region=NWRO>

Kim: Ecology keeps an interactive map of all water rights online. If you type in ECY water rights it'll take you to their webpage and you can drill down on the county and look at where there are registered rights

Cindy: what about using emergency water rights to protect Cascade Creek?

Kelly: that would require permission of the water right holder

Jenny: if we see the stream running dry, we ask Ecology to release water

Kelly: or you could work with some of the other water rights holders like Olga, Rosario, Doe Bay to put some of their water right in stream i.e. in trust for the season. But that would be up to water right holder

Jenny: Buck's visit May 2nd would be a good time discuss even lower than normal low flow for this season

Kelly: yes, Buck will do a tour with Dept. of Health, Parks, and WA Water Trust – not necessarily with water rights holders. But he can talk to WA Water Trust to see what they can get going regarding that group

Judy: what do we know about the sale of Rosario, is that ongoing? Is this the time to get with the new owner -more discussion of details

Kelly: WA Water Trust receives some grant funds from Ecology specifically to purchase water from Rosario, they've also been starting discussions with the new landowners. Michele Curtis, SJ county permit writer, says she is working to process all SJ county water right applications in some capacity. You can search for 'New Applications' on our Water Rights Search page at [Search Water Right Record](#). Select 'Records Search'. Under General Search Tab, select "San Juan" in the County box, select "New Application" in the Phase box, and select "Active" in the Status box. Then click the "General Search" box. It should bring up the 25 applications we have

- Environmental Stewardship

Kendra Smith

Tyler will update later on specific projects. Focused on launching climate and sustainability effort for the comp plan, considering water element and needs to be addressed around conservation, drought management, etc. With the comp plan update due June 2025, between June and end of 2027 is when development code changes will happen, and critical ordinance area updated. It's important to fix maps for streams and wetland areas, that's a task of Susan's along with partners. Aiming for end of 2026 to go into critical ordinance area update. Lynn: will there be any ground-truthing for that? The one for my property is inaccurate.

Kendra: some maps done before LIDAR, questions about buffers. Need to simplify codes for tiers of buffers

Jenny: reminder that those datasets collected last in 2007-8, based on access to property. Lots of challenges.

Question for Susan, I don't see stream connections when you put on the layer for water features, just ponds, may give a false sense of no connection between ponds. e.g. Garrison creek, larger water bodies but no creek

Susan: I can talk to Dan about that, that may have to do with Andromeda

Tyler: or in Polaris, because using Andromeda I saw the stream layers

Jenny: I was using Polaris. I don't want developers/laypeople using Polaris to think there are no connections

Kim: We will run into the same problem now of access to private property. Must figure out incentives or assurances that coming onto property won't result in punitive measures. Need to soften the narrative.

Kendra: the incentive is, help us get it right. And with Lidar now, we can better sense of channel flow path, etc. We have more tools now, hopefully mapping effort will result in a better product than in the past

Lynn: will we coordinate with DNR In these final maps?

Kendra: absolutely, we all need to adopt the same map

- discussion of how mapping effort will help landowners, inferences from eDNA data (may be actual barriers)

Kendra: we'll handle natural barriers. The goal is as accurate a map as possible to properly prioritize resources.

Vicki: the stream layer has a lot of complications, the question is wetlands –where they are, the area extent.

-Kendra discusses details about plans to build database for streams and wetlands layers, data from past efforts

Jenny: even if there's a passage barrier, doesn't mean no salmonids above it. I'm excited about LiDAR, won't need the same access, but eDNA will still be important to estimate populations we don't have access to. E.g., Doe Bay Creek, there's a native coastal cutthroat population there that's been isolated from saltwater

Kendra: And we need to be able to communicate those nuances and priorities to Public Works

Melissa: how is LiDAR predicting where salmonids are, just through showing where body of waters are?

Kendra: it shows the landform, penetrating light, so we have a data layer that shows where depressions and ditches are not the water or the fish itself but accurate information about the contours of the landscape.

Melissa: ok so topographic mapping and inferring the presence of habitat?

Kendra: inferring drainage, we can see channels, etc. Ponds show up as flat, water but don't know how deep

Tyler: including historic meanderings outside of trenches and ditches, like in False Bay

- Health

postponed

Kyle Dodd can't be here, no update for this meeting

9:41 AM **Subcommittee Updates**

- Groundwater Subcommittee

Vicki Heater

Vicki: I'd love to get an update on that USGS work, but we still have a year to work on the water element.

Kendra: I'll connect with Kyle soon, maybe get one of his staff to engage with us to keep work rolling.

Vicki: May I come and access some past reports? Most things are online, but several key reports I'd like to pull

Kim: it may be only a year but there's a lot of work to do, Groundwater is important and it's been suffering

- Surfacewater Subcommittee

Kimbal Sundberg

Tyler sent the minutes from our meeting, we got rolling on the Comp Plan. Discussion about how to tackle the water element, what departments can contribute information (like Agriculture). We'll keep working on it.

-Idea of doing a field trip this fall to San Juan Valley to look at restoration and cattle exclusion to reduce bacteria loads in the stream, revegetation to improve temperature problems in FB creek.

- Could we include in the October 17th meeting? Everyone approves of that as a target date.

ACTION ITEM: pencil in October 17th for this field trip (some discussion of timing, carpooling/county van)

Lynn: Conservation District has a van they'd probably be willing to take people

9:48 AM **Ongoing Business Discussion**

- Fishtrap Creek Update

Tyler Davis

I heard from Helsells, working to schedule a field trip, they acknowledged confusion about the situation and relationship of the watershed to their pond. They invited me to come check it out and I'll report back. I also heard from Jay Cook, he has a report on the situation, I'll share that with everyone. Historical knowledge indicates there was more significant flow but Helsells say it's same as always. Cindy disagrees with that.

ACTION: before Tyler's visit, he'll meet with Cindy and Jenny to get their perspective

Kim: have you been able to access old historical memos that Byron, Barbara Rosenkotter, and myself have written to the Helsells and Ecology? there's written record going back 15 years, Ecology should have records

ACTION: Tyler will follow up and see if Ecology has access to those records

Kim: I have some archives, that record is important especially if they claim "it's always been this way". We have history. KWIAHT, Russel Barsh, and Madrona Murphy did the reclamation work downstream in Fishtrap Creek.

Jenny: I was hoping Jay would help provide some of the data that Helsells were required to report to Ecology.

Kelly: Jay's email to Tyler covered that. They sent 2021 data but still working to pull together the next two years

9:54 AM • 2024 CW Workplan & Project Updates

Tyler Davis

We meant to share this in February before showing to Council. But still want to make sure CWAC gets to comment. This is the CIP with everything we've discussed. Tyler shares screen, 2024-25 Strategic Workplan

ACTION ITEM: Tyler will also email CIP to everyone on the committee as soon as the meeting is over

Past month some maintenance at Lopez Village, planting and mulching, and some redirecting of drainage

At the end of March Ecology grant used for restoration work at Red Mill, we'll see that on October field trip

-Tyler briefly reviews a few other project updates from the CIP

Kendra: should we be sharing more of what we're doing with Council?

Cindy: it was clear on discussion of Jackson Beach that Council didn't feel completely brought along with all you're doing, the more they're in the loop the less likely it is that uninformed decisions will be made

Kendra: I'll try to book some time for early June to get on the Council agenda and do a run-through, "CIP day"

Vicki: This looks like a great plan but what jumps out is our weakness on the side of groundwater, there's no funding or emphasis, we need to support that side of the utility and look at capacity going forward into the water element. Need to make sure money is allocated to improve that information. In the water element, there was a goal of hiring a county hydrogeologist. That's still a huge weakness in looking at water resources.

Kendra: we have \$60K a year to help the Health dept. and it's been consistently underspent, need to talk more with Kyle about how to help him move that along. There are resources but we don't want to overstep

Kim: the OSS septic workshop being hosted by PS partnership, is anyone from the Health Dept. attending? What staff support is there so that the workshop can produce something meaningful for this county?

Kendra: through the LIO, Katie Johnson is our lead and she's reached out to the Health Dept. At the MRC meeting we discussed ensuring we push the idea of sea level rise and inundating septic systems and also the issue of shallow soils. The county is hosting that forum at the Beaverton Valley building. It'll involve other jurisdictions participating and it'll be online. Doing our best to coordinate despite Health Dept's limitations.

Judy: Kyle never makes it to our meeting; I understand but can't we have a liaison to the CWAC?

ACTION ITEM: maybe liaison could be Ethan Schmidt, I'll follow up with Kyle to get that squared away

Judy: and we never heard the first flush report? Can we have that in the next meeting?

Tyler: results from last year weren't broad enough/good enough to be submitted with the other years' data. We missed the flush this year, sample came late and didn't get the full suite

Kim: King county has also identified a big problem of bacteria in stormwater

- Water Quality Funding Updates

Tyler Davis

I submitted three grant proposals yesterday to SRFB,

- Continued work of maintenance and stewardship of existing False Bay stewardship sites,
- lower Zylstra restoration, complementary for Ecology funding, to fund project through completion in 2029
- eDNA sampling, countywide survey, proposed 162 potential sampling sites (one on Waldron)

Kim: the field trips in May will be great, 8 total projects we'll look at around the county, Lopez/SJ and Orcas

-Some brief discussion of work at SJ Valley creek, plans for SJPT to continue working to fence creek & buffers

ACTION ITEM: Tyler will follow up with Dean (...tell him the pressure comes from Judy!)

Ann: Kendra, can you please let the CWAC team know when the presentation to council will be?

Cindy: I will be in WA DC May 12th for PS Day On the Hill. Have fun, and please don't let them forget Fishtrap!

10:19 AM **New Business Discussion**

- Beaverton Marsh

Doug McCutchen

Doug's here to discuss bogs and peatlands at Beaverton Marsh Preserve. Some differences between bog and fen. Wetland soils accumulate more than decompose, for bogs primary water source is rainwater rather than groundwater, means more acidic, hosts different plant species than other wetlands. Peatlands are good carbon sinks. Many deep peatlands at this site. This is the southern margin for bogs, a threatened ecosystem. This is part of the FH watershed, around 2500 acres, about 1500 feeds into the marsh. Map shows where SJPT owns a parcel, within this watershed there's an excess of 50 ponds feeding into the system. Hand drawn maps from 1800's show that these sites were already ditched and drained in 1874, on north side, on the edge of two bog areas, they noted a 'wild tea and cranberry swale' and trees are all small diameter pines with space in between. Last year soil samples to look for both quality, dominant plant communities and pH. Some acidic areas as low as 4.5, north side of preserve is challenging to move through, on borderline between bog and fen. Isolated small bog on south. Cross section of peatlands at Beaverton Marsh (from an area east of the bog), there are fibrous, wood, and sedimentary layers. Doug shows Geo Tech Soil analysis which shows a peat layer 22' deep. Surveys went down 80' and didn't find bottom. Early surveyor notes show cultural signal as well, site on north side had been maintained as relatively open, likely the remnant of indigenous management practices, connects with other areas grassland/savanna areas through FHL and Hillview Terrace neighborhood area. Supports idea that bogs have been maintained culturally. There are peatland, hydrology and water

quality questions that Clean Water Utility can help with: With tendency toward low pH, basic inflows can kill the bog. Increase in stormwater flow from impoundments, ditching, hardening roadsides. Even county's administrative building feeds into this system. What's happening with water quality? And with hydrology, if increased stormflow, will we lose mineral rich groundwater and impact bogs? Existing ditches may help to maintain water that allows these bogs to persist at some level. Need to understand that process. Also, botanical integrity –surveys on south side of site, decrease in native plants and we've been more aggressive with mowing.

Interest in partnering on projects and stormwater and hydrology assessments

- some questions and discussion about wild tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*). sphagnum bogs have been the site of some interesting archeological finds but we don't know specifics about how plant resources were used

Cindy: what is the difference between a fen and a bog?

Doug: it's the primary source of water, for bogs it's rainwater/precipitation-driven. Rainwater is more acidic than surfacewater. We have a project with WWU to find out how deep sphagnum moss is at this site, we know there's at least 2' but if it's more than that shows persistence of beaver activity in the past. Parts of the site have been mowed by duck hunters; that's where we find the most plant diversity and sphagnum moss

Ann: if you have a pond filling up with sedges, is that a fen developing?

Doug: depends on how it develops over a long time scale

-Discussion of nutrient loading, not much nutrients from rainwater itself, nutrients can affect acidity too

Kim: could we monitor water quality on pond next to this building? It probably overflows directly into that bog

-Krista provides more information about the native tea garden, harvest of the native tea around Hummel Lake

Melissa: Are there any shallow groundwater monitoring wells near the Beaverton Marsh? hard to believe no groundwater input. In addition to pH differences in bog vs. fen, any stable isotope analysis done there?

Doug: botanical surveys go back to 1880's and are characteristic of bogs. This year we'll put in some monitoring wells to get a sense of fluctuation of site. Also want some basic elevation data

Melissa: pH can also indicate anoxic conditions, understanding groundwater influence would help

Doug shares link to regional assessment,

https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/amp_nh_puget_lowland_bog.pdf

ACTION: Doug will share this PowerPoint presentation with the group, everyone wants it

10:53 AM **Comp Plan Water Element**

• Subcommittee Meeting Update (March 21st)

Kimbal Sundberg

Need to pull together existing info in reports/datasets/etc. To make progress on that, need a list from the last water report and then at next work session go through that list, see what's been updated and what's new.

Second, discuss what new dataset needs – e.g., in first water element there was a list of all County water rights with a map. Discussed bringing in town, assessing water use on various islands. On SJI, FH is a major type A system and relies on one reservoir. That water is meant for the town and not development of rural areas but now the code allows trucking of water and we need to evaluate whether comp plan should allow that. Those are data we can look at – numbers for trucked water on different islands using developed type A systems.

Cindy: Businesses trucking water are in FH, and telling people with designated dry lots that they can't truck water anymore may seem like take. Simplest way is for town to limit private purveyors to a certain volume rather than the big lift of outlawing this by the county.

Kim: is that legally "taking"? If they have land with no water, not entitled to it from elsewhere. But this goes to how much density SJC can support. I hope the comp plan could be a vehicle to address those issues of growth.

Cindy: the council is a great place to debate that, but the fastest solution will be to limit the amount that can be sold. Town's water is not something County has control over, that's their water right and jurisdiction

Vicki: we need real numbers as far as how much is being trucked and where to. Residential use is probably small. Trucked water has always supplemented people with rainwater catchment systems. A lot of history of areas without enough water. Those on shoreline may have option for desal which is another issue to discuss. Town of FH needs to be a partner because they have so much information on their resources and growth

Kim: hope that between now and next meeting Tyler can pull out reports from water element that are relevant so we can work off a list and continue discussion about additional data needs. That'll be bulk of our surface water meeting in May, if we're on schedule we should keep a block of time monthly to work on this

Kendra: I meet every other week with Sophia. They're trying to address what's required to remain in compliance with State law. We're not anticipating huge changes to the water element, but still opening the discussion because there's the whole post comp plan code amendment and critical area work that gets done.

Kim: we just need a little more direction from County to make our committee time productive.

ACTION: Kendra will be in discussion about that with Sophia, and Kyle or Ethan

11:08 AM Committee Housekeeping

Krista: next meeting I'd like to discuss changes in Planning Dept., changes with our reviews and stormwater maintenance, one contract with Skagit is changing, etc. Discuss how we're moving forward with stormwater. Next surfacewater subcommittee meeting May 16 – presentation from Krista and discuss what's needed.

Kendra: should we also have Susan share the storyboard she's creating around drought?

Susan: I can briefly mention what I'm working on and where I'm at with it; In relation to the conservation drought plan from 2016, my efforts are to follow along with the committee's updates. I'll be applying that to an outreach effort to the community about data we're putting into these plans with maps, etc. Information about water availability resilience and "drought" (even though we don't always get declared here, it's an issue).

Susan is doing this as part of Masters at WWU, interested in implementing plans within a community

Now working to pull data together, I have a summary of bibliography but I'd love further input on what we don't have. Met recently with Ethan and he provided some updated data, now their dept. webpage should be updated. I'll also review the minutes from the recent surfacewater committee meeting

Kim: we'll put Susan on the agenda for May 16th

ACTION ITEM: until then Susan will send out the bibliography she has now and folks can comment/add to it

-Vicki will miss May 16 meeting but wants to meet directly with Susan

11:16 AM Adjourn Meeting