



Clean Water Advisory Committee

October 20, 2022

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

Ex-officio, County support staff, and members of public: Lincoln Bormann, Dean Dougherty, Marta Green, Peter Guillozet, Erin Halcomb, Steve Krueger, Jolyn Leslie, Byron Rot, Kendra Smith, Brooke Sullivan, Cindy Wolf

8:35 AM Welcome and Coast Salish Acknowledgement
Sundberg

Kim

Let us acknowledge we reside on the ancestral lands and waters of the Coast Salish people who have called this place home since time immemorial and let us honor inherent, aboriginal and treaty rights that have been passed down from generation to generation.

8:36 AM Review of riparian restoration program for False Bay, Garrison, and Crow Valleys *Byron Rot*
A facet of Clean Water Utility is improving water quality, these are major watershed creeks. Need to shift paradigm from ditching and human use toward living creeks. Also focus on instream flow enhancement.
Start with **False Bay creek**:

1. The UW Property (part of the False Bay Biological Preserve) at the mouth of False Bay Creek is the most intact brackish-water forested habitat in San Juan County.
2. The Duff property is directly upstream, from Bailer Hill Road downstream to the UW property. ,. Southern part of Duff property is tidally influenced. There were issues with cows in the creek, a fence was put in. No bridge was installed, so we assume cows still access the creek. There's opportunity to approach Duff with conservation proposals for southern half of property. Complicated legal set-up, she may be more amenable to cost-sharing than grant applications involving lots of documents.
3. Upstream of Bailer Hill Rd is the Land Bank False Bay Preserve. Site is a natural depressional wetland, need to get cows out of at least the depressional wetland-portion on the west side, and use area to treat for water quality. Cattle-grazing can leave bacteria. Conservation District has funding for new riparian fencing, need a conversation before new fencing goes up. Recommend a conversation between the SJICD and Land Bank.. The west pasture is mostly Reed Canary Grass (RCG) so will need eradication, Byron recommends using an aquatic approved glyphosate, then plant slough sedge and other colonial wetland species – to form dense colonies of stems for water quality improvement.

Judy: should CWAC write a letter to the Land Bank? ACTION ITEM: Judy will follow through on that letter

Kim: there is a plan for that preserve, could Erin comment on that? How to update management plan for the False Bay Reserve? It's a public plan, Land Bank publicizes how they plan to manage reserves.

ACTION ITEM: Erin can look up when that plan was written and when is 10-year update and follow up with Kim, and also provide that information to Paul Andersson from CD. And respond to Judy's letter about management.

ACTION ITEM: Erin will send out a link to that Land Bank plan to be distributed to committee

Byron (continuing presentation): We started at False Bay Preserve with a dense RCG layer, 6' tall by May 2019. Weed-whackers ineffective, tried brush mower – took entire following summer to defeat RCG. Live stakes lost to mechanical damage, some herbivory (voles etc.).

Fall 2022, canopy closed with willow, RCG should be suppressed in 5 years. Then thin willow monoculture and underplant other woody species.

Q: how much water uptake do willows have vs. RCG?

Byron: RCG defines the wet areas, other dry areas defined by pasture grass. In dry areas willows don't do well so probably need a lot of water. This site stays relatively moist. The stream channel now is really a ditch, no willows there – planted on sides. There's RCG in the ditch. As willows grow and block grass growth that should promote channel flow. Historically False Bay watershed was a series of streams connecting wetlands. Flood waters tell a site's history, we have video. Water sits here in the depressional wetland before being released downstream. Need beavers or beaver dam analogs (BDA's) to increase site use and retain water, improve water quality, potentially reduce ulva mats in Bay

Lynn: do beavers eat RCG?

Byron: no but they eat willows. And it doesn't need to be beavers, it could be human-built BDA's. There's a beaver family on Orcas, historically they existed here. Once this site fully vegetates that's when a beaver could flourish.

Kim: Muskrats possible as well, they eat roots. Any evidence of those?

Byron: they can build lodges with RCG, but probably wouldn't make much of a dent.

Now moving upstream:

4. Ryan property, avid duck-hunter. Photo shows flooding at Red Mill. Then moving upstream is SJ Valley creek False Bay preserve, then Reynolds property. (Byron shows boundaries on map.) Reynolds has not been approached, SJV creek stays more within its banks. Neither Ryan nor Reynolds have cattle so fencing not required. Very little deer herbivory, deer fences not needed. No deer here due to lack of cover; as plants grow, deer may increase too. Ryan buffer would include the depressional wetland from the south that extends onto his property. Reynolds simpler planting strip.

5. Next upstream is Red Mill Farm: False Bay Creek runs through it. In partnership with SJ preservation Trust, long-term ownership. Long-term land manager has fixed views including cows' access to creeks. Property donated to Trust in 2012. First step was 1900' long stretch of False Bay Creek with stream buffers and fencing out grazing, 200' fence corridor. True ecological boundary are historic channels that were part of stream network, which do extend outside of the fenced corridor.

Dean: Black has been there 50 years, has a life lease on the property, he can continue to operate cattle there and we need to cooperate with him. Now creek is fenced, planting efforts. We installed a water system to replace cattle going to creek, it's a solar-operated well pumps to watering stations. Next step will likely be upper stretch of SJV creek - an easier place to fence, don't need to 'replace' water there. So far, Greg Black isn't complaining.

Vicki: is there any ecological restoration plan for that northern end of the Duff property?

Byron: that is an ecological corridor, it is worth mapping. There is an opportunity there

Kim: short links are there with natural spawning-gravel riffle, some decent stream habitat not cattle-impacted

Byron: the fencing is minimum of what the Ecology grant wanted. Planting has been difficult, 2/3 live stake mortality last fall. Steve will be replanting willow whips this fall. Site was flooded mid-November through May and into June, can't plant when the site is underwater. Ordered container plants to go up east side. Site is hard clay in the summer, challenging timing, container plants will go in soon. Don't know what this winter holds for flooding.

Kim: any insight as to why so many stakes lost?

Byron: vole damage plus some loss to summer conditions. With live stakes, need to keep changing up species mix. This fall planting will use wetter willow species. The creek site stays moist between release of Zylstra and naturally wet soil. Grant funding these plantings should be extended another year.

As Dean mentioned, next step "Phase 2" is the Red Mill Farm section of SJV Creek. It'll be easier to put in plants but more maintenance. We'll be planting outside and adjacent to an established riparian corridor. SJV

Creek is hotter in terms of bacteria than False Bay creek, there are some cows in one section, it'll take some effort to get it fenced, planted, and maintained.

Dean: yes it's a challenge, we'll be fencing year after next. There's a lot of maintenance to do first

Kim: anything that needs to be done with Ecology for the grant?

Dean: there's also money from CD, we have options for funding fencing. more worried about time than money.

Byron: Ecology is keen for us to complete Phase 2. There's money, but it comes with Ecology bureaucracy. CW utility would need to sponsor that. Conservation Riparian Enhancement Program (CREP) through the USDA, is another option. This watershed is eligible for that funding, it's a short application, provides funding for fencing, plants, and maintenance. Now CREP funding has been allocated for next year but we could use it in future years.

Kim: Cathy Winings is our newest CWAC member, works with CREP

Cathy: I met the CREP rep from Conservation Commission. I can update this committee as we move forward

6. Wetlands north of San Juan Valley Rd on SJV Creek, includes Aurora Farms. Roberts property would be a fresh contact. Then some interest among the Swan Valley lot owners. Cattle are grazed in all of these areas and full of RCG, it floods in the winter. The idea is to convert these areas from RCG, could be rich for birds.
7. Back to False Bay Creek, moving up from Red Mill to the Traynor-Black parcel. Byron hasn't met the Traynors. A lot of False Bay Creek habitat to be gained from both parcels.

Kim: within area is the major water-pumping station for water from Zylstra lake to fields north of False Bay creek.

- Byron shows pumping station, it doesn't have a hydraulic permit. The water right is for Zylstra lake.
- 8. Zylstra Preserve: purchased by Land bank in 2016, funded in part by SJPT, also part of a national wetlands conservation act managed by Ecology. We've discussed this with respect to water rights. There have been outbreaks of toxic algae in Zylstra lake, we can expect this to increase as temperatures increase. Lower Zylstra is flat meandering habitat. Upper Zylstra has more grade. Spawning habitat exists upstream. Beaver introduction here could be great. Recommendation is to remove both dams, return to an ecological context. Lower Zylstra is easier. Upper Zylstra has water right issues. If pull both dams, restore lake surface.

Lincoln: still waiting on water rights attorney to deliver change of use application letter, then we'll get Greg Black's response. That'll notify that Ecology is coming to investigate the water right, to show it's being exercised. Hope for dialogue. The approach would be to assert our right and come to agreement about lesser usage so we can use some of this water for other purposes, most importantly instream flow

Byron: with water rights, is Land Bank required to manage Upper Zylstra or can they just remove? This will be a difficult site to manage. There's a broader question outside of water rights of what site needs ecologically.

Lincoln: that's an understatement. We're not just managing it for ecological restoration, we have the public committed to it plus the agricultural contingent. Pulling upper dam will be controversial. Water samples taken not out of lake but out of pond on other side of the road, which is disconnected from the lake in the summer, not accurately reflecting water quality of the lake. It would be great to work on water quality of the creek.

9:39 AM Moving on to **Crow Valley**:

1. Starting at the mouth, community is excited about the work, but we don't have the capacity to do all we propose. PALS – pole assisted log structures. Hand-built, slow water down for natural nutrient-cycling and treatment, inexpensive. Stephens/Lampheres.
2. Then moving upstream on the east fork is Brown/Carver/Mitchell – active project on Brown property. Upstream of Brown are two concrete dams, fish impassable.
3. A pond at King/Greening property, Orcas Isle Cider – opportunity for outreach from CD or others, potential riparian buffer around pond.

Lincoln: I know owner of that property I can reach out and encourage them to do more, I have a history with him

Cindy: for background, this owner is a water rights lawyer and intends to use as much water as he's entitled to

Byron: Yes, they acquired the property because of the water right and to start a cidery. There is a beaver family in this pond that needs to be part of the conversation.

Cathy: the CD has been working with these folks, they'll be eligible for cost-share soon. Main source for cost-share is through WA state Conversation Commission – on a biennium cycle, new funding cycle starting in July. Cost-share projects deal with improving water quality. Restoration around that stream would compete well.

Byron: This is an artificial pond with a concrete spillway, could be removed but difficult

Erin: there's a conservation easement on part of creek by Plum Tree Farm Lane. Opportunity on Carver property

Dean: There've been beavers for years NW of Killebrew Lake on SJPT preserve, could expand if had good habitat

Cindy: is aquifer recharge a consideration when doing this riparian work, i.e., Water retention?

4. Byron: complicated, deals with geology etc. Within the purview of Clean Water Utility, we can consider ground water. Back to North fork: Moving north to Crow Valley farms, another artificial pond – could be summer refugia for cutthroat. Landowners are conservation-minded but haven't been approached.
5. North of that is JBS farms and Leone farm, the Leone property has a conservation easement with SJPT. JBS is reportedly not interested in riparian planting.

Dean: Actually, there is an easement on JBS but mostly deals with agriculture not water quality

Jenny: in 2019 wild fish conservancy collected a salmonid sample here on JBS farm, they could be in the creek

Byron: is it possible they're introduced?

Jenny: maybe, needs more analysis to know what species, could also be cutthroat

Byron: Stream ponds around Nordstrom Lane, Schaeffer pond could have cutthroat as well

9:57 AM **Garrison Creek**

Zoey Chue presented about this a year ago, set the stage with landowner outreach in 2021. Laura Pitts is current SJICD project leader. Maybe Laura can come update CWAC at some point.

1. Olsen property. There's a pond here, excellent refugia but infested with bass.
2. Middle Creek, Bryan and Brady property. Horse farm, a lovely wetland here. Previous owner mowed for RCG, I'd encourage keeping an eye on this to ensure maintenance continues.
3. Moving upstream, new owner at Old States Inn is conservation-minded. This is heart of cutthroat trout spawning and rearing refugia in Garrison.
4. Upstream there is a blocking dam on the property just upstream of West Valley Rd that needs to be looked at. Then upstream on English camp NPS property, propose PALS to slow water down

Judy: Thanks Byron, hope you'll leave this presentation. I'm worried, who at county will take over riparian aspect?

Byron: I'm writing a companion report to this presentation, includes maps

Kendra: we have people doing riparian work. Steve will step up. It'll be a team effort, plus folks from the CD.

Judy: it would be nice to have people identified maybe per stream so we know who to contact

Kendra: we'll work on that with our partners; we don't cover every corridor, some others will take the lead

Kim: on behalf of all CWAC, thank Byron for his service to the county! Leaving a solid legacy of complex programs. We hope to see him as a volunteer or however can contribute. A lot of progress is attributable to your dedication

Byron: it's a team effort, this committee is important. I appreciate it.

10:07 AM **Cascade Creek spawning coho and water needed now**

Jenny DeGroot

The Coho came back early this year, salmon seen in Olga trying to get up into freshwater. Last week looked like they were casting eggs out and trying to spawn near the bridge. Rosario owner was interested in donating

water but didn't complete form, Olga water users approved a water donation. Over the weekend Jenny had to contact Dept. of Ecology to get Rosario to release water. Finally water came from Mountain Lake. Within hours of park turning the water on, salmon started coming in and spawning. Now Jenny will count them Kim: the situation is tenuous and ad-hoc, salmon dependent on Jenny's actions. One-time blockage could wipe out an entire year class. Shows resilience of salmon, just need clean water and gravel. Still hope we can get an in-stream flow reservation – it has been funded –problem is in getting the upstream water owner to relinquish.

Jenny: that's what I do, check on water and stream flow. There have been problems before at Mountain Lake, it's an old infrastructure. Want to talk to Ecology about where grants may be to tighten that up. We're lucky here in Cascade creek watershed that there's water to turn on. I agree, it's a system we need to keep monitoring

Peter: Jenny's done a fantastic job. We issued a press release. Prompted water rights holders to extend grants.

Lynn: CD can investigate funding through Conservation commission funding for irrigation systems, it's for infrastructure repair for water conservation. This program requires a 'fish nexus', aimed at fish conservation.

Jenny: I think Ecology should be in the mix as well, there should be funding from State because Parks are involved

Vicki: this system is so vulnerable it requires a steward, Jenny/seasonal personnel is essential. We did tried to get water rights holders together but then ownership changed at Rosario. A coalition to achieve that stewardship

Cindy: USDA has money for drinking water systems. That may help Olga water users look for money. Also, this past weekend I called Debra Lekanoff, talked about buying that property to have public ownership, State buying Rosario so we have a contiguous watershed. She asked me to pen something for her newsletter, there's a potential for some political momentum there. If so then public would have senior water right.

Kim: the State has already committed funds to buy part of the water right, up to \$500K

Jenny: please keep us updated if there's anything we can do

Kyle: I have to head to another meeting. Let's reserve some time on December agenda for groundwater updates

10:21 AM Brief announcement about the Water element

Kim Sundberg

County Council approved final version of the Water element. Through work with planning commission, this committee's recommendations were put back into place.

Cindy: not quite cleaned up yet, we'll see strikeout version next week and cleaned up version a week after that. Thank you Kim for working on that with Planning commission before it came to Council. One recommendation from the Water element was more outreach to the public. Need to update website, most recent info now is from 2008.

Would members of this committee be able to write some content for the website? discuss at December meeting

10:24 AM Agency Updates

Leslie, Jolyn C (DOH)

A few updates from DOH:

- October 26, Kyle and Jolyn will participate in a Groundwater Basics training session in Friday Harbor
- new research on PFAS in septic that can contaminate groundwater
- SRF loan cycle open now, applications due Nov 30, webinar Nov 16
- Our operating permits are now online
- Today is 'Imagine a Day Without Water'

10:26 AM Approval of August 2022 Meeting Minutes

Judy moves to approve the minutes, Lynn seconds. No objections, the August minutes are approved.

10:27 AM Public Comments

none

Ann: a question from the previous minutes, has anything been done about hiring a hydrogeologist?

Cindy: in Council we think those services are necessary, but not full time. Looking at contracting regionally

Vicki: A consultant is how this service was provided in the past. Vicki shares other updates from Kyle - USGS report should be available by 2023. Additional analysis will focus on network but include other water sampling data. Contact Kyle if you want to participate in the groundwater basics training session Jolyn mentioned.

Kim: We have all these instream flow issues, we'll need some professional support whether it's contracted or employee. We get a lot of value out of continuity from folks familiar with local issues. Need to fund it

Ann: I want to have a meeting with the groundwater subcommittee between now and December meeting

Marta: we're ready to capture first flush sampling of stormwater. Since catch-basin and street-sweeping occurred some weeks ago, we hope to see improved stormwater quality over previous years. Thanks Steve for helping.

Kim: We'll be in transition at next meeting with new staff support. See you in December and have a good fall

10:37 AM Adjourn