

**THURSTON COUNTY
STORM AND SURFACE WATER ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**March 17, 2022
Meeting Summary**

Representative	Representing	Present (P) Not Present (NP) Excused (E)
Casey Kramer	District 2	E
Phyllis Farrell	District 1	E
Paula Holroyde	District 3	P
Jaclynn Simmons (Chair)	District 2	E
Britt Nederhood	District 3	P
Carla Sabotta	At Large	P
Nancy Winters (Vice Chair)	At Large	P
David Hartley	District 1	P
Jake Wager	At Large	P

Staff:

Larry Schaffner, Tim Wilson, Sonja Cady, Nate Ensley, Ashley Arai, April Leigh, Miriam Villacian

Guests:

None

Introductions/Process/Correspondence (*Nancy Winters, Vice-Chair*)

Introductions were made. Nancy chaired the meeting in Jaclynn's absence.

Public Comment

None

Amendments to the Agenda

- Paula noted the article in the Olympian about an online open house on 3/28 to discuss I-5 to Dupont with the idea of eliminating polluting stormwater runoff to Capitol Lake. She will send the link with Larry to be shared with SSWAB members.
- Jake stated that he will be mostly observing the meeting and exercising his knowledge.

Meeting Summary

Britt moved to approve the meeting minutes for the January 20, 2022 meeting as written. Paula seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Thurston County Healthy Forests Project (Ashley Arai)

Ashley Arai, with Thurston County, shared her "Healthy Forest Project Presentation" and is happy to share SSWAB's feedback with stakeholders in the broader community. Forests face

numerous stresses from pests and diseases, climate change, development, and destructive wildfires. The goal of this project is to maintain forests that are resilient to these stresses while providing:

- Economic opportunities from the harvest of forest products
- Ecosystem services such as clean water in rivers and streams
- Abundant habitats for fish and wildlife

Tree Protection Today

The County protects forestlands, improves climate resiliency, and enhances tree canopy through codes and policies. These policies and code provisions can be found in the Comprehensive Plan, Thurston County Development Code, and Drainage Design & Erosion Control Manual.

Nancy asked where to find specific information on converting forests as the information contained in the handout Ashley provided is broad.

Ashley will send a link to the section of the development code in Chapter 17. As well as a link for the Washington Administrative Codes relating to forest cutting process.

Project Scope and Timeline

- *Managing Forest Conversions (Spring 2022 – Winter 2022)*. Update forest conversion ordinance (TCC Chapter 17.25 and Title 18) to streamline permit processes and make provisions easier to understand and implement.

The goal is to streamline permit processes and provisions and to be more easily understood by the public and for the County to implement.

Nancy asked if the idea was to make forest conversions more restrictive?

Ashley answered that they are hoping to strengthen the forest conversion process to close loopholes that allow people to get around getting a permit.

- *Studying our Forest Canopy (Summer 2022 - Summer 2023)*. Complete detailed geospatial analysis to better understand extent and composition of the County's forest resources.

Applied for a grant with the City of Olympia for a geospatial analysis to better understand the extent and composition of forest land resources. The analysis will provide data that will lay foundation for water update for tree protection provisions in rural areas.

- *Planning for a Growing Forest Canopy (Spring 2023 – Winter 2023)*. Update the County tree planting standards for rural areas (Titles 18 and 20) and review forest conservation programs with aim of growing and restoring healthy forests.

- *Planning for our Urban Forests (Spring 2023 – Summer 2024)*. Update urban forest management provisions as part of Joint Code Update projects with Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater. Will be able to update tree protection provisions.

Nancy asked if they would use the overlay of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan that calls for protecting existing trees and calls for planting 325,000 new trees.

Ashley stated the Climate Mitigation Plan is a guiding document unlike the County's Comprehensive Plan which is adopted as policy. Tumwater just updated their Urban Forest Management Plan and is a good example of a forest management policy document. Tumwater hopes to hire a consultant this year to translate their new plan into development code.

Jake-is the County's plan and Tumwater's meshed?

Ashley- The intent of the Joint Plans is to have the County mirror the policies and procedures of the north county cities to ease with annexations. A lot of Tumwater's urban forest management policies are included in the joint plan. The County's plan is to get all the joint plans updated and the joint codes would be updated later.

David asked about the inventory of forest coverage mapping that was referred to earlier and asked about retrospective data to see the trend of overall forest coverage.

Ashley- Yes, working with Thurston Regional Planning Council to get a retrospective look at change in canopy over time.

David- Is there an overarching goal, like no net loss of forest cover going forward? Or a level on enhancement of forest cover? What is the big picture of the regulations and how will it be achieved?

Ashley-County has policy for no net loss of commercially-significant forest lands. *Sustainable Thurston* has a no net loss of forest land that includes forested parcels that are zoned Rural Residential. The methodology is being developed now to identify canopy loss. We're trying to get the real picture of the canopy coverage in the County, not including the designated forest lands that are on rotational harvest. The current data is outdated and low resolution. The County has applied for a grant to get a canopy analysis for a baseline using high resolution data. This will give a snapshot in time and assist with setting canopy goals for each respective zoning district, if desired.

David- Understands that the goals are still being assessed and that Washington State Department of Natural Resources is responsible to deal with commercial forestry.

Ashley-we don't want to prematurely establish canopy goals, because we don't have enough information yet need to understand what our current baseline is. The timeline for the canopy analysis to be complete is by end of year, depending on whether we get the grant. At that point, we'd be happy to share data with SSWAB.

Nancy-how likely are we to get the grant? When will we know?

Ashley- since we have done a climate mitigation plan with Olympia, we may have some leverage and are hopeful. If we are not awarded the grant, we will rely on lower resolution data. We could know as early as May if we have been awarded the grant.

Nancy- No net loss, does it only apply to commercial forest lands?

Ashley- It's long-term commercial forestry in the County Comprehensive Plan. *Sustainable Thurston* includes a broader goal for no net forest loss and has been a great resource because they are tracking forest conversion metrics.

Feedback requested on stakeholder and community engagement kickoff.

Kicking off stakeholder and community engagement-approach to provide meaningful and joyful opportunity to share ideas and thoughts on maintaining healthy forests. Ashley shared her list of potential stakeholders and welcomes feedback.

- Capitol Land Trust
- Nisqually Land Trust
- Thurston Conservation District
- Thurston County Agricultural Committee
- Thurston County Storm and Surface Water Advisory Board
- Thurston Climate Action Team
- Homebuilders Association
- Olympia Master Builders
- Washington Farm Forestry Association – South Sound Chapter
- Northwest Natural Resource Group
- Council of Western State Foresters

Nancy suggested including the Chehalis Basin Land Trust, Friends of Trees, and neighborhood groups.

David suggested to add local Tribes. Ashley has them listed separately as jurisdictional partners.

Ashley would love to include any neighborhood groups and organizations people know of.

Britt stated that most of tree work in his neighborhood is unregulated and done by private businesses. Can we include that subset of individuals that are actively making a difference in canopy of the County and identify businesses? Most people probably don't get permits. Ashley will look into this.

Nancy- suggested adding County lake management districts. They could gather resident feedback and can inform their communities about benefits of trees. Ashley will add this to the list.

Healthy forests project storytelling – a creative brainstorming exercise

Ashley has been tasked to find which words resonate with people and asked the group which ones resonate with them. The numbers represent the number of SSWAB members “thumbs up” indicating the word resonates with them.

Forest resiliency - 0
Forest health - 3
Ecological forest - 0
Forest management - 0
Ecosystem health - neutral
Tree preservation - 5
Carbon sequestration/storage - 1
Wildfire mitigation - 4
Forest conversion - neutral
Habitat restoration - 5
Salmon restoration - 4
Climate adaptability - 1 up; mostly down
Tree equity - 0
Agro forestry - 0

Ashley asked if SSWAB members preferred *Preservation* vs *Conservation*. The preference of the group is *Preservation*.

Nancy- didn't hear anything about healthy trees, which is different from a healthy forest. Most of the County's population does not live in a forest but are concerned about healthy trees in their neighborhood. Also, is there a team to talk about the relationship between stormwater and trees?

Ashley- Posed the question why is the connection to healthy stormwater and trees important to the group?

Jake answered clean waters.

Nancy- trees offer so much complexity because they perform so many functions like infiltration and slowing down waters. There is an interrelatedness between people and trees that need more recognition and education.

SW CFP-Related Communications (Miriam Villacian)

Tim Wilson- SSWAB brought this up as a potential topic a couple of meetings ago. The question was how Public Works moves forward with communicating out capital projects. It varies depending on project. This provides a general overview.

Miriam Villacian- Education Outreach Specialist with CPED, since November 2020, is responsible for storm water capital projects outreach. She works very closely with Public Works.

There are four project phases:

- Phase 1 Planning- Begins with engineering staff identifying possible capital projects and creating a business case. There is also public participation and input at public meetings, and the process takes about one month. Using Albany Street Stormwater Project as an example for the presentation.
- Phase 2 Pre-design- Takes 1-2 years. Can begin with a study to find scope of project, may have public outreach including an open house for public input, and then is added to the priority Projects to Capital Improvement Plan, then it goes to the Planning Commission and BoCC. Once approved, the project is added to the online capital projects dashboard. Grants and other funding opportunities are evaluated. Followed by public meetings, zoom meetings, and open houses.
- Phase 3- Design- takes up to two years. Includes preliminary engineering, environmental permitting, and right of way acquisition. Environmental permitting can take time and is another opportunity for the public to comment. Then the project goes to bidding once finished.
- Phase 4-Construction- 6-18 months. Prior to bidding, a second open house about alternative routes, delays, and logistics may happen. Communication is with effected property owners only.

The Albany Street Stormwater project has a stormwater pond and amphitheater. There are interactive and educational signs near the pond for continued education and outreach. The project was so successful that an American Public Works Association Washington State Chapter Public Works project of the year award was applied for!

Public Works Capital Projects Dashboard (April Leigh)

April Leigh is an Education and Outreach Supervisor at Public Works

The Dashboard is an online map with clickable information about Public Works capital projects. Before June 2021, you had to read through the capital projects plan. All projects are now viewable from one location and are searchable.

Information listed on the dashboard includes name, location description phase, costs, construction dates, links to environmental studies, right of way info, and more. The information available is dependent on what point the project is in the process. The dashboard provides the following:

- Increases capacity for outreach within current staffing levels
- Gives the public more comprehensive online information
- Lays foundation for future mapping tools

The information on the dashboard is regularly updated in the active design phases. A major update is done in January once the BoCC adopts the projects.

The Dashboard tracks effectiveness to monitor usage details. So far, they have tracked about 30 views a day; 1000 a month.

The Dashboard is located in a new project hub on the Public Works website and comes in multiple languages. The outreach tools include detour routes, maps, and project updates.

David- thinks it's a great tool for people to utilize. The Albany Street Project seems like a dream project, the process is very refined and well thought out. Has it always gone so smoothly and followed these steps as described? David attended a zoom meeting for Public Works project and no participant faces could be seen and they could only interact with the chat function which was frustrating.

April- Initial online open houses were difficult. They tried to ensure the meetings didn't last too long and they were concerned about having a secure meeting room because the meetings were recorded. It was a struggle at first, but since David's comments they have looked into hosting break out rooms with more staff.

David- Are projects always as engaging for public input as it was Albany Stormwater Project?

Tim- Not necessarily. This was a part of the community outside the County right-of-way. Some projects have less direct engagement efforts from the community.

Carla- What does *right-of-way* mean in this instance?

Tim- Right-of-way is the area adjacent from the road that is managed by the County. If the project is within the County-right-of way there may be less community engagement.

Nancy- likes upfront public involvement. Dashboard is fantastic. How do you get engagement where people don't have computer or internet, or time, but who still care?

April- they are currently looking at that. The dashboard isn't mobile friendly yet and they are working to make it more mobile compatible - no substitute for boots on the ground. They are trying to target audience for each project and find the stakeholders.

Annual Municipal Stormwater Permit Reporting (Larry Schaffner)

The County's municipal stormwater permit outlines what the County needs to do, the storm water management program plan describes how the County will do it, and the annual report shows how successful it was. This annual report documents the County's progress in fulfilling the Permit's obligations for calendar year 2021. It involves responding to a series of 111 different questions. The information compiled for the report involved 20 staff from 14 different program areas in five departments. The questions range from requiring *yes/no* answers, narrative summaries numbers, or more detailed documentation. In previous years, the County's annual MS4 permit report submittal to Ecology had occurred prior to SSWAB's meeting on this topic. This year, the bulk of the reporting is complete, other than two responses related to stormwater management action planning which staff is diligently pulling it together now.

Larry will send the link to the submitted annual report to SSWAB members when it is completed.

During this reporting year there was one noncompliance related to the education and outreach' behavior change campaign. Staffing issues associated with COVID challenges contributed to this noncompliance. Nevertheless, the County was able to quickly come back into compliance.

Nancy- Is there a consequence of the noncompliance?

Larry- There can be, particularly if a permittee outright refuses to comply. For those demonstrating good faith to bring themselves back into compliance, there typically isn't a problem. Thurston County is considered in good standing with Ecology.

Appointments: Conservations Futures Ranking Committee

Larry gave an overview of the Conservation Futures Ranking Committee as Jaclynn was not present. Annually a committee is assembled to rank projects. Conservation Futures projects are funded through a portion of property taxes. The BoCC has the final decision in how funding is allocated. To assist in their decisions, they have sought input from a committee to review, rank and provide project recommendations.

Britt- Stated that that his participation last year was enjoyable. COVID safety protocols prevented committee from going on field visits, which would have been more enjoyable. He stated that it is a positive way to interact with other conservation groups in the County.

Jake- who is eligible to submit for projects?

Larry- In the past it has been land trusts and conservation groups. Andrew Deffobis has more information.

Nancy- what is a Conservation Future?

Britt- Projects that are going to conserve land and resources into the future. Last year's applicants were nonprofits and the County had more funding than applicants requested.

Larry- Only one application has been received this year and there will once again not be site visits due to COVID.

Nancy- Are projects preserved for perpetuity or limited time?

Larry- It's a land preservation program that allows landowners to sell their property or future development rights to a qualified conservation organization.

David- How do the funds come to the County, does it come from the state? What is legislative background?

Larry- The funds are from property taxes and there is more detailed information in the link Larry provided prior to the meeting. There is an RCW that authorizes this program.

Brett agree to serve as SSWAB's representative on the Conservation Futures Ranking Committee and David agreed to being his alternate.

SSWAB General Discussion

- General Updates- None
- Hybrid in-person/video conference meetings- Meetings will likely resume to an in-person Zoom format by the next June meeting.
- Updates on Action Items- None
- SSWAB's pending vacancies-
Need a strategy on how to fill the vacancies,
Nancy asked Larry to put it as an item on the agenda subcommittee meeting to help be more proactive.
This issue needs consistent energy put into it; maybe requires a membership subcommittee.
- SSWAB's reports on outreach in community
- Topics for next meeting- SPLASH Utility Communications, prepare for SSWAB's annual BoCC briefing

Nancy asked if the Board members had an interest in meeting Clay and Casey. They will follow up.

Action Items

- Paula will send Larry a link to the Olympian article for him to distribute to SSWAB members.
- Ashley will send Larry a link to the section of the development code in Chapter 17 as well as a link for the Washington Administrative Codes relating to forest cutting process. Larry will distribute this information to SSWAB members.
- Larry will send the link to the submitted annual report to SSWAB members once it's completed.
- Brett will serve as SSWAB representative on the Conservation Futures Ranking Committee with David serving as the alternate.
- The agenda subcommittee will discuss recruitment for filling SSWAB member vacancies at their next meeting.

The next meeting will be June 2, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm