

Meeting Summary

Subject: Deschutes Watershed Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting #3

Date/Time: March 25, 2016, 12-3PM

Location: Thurston Regional Planning Council office
2424 Heritage Court SW, Suite A
Olympia, Wash. 98502

Attending: Michael Burnham, Michael Ambroggi, Veena Tabbutt — Thurston Regional Planning Council; Charissa Waters, Allison Osterberg — Thurston County; Amy Hatch-Winecka; Katrina Van Every; Adrienne Blackburn; Greg Schundler; Lisa Dennis-Perez; Martin McCallum; John Pettit; Gretta “Lou” Guethlein; Caitlin Guthrie; Daniel Lihach; Darric Lowery; Adam Stillman; Lydia Wagner.

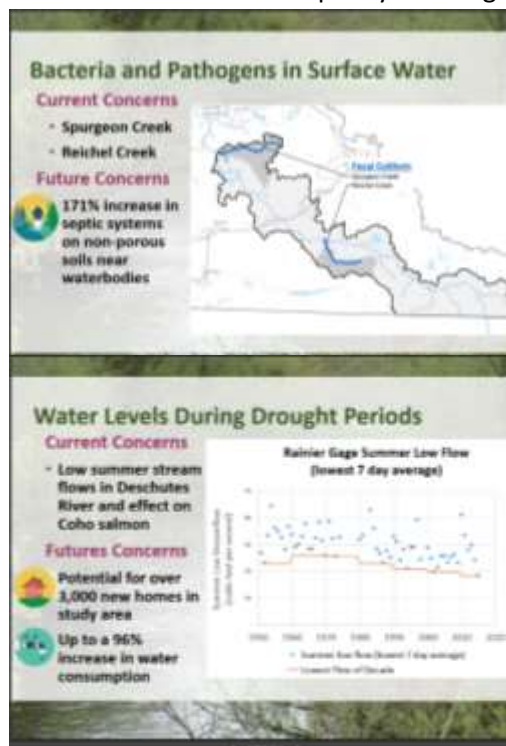
Osterberg kicked off the meeting with a summary the project’s progress to date, including the methodology for developing draft scenarios and incorporating the workgroup’s input.

She provided a presentation (*See SharePoint site*) that provided an overview of water quality challenges amid the study area.

Per the presentation’s Bacteria and Fecal Coliform slide, Lihach asked what are “nonporous soils” and why should we be concerned. ... Osterberg responded that we’re concerned about non-functioning septic systems amid such soils. Water does not sink into the aquifer; rather, the water flows horizontally into the surface water.

Per the presentation’s Water Levels During Drought Periods slide, Pettit asked what is the baseline and source of the claim that there would be an “up to 96 percent increase in water consumption.” ... Osterberg responded that the project team projected the number of new homes that could be built and factored in such homes’ average water consumption.

With regard to the same slide, Lihach asked whether there is enough evidence of illegal siphoning of water from the Deschutes; he noted that this is a problem in California, which has been ravaged by severe drought in recent years. Several project team members and



workgroup members weighed in on this ... All agreed that there is no evidence of this, and it is unlikely given water availability and climate (compared to California).

Per the Development Regulations Scenario slide, Pettit suggested that if growth were limited in a sensitive area, it should be allowed to increase in an area that's not sensitive. Tabbutt said this a good idea worth considering as a recommendation.

With regard to the same slide, Lihach asked about stormwater mitigation requirements on individual sites. He had to do this when constructing a structure for horses. He contended it's a "zero-sum" action to require collection of stormwater in a dry well instead of allowing natural infiltration of runoff from the structure. ... Osterberg responded that the regulatory requirement helps to mitigate the collective impact of development that reduces infiltration throughout a basin.



Tabbutt then provided a presentation (*See SharePoint site*) about Deschutes indicators and scenarios that the project team has developed. Per the slide about Landslides, Osterberg noted that Thurston County has used LiDAR and GIS to identify potential landslide problem areas. ... Lihach asked whether there is a program for removing landslide debris from rivers, including the Deschutes. ... Osterberg said yes; Thurston County Emergency Management will respond to major river blockages that pose safety dangers (e.g., flooding); when there is lesser blockage that poses lesser risk, the County will let the river respond to the blockage naturally.



Tabbutt provided instructions for the subsequent scenarios workshop: Workgroup members moved amid four tables with maps and information sheets. Each table featured a scenario: Restoration and Conservation; Zoning Regulations; Education and Outreach; Development Regulations and Monitoring. ... Workgroup members were encouraged to write questions and comments on project maps that featured brief descriptions of draft actions and results. Below is a list of the scenarios, followed by a summary of comments (*in red, italicized text*):

Development Regulations and Monitoring Scenario

Thurston County changes development regulations and implements mandatory monitoring programs to reduce the impacts of future development on water quality. Under current regulations, the Deschutes Study Area could see an additional 1,400 acres of impervious surfaces, 3% loss in forest cover, and 3,100 new homes on septic systems.

Impervious Surface Limits

Current impervious surface limits allow up to 60% of a parcel's area to be impervious surface, depending on zoning and soils.

Action For parcels in Lake Lawrence, MacIntosh Lake and Offut Lake basins currently zoned RRR 1/5, reduce impervious surface limits to:

- 5% for lots larger than 5 acres,
- 60% or 10,000 square feet (whichever is less) for parcels smaller than 5 acres.

Result More compact development and less impervious surface in sensitive basins. Regulations would be similar to those in other sensitive areas, such as the McAllister Geological Sensitive Area (MGSA).

Action For remaining parcels, reduce impervious surface limits to a level more in line with typical new developments.

- 10% for lots 2.5 acres or larger,
- 60% or 10,000 square feet (whichever is less) for parcels smaller than 2.5 acres.

Result Limit development with excessive impervious surfaces. Would have a limited impact as most new development occurs below proposed thresholds.

Septic Inspection

Action County implements a mandatory septic system operation and maintenance program.

Result Identify and repair more failing septic systems. An estimated 410 more failing septic systems would be identified, decreasing the number of failing systems by 68%.

Comments written on map:

"Education—YES ... Mandatory—NO"

"Mandatory Program ++"

"Realistic countywide?? ... Maybe focus on sensitive basins"

"+ ... Has a source of funding to support education"

"Reinforces responsibility to maintain"

"Reasonable ... Minimal impact on property owners"

Zoning Regulations Scenario

Thurston County changes zoning regulations to reduce the number of new homes in sensitive areas. New development is associated with increased pollution from runoff, tree clearing, and water withdrawals. Under existing zoning, the Deschutes Study area could see up to 3,600 new homes, a 84% increase from 2015. The goal of this scenario is to reduce the impacts of new homes.

Bacteria and Pathogens in Surface Water

Action Rezone parcels currently zoned RRR 1/5 to R 1/20 in areas with nonporous soils near waterbodies.

Result Less pollution entering waterbodies from new septic systems.

Sediment and Erosion

Action Rezone parcels currently zoned RRR 1/5 to R 1/20 in areas with steep slopes near waterbodies.

Result Less erosion and less sediment entering the Deschutes River from new development.

Nutrients and Algae Blooms

Action Rezone parcels currently zoned RRR 1/5 to R 1/20 in Lake Lawrence, McIntosh and Offut Lake basins.

Result Decreased impacts of new growth on nutrient and algae issues in lakes.

Comments written on map:

"Create maps and visualizations that show rate of variances, exemptions and non-compliance"

"Consider extending rezoning to 500- to- 1000-meter buffer"

"Sediment (dust) from logging roads" is a problem

"Consider zoning exemptions, equity issues."

"Protect cold-water refuge" for fish"

"Consider thermal refuges along Silver Spring + one other spot"

"Zoning as a last resort" ... "Better standards for roads; retrofit existing roads and properties"

"Reevaluate how stormwater is dealt with"

Restoration and Conservation Scenario

This scenario assumes a major increase in funding for restoration and conservation. The goals are restoring habitat near wetlands, streams, and the Deschutes River, and conserving habitat throughout the basin. Without action, restoration and conservation would continue at existing levels. Over the past 10 years, conservation groups in Thurston County have restored about 1,600 feet of river per year.

Restoration

Action Thurston County assesses the Deschutes Basin for stormwater retrofit opportunities and implements several projects.

Comments written on map:

"Include economic benefits of outdoor recreation, especially water quality-dependent activities to leverage funding/investment."

"Look at County roads and projects!!!"

Result Decrease in stormwater runoff from pockets of high-density development in the Deschutes Basin. Decrease in nutrients and sediment entering the Deschutes River.

Action Thurston County implements and funds a habitat restoration program. Program could include funding restoration projects or providing financial incentives, such as rebates, to landowners who restore riparian areas.

Result More restored habitat. Increase in shade cover and decrease in water temperatures along streams and rivers.

Comments written on map:

"Create priority list/map of restoration ... Create cost tree for low- and high-hanging fruit"

"Restoration and conservation priorities already exist ... Funds should leverage and implement agreed-upon priorities. Build upon and fund decades'-old stakeholders' involvement."

Rebates could come in the form of "property tax incentives."

"We need financial incentives for restoration of the riparian zone because many landowners will not restore riparian areas without significant incentives. ... Could/Should also incentivize water conservation measures if riparian/property restoration reduces turf/plantings that require lots of water with native plantings that don't require irrigation."

One person marked in orange marker areas with "poor streamside vegetation" (See image below)



Conservation

Action Thurston County opens up the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs to include areas other than agricultural lands. County provides additional funding to the PDR program through Conservation Futures or another source.

Comments written on map:

"Map Eco-/Agrotourism business inventory and/or business development on tourism/outdoor recreation"

"Recommend that county makes this program functional, because if well-functioning, cost to county would be low"

"Careful of criteria beyond ag."

"Currently, conservation futures program has much higher need/demand than available funds. Need to increase annual conservation futures funding for current program. If adding in a TDR program, then even"

more funds would be needed. Don't want to hurt existing conservation programs by moving existing funds to TDRs." → (related question) "What kind of additional cost would be needed to administer?"
"Write recommendation to state agencies and Legislature Re.: Forest management, challenges, opportunities. ... Get grant/Weyerhaeuser/Amazon sponsorship to reopen upper Deschutes Falls."

Result Increased protection of ecologically sensitive areas. Financial benefit to property owners whose land provides valuable ecosystem services.

Comments written on map:

"Survey local market/interest for PDR/TDR"

Action Thurston County identifies a wildlife corridor linking existing conservation areas and provides funding for acquisition of properties or development rights within the corridor.

Comments written on map:

Thurston County should "encourage land trusts to" identify wildlife corridor funding ...

"Connect bike trails on east side of watershed with lower basin."

"Yes! ... We get highest conservation value when we build upon existing conserved areas to increase patch size on natural areas."

"Encourage wildlife habitat by limiting herbicide/pesticide spraying in some areas."

Result Increase in protected habitat. Financial benefit to property owners whose land provides valuable wildlife habitat.

Comments written on map:

"Better wildlife crossing signs and ed. & outreach for allowing wildlife movement along with wildlife corridors"

"Wildlife corridors adjacent to river (large, open grasslands)"

Education and Outreach Scenario

This scenario assumes an increased investment in time and effort for outreach and education efforts by Thurston County staff along with other partners, all of which would require additional funding. The funding source has not been identified. The goals are increased watershed stewardship, water conservation, and septic system maintenance. Without action, Thurston County and its partners would continue education and outreach efforts at current levels.

Watershed Stewardship

Action Thurston County and its partners provide additional funding for enhanced education and outreach for general watershed stewardship issues. This includes increasing opportunities for voluntary restoration.

Result Reduction in nutrients in the Deschutes River, tributaries and lakes.

Comments written on map:

"Include property owners more as stewards of their own land by not mowing lawns, leaving native vegetation and caring for river habitat on their own."

"Schools, communities, nonprofits" could lead "planting sessions and restoration activity tours"

General Comments:

- *“Leverage social media, citizen science, asynchronous communication through online portal/ArcGIS online”*
- *“Create watershed recreation map ... Showing fishing, boat launches, bird-watching spots, bike trails”*
- *“Education Media Contest for artists and students” ... Potential groups to engage include churches, youth groups (4-H, Scouts, Horse Clubs)*
- *“Create map of voluntary actions/compliance to give credit/create peer pressure” to be watershed stewards*
- *“Create incentive contest for passing a fun watershed quiz (e.g., Amazon certificate/smart phone)”*

Farm Plans

Action Thurston County works with the Conservation District to help farms develop farm plans to reduce the impact of agricultural activities on water quality.

Comments written on map:

“Quantify relationship between local food sales, jobs, food, farmland preservation”

“Rotate crops to keep variety of nutrients in soil”

Result Increased number of farms with farm plans. Reduced impacts of farming and agricultural activities on water quality.

Comments written on map:

“Implement agricultural practices that involve native planting and crop rotation. Also, leaving standing grass in prairies to help the water table.”

Septic Inspections

Action Thurston County expands outreach and education efforts on proper septic system operation and maintenance.

Result Identify and repair more failing septic systems. An estimated 100 more failing septic systems would be identified and repaired, decreasing the total number of failing systems by 18%.

Comments written on map:

“YES!”

Water Conservation

Action Implement a water conservation outreach effort during drought years. Efforts could include rebates for water-efficient appliances.

Result Reduced residential water consumption. Aggressive water reduction efforts in the City of Olympia, including outreach material, rebates for water-efficient appliances, free household water-savings kits and a tiered pricing structure, reduced water consumption by 7% per household between 2010 and 2015.

Comments written on map:

Use “demographically appropriate” approach to outreach and education (reach out to discrete groups: churches, youth, ag. clubs)

“Devise watershed resource-based ‘carrying capacity’ for max population given various per capita water consumption scenarios”

Project team members wrapped up the meeting by summarizing the written comments they received at the four scenario tables. Guthrie suggested that the scenarios should include well metering, even though it was not an action presented.

Project team members said they would use the comments received to refine the scenarios further. The workgroup will be asked to review the scenarios – and potentially reach a preferred alternative – at the next meeting (spring date TBD).

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