



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Scott Clark
Director

**Nisqually Reach and Henderson Inlet Shellfish Protection Districts
Combined Stakeholder Committee
Meeting Notes July 15, 2014**

Members: Tris Carlson, Kim Benedict, Linda Malatesta, Sue Shotwell

Alternates: None

Guests: Doreen Gavin (AHBL)
Jean Snyder (WDOH)
David Hall (Thurston Conservation District)
Kathy Whalen (Thurston Conservation District)

County Staff: Allison Osterberg (SPD coordinator – Long-Range Planning)
Pat Allen (Water Resources)
Sue Davis (Environmental Health)
Cindy Wilson (Long-Range Planning)

1. Administrative

- Introductions

Allison Osterberg has taken up the role of coordinating the SPD stakeholder committee from Lawrence Sullivan, who has moved on to a position with DOH. She works in the Long-Range Planning division and focuses on watershed planning. At the moment, this is a temporary staff assignment – a permanent assignment will depend on workloads within the Long Range Planning division, which is in the process of hiring some new positions.

- The committee approved the agenda
- The committee approved the May 20, 2014 meeting notes

2. Woodard Creek Basin Stormwater Retrofit Study: Pat Allen (TC) and Doreen Gavin (AHBL)

Pat and Doreen returned to update the committee on the progress of the Woodard Creek Stormwater Retrofit Study, which had been introduced at the January 21 SPD committee meeting. The study is funded by a grant through the Department of Ecology, and the goal of the project is to identify stormwater infrastructure projects in the Woodard Creek basin that have the potential to reduce pollutant loads and runoff flows to the creek. AHBL was hired as a consultant to develop a method for identifying and prioritizing different potential projects, and they worked with a second consultant, NHC, that specializes in hydrologic modeling. At the

January meeting, the project had completed an initial screen, whittling an initial list of 400 sites down to 66. They have now identified their top five sites, and the next step is to complete pre-designs for these five projects.

Doreen explained the criteria used to select the five sites:

1. How large a drainage area is included in the site, and how great is the pollutant load it would be expected to contribute to the creek?
2. How connected is the site to the creek? (this left 26 sites)
3. How feasible is the project? This assessment looked at 12 aspects, including whether the site had enough space to complete a project, ease of permitting, whether critical areas would be impacted by a project, landowner willingness, whether the site was in the County right-of-way, and more. This narrowed the top selections down to 10 sites that were scored 1-3.
4. What type of facility would be constructed at that site to improve water quality? The options were:
 - a. a constructed wetland;
 - b. a bioretention facility with infiltrating soils beneath it;
 - c. bioretention with underdrains, because of high groundwater and/or poor soils; or
 - d. a compost-amended vegetated filtration strip (CAVFS). Most of sites were in the county right-of-way and were long, linear projects.

Once they determined what kind of facility would be constructed and how much acreage could be treated by that facility, NHC input the 10 different projects into the model and evaluated the reduction in pollutant loading. These were ranked in order.

One of the restrictions of the grant was that the top 5 projects had to either be County owned or have an easement. This excluded some high-ranking projects, including one just south of I-5 that is in the City of Olympia. Pat and Doreen will be following up with the city to gauge their interest in that project. Other sites were excluded because they are in private ownership. Most of the remaining priority sites were those in the right-of-way. The next steps are to characterize soils and do site surveys on the five top sites and complete designs. There will be another public meeting to show the designs to residents of the basin. To date, this project is ahead of schedule.

Pat noted that he had expected more of the top projects would involve older subdivisions that were constructed without stormwater treatment or urban areas. Instead, they found that most subdivisions have some kind of facility. In this basin, there are good soils underlying the urban area, and most water in the headwaters does not discharge to the stream. Water Resources plans to do similar analyses in other basins, on a 3-year schedule. There is a map-book that details all 26 initial sites, and the County could use this information to approach private property owners in the future.

The committee asked how many of the projects the County intends to build. Pat noted that they would all be included in the capital facilities program for stormwater and that they are

proposing a rate increase this year – some of this funding could be used to construct these retrofit projects. There are also construction grants available from Ecology. The stormwater community recognizes that to improve water quality, we need to fix the infrastructure that exists from the past. When they can move forward is dependent on working with the Surface Water Advisory Board to prioritize what ends up on the capital facilities plan.

Sue Davis wondered about the use of compost-amended soils. The TMDL for Henderson Inlet identifies a need to lower phosphorus in Woodard, so would adding compost remove nutrients or just end up contributing additional phosphorus? Doreen noted that there is limited data on the use of CAVFS, but that the term “compost” is misleading, because for this use the main component is mineral. The compost that was used in such a project would need to be certified to make sure it is appropriate. The facilities might be able to remove metals and other pollutants, but for this study they focused on removal of fecal coliform.

Information on this project can be found at:

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/waterresources/woodard/woodard-home.htm>

3. **Updates:**

- DOH: They are backlogged, and have no new data yet. However, staff at DOH re-looked at data for Henderson’s conditionally approved areas and determined they are still meeting the standard. This differs from what was previously communicated to the group, because when the data was re-sorted for the analysis, a few higher numbers fell out. There have been some higher numbers at sites 187, 188, and 189. These areas remain on the edge. DOH won’t reassess the conditional areas for either Henderson or Nisqually until the end of the year.

The recreational shellfish program has launched a new map that is much more accurate.

The website is: <http://dohmptumehqv1/maps/biotoxin/biotoxin.html>

A map of commercial shellfish growing areas is coming soon.

Sue Shotwell noted that the Nisqually Tribe is currently expanding their shellfish farm into the conditional area, and are very concerned about what happens there.

- Thurston County Environmental Health: Sue Davis responded that TCEH has done some investigations of the tributaries, and they saw big numbers for Snug Harbor and Dobbs Creek. There needs to be a discussion with the community, and TCEH need tools that reach beyond dye testing shoreline properties. They have gone into Pleasant Forest Campground in the past, and may do that again. TCEH received grant money to do some work in Eld, but had very low participation, so they have asked DOH to expand the grant to include Henderson. Ecology may use optical brightener probes to ID sewage. Sue Shotwell noted that the Nisqually Tribe has 2% funding from their casino revenues that they award to projects in October or November.

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- Conservation District: The CD will be soliciting for proposals to use the Shellfish Protection Funds. These will be brought to group for review at the September meeting. Once the committee determines its recommendation, the proposals are reviewed by the County Board of Commissioners and the Conservation District. Projects can include anything that supports the work plan. Proposals are due September 4th.
- Thurston County Long-Range Planning: Cindy Wilson gave an overview of the Voluntary Stewardship Program. This is a stakeholder group that was funded by the legislature to develop a voluntary alternative to regulating agriculture through the Critical Areas Ordinance. Members of the group include the County and the Conservation District, state Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, the Center for Natural Lands Management, the Farm Bureau, Chehalis Tribe, Nisqually Tribe, and several farmers. So far, the group has had three meetings – the aim is to come up with a list of BMPs for agriculture that will meet environmental standards. Right now the program is for the entire county, but they may end up focusing it to a watershed. The Chehalis and Nisqually Tribes are a part of the group, but the Squaxin Island Tribe is not participating, because they would prefer that agriculture be regulated. The committee asked how this voluntary program is different from the current voluntary program? It may not all be done through the Conservation District, and there will be some safeguards, as well as a process to get farmers to comply with what the group determines. More information is on the program website: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html>
- Nisqually Tribe: The tribe is developing a 122-acre farm in Henderson Inlet's conditional area. They took possession of the farm in 2010, and this year they are harvesting the first crops with 75 acres ready to harvest. They are raising extra small oysters which are being sold to 122 restaurants in New York City. The farm has hired 6 new people, and has great interaction with both tribal members and the local residents near the farm. Tris suggested Sue Shotwell give a presentation on the farm to the Board of County Commissioners.
- Tris initiated a discussion on the future of the SPD committee. The voting membership is dwindling, as the initial mission of the committee has been achieved with water quality improvements in the inlet. It would be nice to have a bunch of votes for the September meeting. Sue Davis asked whether it might be worth rethinking the committee's mission. It was set up during a crisis and may be time to step back. Allison will work with Tris to draft a letter to the Board of Commissioners requesting that they consider inviting new members to the group.