

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Leif Fixen, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores • Jeff Reibman
Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

The Urban Forestry Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle

December 2, 2015

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Leif Fixen - chair
Tom Early – vice chair
Gordon Bradley
Mariska Kecskes
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke

Staff

Doug Critchfield - Parks
Maggie Glowacki - DPD
Jon Jainga - Parks
Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Nicholas Welch - DPD
Michael Yadrick - Parks

Public

Evan Shaw

Absent- Excused

Richard Martin
Jeff Reibman

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Call to order

Leif called the meeting to order.

Public comment

None

Adoption of October 7 and 14 meeting notes

Commissioners reviewed the October meetings notes.

ACTION: A motion to approve the October 7 meeting notes as written was made, seconded, and approved.

ACTION: A motion to approve the October 14 meeting notes as written was made, seconded, and approved.

Restoring Native Forest Diversity to Seattle Parks – Michael Yadrick (Parks)

Michael is one of the plant ecologists in Parks. This is a follow up to the presentation about Carkeek Park from a month ago. Michael wanted to give the Commission more history about the park. What Parks wants to do is increase diversity on the ground by encouraging more diversity among tree and understory species.

Creating canopy gaps in some hardwood-dominated forests, in combination with other restoration practices, can promote site conditions conducive to successful conifer establishment and increased native forest diversity. These conditions will help slope stability, increase wildlife habitat, reduce the effects of stormwater runoff, and promote stewardship practices common on forest lands managed both for timber production and species diversity.

If invasive weeds are left to grow unchecked they would kill existing trees and prevent new trees from growing producing an 'ivy desert'. GSP has been working on removing invasive species and planting understory native species and native trees.

The Northwest Natural Resource Group (NNRG) established the objective to provide a series of prescriptions for successfully establishing a conifer cohort beneath hardwood canopies at Carkeek Park and the West Duwamish Greenbelt.

Red alder dynamics: shade intolerant, early successional species colonize sites at high initial densities allowing for few conifers. Early growth outcompetes all other species. Alder stands often run into brush-dominated sites. Alder and salmonberry can outcompete conifers for light, water and nutrients. Conifer regeneration is encouraged by light availability. Variable canopy density can support understory conifers through canopy succession. GaPS of ¼ acre and at least 20 feet wide can increase light availability by 30% and support conifer production.

In Carkeek Park, mountain beavers are causing a lot of tree damage. Parks staff is using wire cages to protect young trees at Carkeek Park.

Method alternatives:

- a) Understory treatment (UT) only – remove or treat weeds, plant natives, erosion control.
- b) 30% thin and understory treatment – Understory treatment plus girdle, inject or cut native trees.
- c) 30% thin gap creation/enhancement understory treatment – Understory treatment plus girdle, inject or cut native trees.
- d) Commercially thin alder and maple, gap creation/enhancement, understory treatment. – Understory treatment plus girdle, inject or cut native trees plus road building and hauling logs off the site.

GSP will not be pursuing c) or d) at this time. West Duwamish is less complex, is less steep and has lower public use, and would be a good project to get started with. Carkeek has steeper slopes, sandy soils, mountain beaver, streams, and much more public use. They recently removed 20 alders, snagged others, dropped some and left them on the creek.

UFC question: Does this include planting of conifers?

Answer: Yes. It's more detailed on the timeline on the memo and report.

UFC question: Are you installing larger trees? 6 ft conifers?

Answer: usually go with 1 gal potted material that establishes better and requires less watering.

UFC comment: The UFC recommended the Arboretum to install signs to educate the public about what's being done.

Answer: in Carkeek it would be very visible and a great idea. Would also do outreach to the community before the project gets started.

UFC question: What's the timeline to reach the target?

Answer: some of those areas are phase 4 (maintenance only). They worked on solidifying those metrics this year. GSP starts counting trees when they reach 5 inches DBH (diameter at breast height).

Environmental Critical Areas update presentation – Maggie Glowacki (DPD) and Nick Welch

Last time DPD presented to the UFC they received high level comments but didn't yet have draft code language.

Environmental Critical Areas include:

- Aquifers
- Landslide-prone and steep slope areas
- Peat bogs
- Streams
- Small lakes
- Wetlands

Shorelines are no longer part of ECA, they are regulated separately under Shoreline Master Program. Maggie mentioned that the UFC provided comments regarding protecting heron habitat.

The requirements for the 2015 ECA update are:

- Review regulations for compliance with Growth Management Act
- Best available science
- Public participation plan
- Develop policies and regulations.

The ECA update process includes:

- Public outreach via website and meetings
- Public open house
- Summary of identified changes – February 2015
- Proposed policy changes – February 2015
- Proposed regulatory changes – October 2015
- Public input throughout process
- SEPA
- Mayor's approval

- City Council –public hearing and approval

Public comment is currently open and will continue in January 2016. DPD has mapped all the critical areas as DPD knows them. Maps are advisory, what matters is what's actually on the ground.

Existing regulations in place:

Section 25.09 of the Seattle Municipal Code. Current regulations include:

1. Define ECAs
2. Establish exempt development (e.g. maintenance and repair)
3. Specify submittal requirements
4. Establish specific development standards for each ECA type
5. Outline variance process for development on steep slopes
6. Outline exception process for lots predominantly ECA.

Proposed changes:

- Clarification of code where needed
- Steep slope – unit lot subdivision standards
- Wetland – increase setback for Type III wetlands with moderate to high habitat function from 85 ft to 110 ft.
- Heron Habitat Director's rule

There are provisions for buffer average. DR 5-2007 – Update to Heron Habitat protection. There are seven colonies in Seattle.

UFC recommendations in 2010:

- Retain trees: 6" DBH or larger screening trees year round (decrease from 22" DBH during nesting season)
- 15 ft building setback: require a landscape planting plan approved by DPD

Updated Great Blue Heron Director's Rule:

- Retain trees with 6" DBH or larger screening trees year round
- 15ft building setback: include additional detail that native vegetation is required and this plan is required to be approved by DPD based on the standards.

Additional changes:

- Include year around buffer: 197 ft if vegetation is removed mitigation to replace habitat loss is required using mitigation sequencing.
- Great Blue Heron Nesting Colony:
 - o Clarify no development is allowed within the heron nesting colony and
 - o Protect a nesting colony 10 years after last known nesting season.
- Definitions: update and add additional terms

UFC question: What does mitigation sequencing mean?

Response: stop the action, minimize the impact, and look at replacing ecological function of the habitat removed.

UFC question: Is there a requirement for the habitat replacement to happen in the same location?

Answer: the intent is that it would be provide habitat for the Herons in the affected colony. If there are nests in the trees, DPD will consult with a Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist.

UFC question: Is there protection for staging? Male herons come back one month before females. They look at last year's nests and choose one for this year. If there is no protection for the staging area, male herons won't try to attract females to this year's nests. There is also no protection for feeding areas.

Heron Habitat Helpers is asking for 1,500 feet. Both protections would help.

Answer: there are no protections for staging currently.

UFC question: Are we requiring a permit for re-roofing houses during the nesting season?

Answer: will check

UFC question: What about vegetation removal?

Answer: we do allow some development in steep slope areas that require geotech review. Standalone removals are reviewed by Seth Amrhein in DPD.

Donna has some comments if the UFC chose to submit a recommendation to DPD.

UFC question: Is there a period before and after nesting in terms of what the actual nesting season is? With males coming in a month early... the last chicks leave by Labor Day.

Answer: currently Feb 1 – July 31 based on Department of Fish and Wildlife (this doesn't include staging).

Right of Way Improvements Manual (ROWIM) update - Susan McLaughlin (SDOT)

Susan McLaughlin – convened an advisory committee and Jeff Reibman was the UFC representative in that group.

ROWIM is the user's guide to the ROW. Establishes and documents the policies, procedures and practices for how the City manages physical improvements in the street right of way and on public property.

This is the 10-year update. It will reflect:

- Modal plan design guidance (freight, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle).
- ROW allocation and priorities within the ROW
- Activating and adapting public space
- Definitive street improvements to influence private development outcomes.

Last year SDOT did an intensive survey asking people why they use the ROWIM. 88% responded that they use it to access design criteria and considerations.

What's new:

- Illustrative street types
- Modal plan integration and design standards
- Adaptive street strategies
- Green stormwater infrastructure improved design guidance
- ADA improved design guidance

New street types:

- Differentiate street design based on adjacent land use, roadway function and modal priorities such as:
 - o Urban village main
 - o Urban center connector
 - o Residential curbless
- Set minimum and desirable design standards:
 - o Sidewalk widths
 - o Landscape buffer
 - o Intersection design

Project schedule:

- Second working draft – December 14 will reconvene the advisory committee. Don't have a formal public comment period. Will give a month for a first review.

Will have a new website being developed in parallel and advisory committee will be part of the user test. They are looking to adopt the new manual at the end of Q1 2016.

UFC comment: Will be interested about a section with soil volume considerations.

UFC question: Sounds like there won't be a public input period?

Answer: they are looking for a targeted group of stakeholder input.

UFC question: Are Greenways an overlay or a street type?

Answer: Yes. It's an overlay.

Public comment

None

New business and announcements

Donna has rough comments for a letter but will need a few more days to send it out. Tom will help Donna put together a first draft.

Joanna asked whether there was a need for follow up with Lex about his presentation. Gordon spoke with him today. Parks has worked very close with him. He is concerned that there is not plan for a long-term solution for the issues at Carkeek Park. There are multiple groups out there that might have other ideas/opinions. It's a challenge. It doesn't seem like there is a lot the UFC can do to advance his objectives.

Adjourn

Community input:

From: Lance Young [mailto:lance_young@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2015 11:26 AM
To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra
Subject: Good article on importance of urban forest retreats

Subject: Good article on the importance of urban forest retreats

Hi Sandra, would you see that this gets sent out to the Forestry Commission (Thanks)

To: Urban Forestry Commission

An article from last Sunday's Seattle Times about a University of Chicago's study on "the health benefits that green spaces in urban areas offer through contemplation and restoration". Basically they say that just 10 minutes exposure two to three times a week. Participants reported having significantly less stress, an improved ability to focus, and an increased satisfaction with their mood and energy levels, and they had a 20 percent improvement in working memory over the control group.

The article is attached

Thanks for doing what you can to improve our Urban Forest Canopy!

Lance Young

Interurban Trail Tree Preservation Society