

Meeting Minutes
Cedar River Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan
Oversight Committee Semi-Annual Meeting

Monday, May 23, 2011

Members attending:

Richard Bigley
Aaron Bosworth
Holly Coccoli
Jim Erckmann
Cyndy Holtz
Chris Konrad
Matt Longenbaugh
Steve Ralph
Tim Romanski
Sue Rooney
Buck Smith
Frank Urabeck
Jean White

Staff attending:

Liz Ablow
Dave Beedle
Todd Bohle
Paul Faulds
Jon Hansen
Amy LaBarge
Rand Little
Dwayne Paige

This Oversight Committee meeting was held in the field to provide members with the opportunity to see HCP projects currently underway.

The Oversight Committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.

Lower Cedar River Protection and Restoration Sites – Jon Hansen, King County Ecologist and project manager of the Rainbow Bend Levee Removal and Restoration project, provided a project overview and led a site walk. Discussion points:

- Identified as most significant restoration opportunity on the lower Cedar River in the King County Basin Plan and WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Plan
- 40 acres acquired by King County over past several years, including mobile home park
- 40 acres to be reconnected to river with removal of levee
- Design team exploring a range of restoration solutions from just removing levee and letting nature take its course, to more engineered solutions that would be intended to accelerate development of habitat features; pros and cons of different approaches was discussed

The group crossed Cedar Grove Road to visit properties acquired by SPU and restored in recent year. Discussion points:

- Land acquisition by SPU is focused in three reaches of the lower River (map provided)
- SPU contracts with Cascade Land Conservancy to provide restoration and stewardship support; CLC documents conditions at the time of acquisition, including restoration

opportunities, and provides annual work plans and accomplishments reports to SPU for each property

- The focus of restoration efforts on these properties is invasive plant removal (particularly knotweed), and planting native vegetation
- An EPA grant awarded to SPU in 2010 expanded the knotweed and community/private property-owner outreach efforts, which complements the public land acquisition and restoration efforts of the HCP Downstream Habitat program

Cedar River Sockeye Hatchery – Rand Little and Paul Faulds conducted a tour of the Cedar River Sockeye Hatchery, which will replace the interim hatchery. Discussion points:

- Adult sockeye for broodstock are held in four raceways each having a 1,000 fish capacity
- Fertilization of eggs takes place in the spawning building and eggs are transported to hatchery in buckets.
- Hatchery incubation water is supplied from springs on the south side of the river.
- Spring water for incubation enters the headwork's area of hatchery and then passes into incubation area in overhead troughs.
- Incubation water temperatures can be manipulated (ambient, tempered to river, chilled for marking, or heated). Goal is to closely match the river water temperature as part of AMP.
- Hatchery has capacity to incubate and rear up to 34 million fry inside the hatchery building.
- Hatchery releases can be done directly from hatchery in fry transfer line or trucked to lower river.

Walsh Creek/Rock Creek Confluence project – Todd Bohle, Watershed Hydrologist, provided the Committee with a project overview. Discussion points:

- History of the Walsh Lake Basin and Diversion Ditch
- Defined the Problem
 - infrastructure (diversion structure and 40 road) no longer needed and expensive to maintain
 - episodic landslides into Rock Ck pose a chronic threat to water supply, endangered species and critical habitat
 - infrastructure is an impediment to fish passage and access to high quality habitat
 - encroachment of roads into streams and wetlands (impairing riparian and aquatic habitat and processes)
- Current water quality of Walsh Lake outflow. Fatal Flaw analysis completed before 2009 blowout determined water quality will not compromise the City water supply and can be restored.
- Brief chat about project alternatives. Walsh Creek flows already connected to Rock Ck but removal of infrastructure, fish passage obstructions will still exist and floodplain function will still be impaired if preferred (proposed) project isn't implemented. Proposed project deemed to have greatest benefit to listed species.
- Discussed restoration objectives
 - *restore natural, self-maintaining channel attributes and processes*
 - *reconstruct functional floodplains and wetlands by removing road fill*

- *restore habitat connectivity (fish passage at confluence) and natural flow paths (valley wall drainage)*
- *stabilize slopes above Rock Creek and restore natural riparian processes*
- *integrate natural design elements (wood used as natural channel roughness elements and revegetation of native plants)*
- Discussed project designs and extent.
- Discussed ongoing NOAA research on recolonization within the Rock and Walsh Basins.
- Discussed previously established thresholds for acceptable salmon carcass biomass above the Dam. Jim recalled it to be about 47,000 lbs (?) annually

58 Road Forest Restoration Site – Amy LaBarge, Forest Ecologist; Rolf Gersonde; Silviculturist; and David Chapin, Wildlife Biologist, explained SPU’s approach to increasing forest resilience in anticipation of the potential effects of climate change on forest health and water quality. Discussion points:

- This stop was a follow-up on 8-year comprehensive review item regarding incorporating climate change into planning. Key element is to support supply of high quality drinking water and other watershed ecosystem services (e.g., habitat, carbon sequestration). Goal is to track potential changes and work adaptively to maintain resilience of watershed ecosystems to provide continued services.
- Climate Change strategy includes:
 1. Leveraging work already being done by SPU and other organizations.
 2. Collaborating with others to research projected impacts and adaptive responses.
 3. Monitoring to detect changes.
 4. Develop adaptation strategies.
- This project focuses on forest resilience and recovery by increasing species diversity and testing methods of planting different species into small gaps on potentially difficult sites. On this particular site, there are numerous issues that impact tree vigor and forest resilience, including persistent and episodic winter winds, droughty soils, limited tree species diversity (mostly Douglas-fir), laminated root rot, and Douglas-fir beetles. In combination, these factors cause poor growing conditions and tree stress, and many forest patches are exhibiting decline. There is limited species diversity and regeneration that aids forest resilience. The objectives of this initial forest resilience project includes:
 - Testing feasibility of planting different tree species into new and existing gaps;
 - Tracking near-term survival and growth of tree species and populations; and
 - Tracking long-term growth and reproductive ability.

Steelhead metric discussion – During the meeting the Committee discussed addition of a metric to the HCP web site that explains Cedar River annual steelhead population trends. There was consensus among the Committee to direct SPU staff to add this metric.

Approval of meeting minutes of June 4, 2010 – The Oversight Committee unanimously approved the meeting minutes of June 4, 2010.

At 3:00 the meeting was adjourned.