



San Juan County
Water Resources Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 14, 2018 8:30-10:30am
Town of Friday Harbor Fire House, 60 Second Street, Friday Harbor
Upstairs Conference Room

Introductions

Paul Kamin, John Cook, Jenny DeGroot, Laura Jo Severson, Kendra Smith, Buck Smith, Kyle Dodd, Bill Watson, Kimball Sundberg, Libby Concord (minutes)

Minutes and Updates

The minutes were not approved because a quorum was not present.

Department of Health Update - Kyle

Gary Covington is retiring. Will be looking to start the process of filling the position in the next couple months.

Department of Ecology Update - Buck

Buck summarized the Hirst Water Decision and ESSB 6091 (engrossed substitute senate bill), which dealt with new wells and their impact on the larger watershed area. He passed out a map that showed the 62 watersheds throughout Washington, color coded by level of effect. Essentially, this bill reconstitutes the watershed units put together in 1998, raises the fee, lowers the yearly average per day from 5,000 to 3,000 gallons, and creates \$20,000,000 in funding each year. Washington State Department of Ecology will be hiring new planners and ecologists, biologists, etc. to implement this plan.

The Swinomish lobbied to have the Skagit watershed left out of this plan. The legislature has devised a task force with two members of each party and members of the tribes to try to devise a solution.

Questions followed. Jenny wanted to know if WRIA money could be transferred, say to San Juan County. Buck replied that anything is possible. Paul wanted to know if San Juan County could proactively adopt the 3,000 gallons per day per year limit. The consensus was that it could may be possible with enough supporting data, but was politically risky. Kim wondered if enough emphasis would be placed on data gathering to inform the planners the State would hire. He also doubted that the Tribes would want to come to the table and risk losing any sovereign rights. Buck replied that his hope was that the bulk of the money would go towards data collection and implementation. He also hoped that the Tribes would come to the table because they also have projects that they wish to see completed. Kyle commented that enforcement of the 3,000 gallon per day limit was going to be down to local jurisdictions to enforce and would be tricky to implement, especially without metering.

Buck also reported that the snow/water issue was looking good. He had spoken to Green River water supply for the city of Tacoma, as well as the City of Seattle and everything seems to be a little more than 100%.



Buck suggested that the group take a field trip out to Cascade Creek on Orcas in July.

Proposed Amendments to the County Code, Chapter 13.04 – Clean Water Utility Action

Kendra met with Jon Cain shortly after the last meeting to discuss changes to the Clean Water Utility code. He suggested caution when making changes to the code, so as not to open up the code to interpretation. This meant that the major changes asked for at the previous meeting were not practicable. The rewrites Kendra submitted included:

- Using a 10,000 square foot service unit to get to a 1 to 1 system in order to better serve commercial properties.
- Including a definition of “impervious surfaces”. Examples include rooftops, patios, parking lots, driveways, heavily compacted gravel roads – all things that shed water and pollutants into the environment.
- Clarifying the definition of storm water to include all rainwater runoff from impervious areas that drain into wetlands, streams, the ocean, etc. (A suggestion was made to include snow melt.)
- Changed the membership to one year with emphasis placed on having a diversity of island residency and expertise.
- Worked on exemptions, which include the Land Trust, the Land Bank, all those parcels that are just holding forests. This is estimated to apply to 1,170 parcels, or about 7% of total parcels, equaling about \$60,000 in revenue. If any of these properties are developed, the owners or holders would be required to pay the fee.
- Included some fee reductions, encompassing a 10% reduction for commercial facilities that do rainwater harvesting, as well as residential properties that have storm water treatment facilities. Proof of continued use and maintenance must be provided every year. (The group asked Kendra to remove part of this change). Additionally, people below the poverty line can request a reduction. (The group discussed a 50% reduction, as well as consulting the Assessor to see what their system is for granting property tax reductions based on poverty level.)

Kendra explained how the fee adjustments were being calculated. A grant for \$85,000 was being included in the equation. The fees for Orcas and Lopez would most likely go down, while the fees for San Juan would likely go up by \$2.

Discussion followed on getting water meters for new wells into the budget. Kendra explained that a hydrologist and meters were already in the budget on the operations side.

Kim: I just think that people want to know that they are getting something besides drainage management. That they are getting water management. Also part of the budget was money coming from the Roads Department, which John and Kendra were planning to use to buy a street sweeper and vacuum truck. The code changes would get to Council by March 29th, have a first touch in April, and a hearing on May 8th.

Committee Composition



Paul reiterated the group's desire to have 7-12 members. It was determined that people could serve as alternates. Paul made a diagram on the white board:

Orcas: Paul, Bob, Gary

San Juan: Kimball, Laura Jo, Kyle, Bob (maybe)

Other: Vicki

Lopez: No one. Scott, wetland specialist (maybe)

Candidates: Jenny, Dan Vekved

It was requested the Bill speak with Jamie Stephens, asking him to solicit members on Lopez. Kendra volunteered to make a spreadsheet correlating experience and island residency for board members.

The discussion then moved to meeting location. It was suggested that making use of Skype or a similar product would be useful in order to get a quorum. It was suggested that the meeting could be held at OPALCO, the library, Key Bank, the Legislative Building conference room, or the County Council Chambers. It appeared that the County Council Chambers would be the preferred venue.

Discussion

The conversation moved back to Cascade Creek. Paul explained that Mountain Lake flows through Moran State Park as Cascade Creek. There are multiple stakeholders in that watershed. Doe Bay, Olga, Washington Water Service Company, and Rosario Resort, who have the most senior water rights and use a portion for hydro dam production. The issue is that Washington Water Trust purchased a water right to maintain a minimum water flow through the Moran State Park Bridge. That water right is not always being honored and it is a danger to fish populations in the creek. Millions of dollars were spent in creating the bridge and restoring fish populations to the creek.

Buck explained the history of the Washington Water Trust buying half of Rosario's water rights in the early 2000s for \$76,000. These water rights were established in the 1880s and have been adjudicated, making them the senior water rights. However, the half that the WA Water Trust owns are junior to Rosario.

Much discussion followed on:

- The current procedure for releasing water when the creek runs dry or for Rosario to get more water. It was suggested that the process be mechanized or that a disused pipe under the diversion be put into use in service of the creek and fish, as the resort's response time is often too slow and could cause massive fish die-off.
- Why Olga and Doe Bay, who have junior water rights, are getting their water before organizations with senior water rights?
- What the purpose of Rosario's hydro dam is. Could Rosario be talked into migrating to solar panels for energy production? Kendra offered to talk to her former colleagues at Bonneville



Dam about ways to incentivize Rosario, with the potential of a certificate that helps businesses present as environmentally conscious.

It was suggested that a field trip be organized to Cascade Creek in the spring, instead of in the summer. It was also found to be desirable to have a better understanding of the dam, diversion, and Rosario's hydro dam. Emphasis was placed on avoiding making Rosario feel as if they had done anything wrong by asserting their water rights, but rather allowing them to be part of the solution to the problem.

Meeting adjourned.