

**City of Bellingham Habitat Master Plan
Technical Advisory Group Meeting #3
July 13, 2012
9:00 am-12:00 pm
Mayor's Board Room; Bellingham City Hall**

TAG Members present:

Julie Guy, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board; Jim Helfield, WWU; Sue Kaun, citizen; Wendy Steffensen, RE Sources; James Luce, City of Bellingham Parks Department; Sue Madsen, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group; Kim Weil, City of Bellingham Planning Department.

TAG members absent:

Kurt Baumgarten, Ecology; Barry Wenger, Citizen.

Others present:

Project manager: Renee LaCroix, City of Bellingham Public Works

Consultant team: Derek Koellmann and John Small, Anchor QEA; Vikki Jackson, Northwest Ecological Services; Hilary Wilkinson, Veda Environmental

Additional attendees: Sara Brooke Benjamin, City of Bellingham; Wendy Harris, citizen

A. Meeting purpose, goals, objectives

Hilary reviewed the goals and objectives of the meeting, which were linked to two documents distributed prior to the meeting:

- *Stakeholder Engagement Plan*
 - Finalize list of stakeholders
 - List of priority stakeholders to involve extensively
- *Draft Habitat Master Plan Outline*
 - Overall TAG input on outline
 - TAG support for project team's proposed approach regarding process-based restoration and preserve first, restore second concepts
 - List of 5 priority habitat types.

Derek provided project updates from the last meeting, including:

- Limiting Factors Report: excellent response via survey monkey. The input will be incorporated and the final document will be available in early August.
- A simplified 5-step approach is being developed and will be available on the ftp site soon.

B. Draft Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Finalized list of stakeholders

TAG members suggested that the stakeholders be categorized for easy review and made several suggestions on that front, including:

- Development community as one entire group, with specific organizations/individuals within it
- Advisory Boards
 - Planning Commission
 - Greenways Committee

- Public Works Advisory Board
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

TAG members also added the following individuals and entities to the list:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Development Community:
 - Master Builders
 - Caitac-Talbott Family
 - Bill Gyer—Muljat group
 - Janocki—T.M.
 - Polygon
 - Edelstein
- Environmental Community:
 - Responsible Development
 - Whatcom Conservation District
 - John Blethen
 - Friends of Chuckanut
 - Futurewise
 - WWU Environmental Student Coalition
 - WA Conservation Voters-Whatcom Chapter
 - Whatcom Watch
 - Whatcom Land Trust
 - Koma Kulshan Chapter of Native Plants
 - itree

Priority stakeholders

Hilary led the TAG through a stakeholder prioritization exercise to identify those entities/individuals who could have the greatest influence on the project’s success (positive or negative) or be the most impacted by the project’s outcome (positive or negative). The results of this exercise follow. Please note that the categories of stakeholder groups are NOT prioritized, but individual stakeholders within each category ARE prioritized.

- **Development Community**
 - BIA
 - Whatcom County Association of Realtors
 - Whatcom Builders
 - Alliance Properties
 - Bill Gyer
- **Environmental Community**
 - N. Cascades Audubon
 - RE Sources
 - NSEA
 - Sustainable Connections
 - Koma Kulshan Native Plant Society
 - Humane Society
- **Neighborhood Associations**
- **Government entities**
 - COB-Parks

- WDFW
- Port of Bellingham
- COB-Planning
- Ecology
- Whatcom County

- **Advisory Boards**
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Public Works
 - Greenways
 - Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Group
 - Planning Commission

- **Business Association**
 - Chamber of Commerce

- **Planning Groups**
 - Bellingham Bay Habitat Action Team

Hilary explained the stakeholder engagement approach and how it links to prioritized stakeholder groups. The TAG supported the overall approach.

C. Draft Habitat Master Plan outline

General overview: Habitat Master Plan Outline.

Derek provided an overview of the draft Habitat Master Plan Outline.

A summary of the TAG's comments follows. The consultant team's responses appear, or any follow-up discussed related to the comment, appears in parentheses.

- Will the relationship to other plans be included in the final report? (Yes)
- Include a disclaimer that this project is not attempting to recreate historic conditions. (Comment noted)
- Should consider how this will be incorporated into the permitting process, such as SEPA review.
- Move endorsements to front of document.
- Find a LEED builder association for an endorsement.
- Some TAG members raised concerns about the overall approach to developing the Draft Master Plan, specifically regarding the prioritization of habitats and species. (Note: the consultant team will refine this approach and re-approach the TAG for input via e-mail). The need to identify target habitat and species is explained below.

Process based and preserve first, restore second approach

The TAG unanimously agreed to the following:

- A process-based approach is the goal for the overall effort; however, if this cannot be achieved, we will go to the next step.
- A preserve first, restore second philosophy will guide the overall effort.

Species prioritization

Derek provided a brief overview of where the consultant team is in terms of developing the prioritization approach. He asked for TAG was asked to help the consultant team prioritize both species and habitat.

The TAG questioned this approach. Renee asked why the prioritization could not be “data driven” from the limiting factors analysis and other work. Other members expressed concern that focusing on target habitats and species would mean other opportunities would be ignored.

John provided context for why it was important to narrow the list of species and habitat so that the consultant team can begin addressing processes to restore and preserve. In developing the prioritization scheme understanding target species is critical for numerous reasons:

1. Individual species often use the same habitats very differently or receive different functions from the same habitat.
2. Species often have important interactions with one another (e.g. predator – prey) so targeting one species can come at the expense of another.
3. Restoration of one habitat type can result in the displacement of another habitat (e.g. conversion of blackberry to sapling forest) leading to loss of certain habitat functions (e.g. in the case of blackberry would be ground nesting sites.)
4. Decisions will need to be made on which specific restoration opportunities should be prioritized and it makes sense for this to be based at least in some measure by anticipated benefits to specific species.

Hilary led the TAG through a species prioritization effort, emphasizing that species included in the list should be keystone species and/or indicator species. Please see Attachment 1 for a comprehensive list of priority species identified by TAG members during the meeting.

Habitat type prioritization

Hilary led the TAG through a quick brainstorming exercise to help the consultant team identify priority habitat types that should guide the development of the plan. The TAG identified the following priority habitat types:

- Riparian
- Wetlands
- Pocket Estuaries
- Forests
- Streams
- Nearshore
- Urban forest; Urban Greenspace (microhabitats)
- Native bald communities
- Open fields
- Caves
- Snags
- Lakes
- Bellingham Bay

Additional TAG comments

- **Comment:** Add a species richness and biodiversity metric. **Response:** The consultant team acknowledges that there are species-rich areas in Bellingham and that the Habitat Plan needs to capture them. This will happen. The team knows that there are some data sets available that address biodiversity, such as the Eissinger work. These will be examined as part of the prioritization process.

F. Wrap up and next step

- A Survey Monkey link will be distributed to capture remaining input on the Habitat Master Plan Outline.
- The flow diagram will be simplified, and the 5 key steps will be clearly outlined within it.
- Next meeting: September 17, 9 am to noon, Bellingham City Hall, Mayor's Board Room.