



## Regional Open Space Conservation Plan Advisory Committee *Action Items and Summary Notes*

Tuesday, December 12, 2017, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

### Participants

Hilary Aten, PCC Farmland Trust	Michael Hubner, PSRC	Michael Murphy, King County
Jim Bolger, Kitsap County	Colin Hume, Department of Ecology	John Owen, Makers
Ryan Dicks, Pierce County	Paul Inghram, PSRC	Nancy Rottle, UW
Keith Folkerts, WDFW	Ikuno Masterson, Snohomish County	Maria Sandercock, PSRC
Erika Harris, PSRC	Mark Mauren, Ueland Tree Farm	Stephen Stanley, Dept. of Ecology
Sono Hashisaki, Tulalip Tribes		Tracy Stanton, Bullitt Foundation

### Action Items

- PSRC sent meeting materials out to the committee. The advisory committee was asked to send additional feedback to Erika Harris (PSRC) by December 20.
- PSRC will send the Executive Summary to the committee on December 20. The committee was asked to send comments on the Executive Summary to Erika by January 3.

### Summary Notes

- 1) **Introductions.** The participants listed above introduced themselves.
- 2) **Work plan and schedule update.** Erika briefly reviewed the work plan and schedule for the project. She encouraged committee members to provide input on the meeting materials both during and after the meeting.
- 3) **Discussion to shape a draft plan.** Erika and Maria provided some information on each chapter and the committee provided comments on the draft materials as listed below.

### Comments on Chapter 1 Regional Open Space Plan

- Should consider adding information on mineral lands.
- Current regulations are strong (GMA, Forest Practices, etc.), it is the development and impacts that occurred under past, less protective regulations that is the problem. Should make that differentiation. This is especially true for forest practices, but also farming. Stormwater is a good example of legacy problems. Also for habitat restoration. This plan needs to focus on retrofitting legacy issues.
- Put Chapter 1 into context of what the plan is trying to do, not new regulation. Take care of past actions, and use the tools available with the current regulations.
- Supporting growth in the right places is the big opportunity.
- The plan is an opportunity to define open space as all the working lands. Open space represents natural infrastructure.
- The plan can support a campaign to increase awareness about open space. Individuals can be encouraged to steward their own properties to enhance habitat.

- We can tackle more than one issue at once; this work benefits many issues. For example, businesses locate here because the excellent open space opportunities attract talented employees. If all neighborhoods are attractive, development will be distributed more evenly (realtor comment).
- The plan should stress the regional nature of our systems. Partnerships and regional solutions are crucial.
- Identify obstacles to using tools we already have. Political strategies may be warranted.
- There is much research on the benefits of open space. Growth can pay for new urban open space and for protecting open space.
- We need to address the affordability issue early in the plan. It doesn't have to be negative. For example, realtors say that providing parks and open space throughout the region helps with affordability because developers will build housing in more places (that have access to parks and open space). King County did an analysis to see which places lack access to open space. It is part of their Lands Conservation Initiative.
- New growth can pay for some of the past problems (such as land use patterns). But it can be difficult to do.
- Keep the discussion positive.
- What are the costs of not protecting open space? A valuation for King Co Land Conservation Initiative can be used.
- This is the only plan that is truly integrated. Ecosystem services can be paid for. Be sure to identify the values and functions that open space provides. Example of increasing forest rotation to improve ground water.
- This plan starts a positive discussion on how we can conserve open space to improve quality of life today and for future generations. It is the vision for the next 50 years. But don't create the impression that we are taking land or are adding regulations.
- Some of these issues can be put in sidebars.
- Try to build a sustainable framework with an ecosystems approach. Don't just focus on recreation and popular issues with public.

### **Comments on Chapter 2 The Regional Open Space Network**

- More maps would be helpful. Add them to the appendix. Farmland could be more visible.
- The bubbles are helpful.
- The criteria are very important, so emphasize them. They set up the framework for the regional open space network. Bullet points might help. May want to repeat the criteria in other chapters.
- Residential development can be in the network. A greenness index could be used for open space analysis. Even with some fragmentation, there are still open space benefits.
- Many large working forest landowners are good stewards. The concern is with large landowners that use short rotations or sell their land in as small of parcel as possible.
- Some people will say that there is enough open space already. There is not a crisis, but there is risk if we don't continue our work.
- Could do a scorecard by county. There are pros and cons to this. Some competition is healthy and but can get in the way of thinking regionally and being collaborative. Could be more educational: how are we doing as a county? A briefing paper for each county would be useful (conservation easements, acres acquired, acres lost, etc).
- Could do an open space health index.
- What are the politics of this discussion? We need broad support. Politics and collaborative work builds support. Have county staff brief County Executives before Exec Board meeting (provide briefing paper).
- A checklist of what local governments can do (like have a TDR program) to protect open space would be helpful. What policies could be adopted?

- Tell the story with National Land Cover data of ag land lost, etc. over the past decade.
- Think beyond political boundaries. We have a stake in how other jurisdictions are doing.
- Data by county would be helpful in conservation work. Provide to those making decisions.
- Add information on acres lost with various types of open space.

### **Comments on Chapter 3 Protected Open Space**

- Note that DNR lands can be sold.
- Could use the term “currently protected”. It’s appropriate given what is going on at the federal level with National Monuments like Bears Ears.
- Chart does not include county easements, make that clear.
- Make sure Tribal land is consistent color.
- Need to work on definitions. Most consider preservation as locking land up. Forterra would be good to ask. It is common to use the phrases: “conserve working lands” and “protection through regulation”.
- Conservation easements are considered permanent. Each agency uses terms differently, so define in this plan and use consistently.

### **Comments on Chapter 4 Conservation Needs**

- Could list acres protected by county. In appendix if not enough room up front.
- It would be helpful to run the OSAT on the regional open space network. Could look at different scales: regional, county, WRIA, etc. Could go in appendix.
- Could present OSAT info and show how it could be refined at a local level.
- Farmland usually a 5-acre minimum to target for conservation, but some productive farms are even smaller. Small farms support the farming economy.
- Look at the split between urban and rural farms.
- How much farmland is enough? Is there a critical mass of farmland?
- Farmland in the urban area is important, like the Green Heart in Pierce County. It provides more than food. Could treat urban ag differently than rural ag. Can use different tools to protect it. Farmland also has habitat and hydrological value.
- The State is looking at developing food policy. Can refer to food policies and working lands policies in VISION 2040. This plan should direct policy. Look at multiple benefits of urban farmland.
- Unfortunately, urban farmland is very expensive to conserve (acquire easements).
- Economic viability is an issue – the farmer must make money to keep the land as farmland. Connect the dots that farmers need to be supported – buy local food.
- The committee agreed that farmland is the most threatened type of open space and should be highlighted as a main issue in the plan.
- Keep in mind that most farmers don’t appreciate bureaucracy and regulation. They enjoy their livelihood.

### **Comments on Chapter 5 Access to Open Space**

- The plan should map gaps in access to open space. Use a positive frame: it will help local government get funding for parks and open space needs. Run idea by regional staff committee.
- Try to look at access to hiking trails.
- Open space provides benefits to everyone in the region, even if they are not right next to it.
- Look at both urban and rural access.
- Don’t use the term “marginalized”.
- Add policies to help cities with lower revenues increase park and open space access. Offer information and methodologies to cities. Equity benefits accrue to everyone in region.
- Need to push equity story. Look at bicycle network gaps, many in underserved areas.

- Trail gap between King and Pierce counties on White River.

### **Comments on Chapter 6 Action Plan**

- General comment: The role of partnerships should be incorporated into strategies
- Strategy 1:
  - Give examples at different levels of government. Look at how PSRC can facilitate integrating open space planning. Outreach strategy to local governments and public. Focus on key organizations like conservation districts, counties, cities, etc. Messaging to public is hard.
  - Delete “regulation” in strategy. Focus on plans and policies.
  - Consider an outreach strategy, especially for retrofits. Develop strategic messaging.
  - Could have a regional open space investment district.
  - The notion of partnerships is a strong strategy. Coordinate with nonprofits (6.1.7). Pursue partnerships to get beyond business as usual.
  - Use “should” rather than “can” to make the strategy stronger. This could be a question for the GMPB and RSC.
  - Can these be incorporated into the MPPs? Who provides leadership on this? Make this a living document.
  - Can make a political push to tie 6.1.1 to affordable housing and equity. Make the connections to all important issues explicit. Need to connect to MPPs and RGS and health benefits of open space.
  - A sub-strategy could be to work with legislative leaders on new tools for new funding.
  - Tracy can help with messaging on how open space supports livability. Do livability index?
  - We should think of this work in terms of paying it forward for future generations. Add a text box on Forward Thrust. The King Co Land Conservation Initiative has some similar language.
- Strategy 2:
  - Using the phrase “support growth in the right places” is more positive.
  - Fourth bullet: Seek a level of protection by designating high value conservation lands.
  - The idea of leaving a legacy will resonate well with tribes. Develop this concept.
  - Keeping land available for farmers is a positive message.
  - The cost of housing is a driver for greenfield development. Look at this at a regional scale.
  - Watershed characterization helps identify land to develop with lowest impacts to ecosystem services.
- Strategy 3:
  - Emphasize corridors and connectivity in strategy 3.
  - Add more about the positive side of acquisition-where would use land acquisition.
- Strategy 4:
  - Discuss the whole economy of farm and forestry sectors. They are economic clusters, and need lots of support.
  - Many managers of working lands find change hard. There hasn’t been a change in the Forest Rules for 10 years. Farmers and foresters need to feel supported, and government needs to show that they are valued.
  - Improving agriculture viability will help.
  - Preventing conversion of farmland is a key strategy, and there is a real urgency. Highest level of urgency.
  - Call out purchase of development rights (PDR) separately from TDR.
  - Highlight new farmers’ needs: new farmers and foresters will have affordability problem to buy land, even with protection.
- Strategy 5:
  - Underscore new tools. For example, the Forest Service has a shared stewardship program to recognize and protect source water on its land.

- Landowners want to do the right thing. Doing a sub-basin assessment tool could help identify practices, but may need assistance.
- Need more resources for Conservation Districts.
- The farm community is interested in ecosystem services, especially stormwater.
- Rain garden programs have had success. Could do a similar program for conservation. Look at your stormwater footprint (voluntary program to offset your stormwater footprint).
- Bulkheads are a similar example-landowners need assistance.
- Strategy 6:
  - What entity will do regional coordination?
  - Need to fund time for partners to sit at the table.
- Strategy 7:
  - Add “nonprofits” to strategy.
  - There is a lack of congruity between GMA and SMA. Shoreline plans rarely look at comp plans. Hard for cities to accomplish much with CAOs. Need legislation to improve consistency.
  - Need stewardship framework organization because there are sometimes overlapping and sometimes conflicting efforts.
  - Sono can provide language on harmonizing regulations.
- Strategy 8:
  - Establish priorities for communities with low access.
  - Can look at equity in different ways: income vs. recreational use. We are focusing on cultural and socioeconomic. Provide access regardless of income and race.
  - Parks don’t compete directly with housing, revise language in strategy (such as increase density). There are also stormwater and other benefits.
  - New parks can enable and attract higher density. South Lake Union now has a park, for example.
- Strategy 9:
  - Coordinate among jurisdictions for watershed-wide solutions.
  - Can look at different types of infrastructure: river trails, parks, etc. Broaden-out language.
  - Add bullet: provide support for nonprofits to do these projects (Earthcorps)

#### **Comments on Chapter 7 Implementing the Action Plan**

- Illuminate opportunities for partners such as Emerald Alliance.
- Highlight coordination with Puget Sound Partnership.
- Could add diagram of relationships with various groups.
- Call out King County Land Conservation Initiative. Look at recommendations from advisory group.
- Long-term goal split by open space category. Explain what it is in human terms (viable ag, food security, fill access gaps)
- How pay for it? Return on investment analysis.
- Will the job be finished?
- Framing the issue: Communicate the problem, urgency, solution and how others can help.
- Look at trends: losing farmland, etc.
- Add call to action
- Add next steps for funding: land acquisition and conservation easements, etc.

#### **4) General Discussion**

- Outreach: reach out to Master Builders, build partnerships (could be an ally)
- Ask county staff how to reach out to key people and diverse stakeholders: farmers, foresters, recreational groups, etc.
- Talk to ULI

- Long-term outreach important too

5) **Next steps for committee.**

- Erika asked the group to review the chapters and send comments by December 20. Sending comments either in writing or through a call is fine.
- Erika will send the Executive Summary to the committee. Please send comments on the Executive Summary to Erika by January 3.
- Erika sent an email summarizing these next steps and added the general questions that we didn't have time to discuss. Sending thoughts on those by January 3d is also appreciated.

**Questions:** Contact Erika Harris at (206) 464-6360 or [eharris@psrc.org](mailto:eharris@psrc.org) or Maria Sandercock at (206) 971-3298 or [msandercock@psrc.org](mailto:msandercock@psrc.org).