

Building Cities in the Rain
Working Group
March 31, 2015
Meeting Summary

Participants: Bob Vadas, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (by phone); Bruce Wulkan, Puget Sound Partnership (by phone); Larry Schaffner, Thurston County (by phone); Phyllis Varner, City of Bellevue (by phone); Scott Stolnack, WRIA 8/King County; Erika Harris, Puget Sound Regional Council; De'Sean Quinn, South Central LIO; Dan Gariepy, Abbey Stockwell and Anne Dettelbach, Department of Ecology; Heather Trim, Futurewise; Andy Rheame, City of Redmond;; John Lenth, Herrera; Anthony Boscolo and Heather Ballash, Washington State Department of Commerce.

Draft Prioritization Process for Flow Control

The group continued the discussion of a process for prioritization of watersheds for flow control transfers. The group agreed that:

- The guidance shouldn't use the term "phasing" because it could be confused with the Phase I and Phase II permits. Use the term Level 1 screen, or step, etc. Folks will think about other terms that might be most useful. An introductory paragraph in the guidance will explain the function of the levels for purposes of prioritization. (Erika noted we also had trouble with the term screen because people thought of it as screening out. Step is probably safer.)
- Level 1 evaluation should be a "preponderance of the evidence", rather than a determination of whether a watershed is in or out of the prioritization for retrofits. It was noted that Redmond does not leave any watershed out - its prioritization simply determined which watersheds will be retrofitted first. The group noted that while Level 1 is not limited to fish use, it is likely to be the highest beneficial use in urban areas. Using a case study to explain this would be helpful.
- There should be two levels of process, not three - levels 2 and 3 from the meeting handout should be combined.
- Level 1 is not a higher priority than Level 2, they are just different steps in the process. The goal is to make the process easier by providing an analytical tool.
- The group will need to go back and look at possibly including other beneficial uses besides fish use (e.g., recreational use or shellfish harvest). However, it was noted that in urban areas fish use is the probably the highest beneficial use.

Level 1: Fish Use – Biological conditions and potential for lift: can support actual or potential fish use

- Presence of culverts or other barriers, including natural barriers
- Tree canopy/condition of buffer, with the provision that these may be considered at Level 2.
- BIBI
- Known water quality impairment- 303 listings and TMDLs, or low instream flows

Level 2: Flow control opportunities

- Physical flow control
 - Percentage of impervious area/land cover
 - Age and condition of infrastructure
 - Jurisdictional influence, within jurisdictional control
 - Ripeness to proceed (local knowledge, aligns with programs such as tree planting, capital improvement plan, etc.)
 - Watershed area data (inside vs. outside jurisdictional boundaries)

- Coordination with state, regional and local plans
 - Comprehensive plans and zoning – potential for growth
 - Salmon recovery plans (3-year workplans, WRIA priorities)
 - TMDL plans (active and planned)
 - Regional ecosystem goals, e.g. BIBI

Other notes:

- The guidance needs to take a pragmatic approach. If it is too stringent local governments will not want to participate. For example, Tukwila is built out so there is less opportunity with creeks. The Shoreline Master Program had take back some buffers and then explain it to citizens. Local governments need to have a reason to try this type of program.
- It was suggested that high integrity places with potential for flow restoration be included. However, Ecology noted that flow restoration is tricky. Cities and counties should try to address it with low impact development. If are discharging into salt water, flow control is exempt under the permit. If are putting flow into a stream, it can be problematic.
- It was also suggested that guarding against erosive forces, bank erosion and stabilization, should be another consideration.
- New operating assumptions:
 - Every jurisdiction needs to prioritize based on local conditions. The screens/levels are a starting point. They just need to explain their prioritization process.
 - Programs should focus on streams with middle conditions (not high quality and not low quality) with the most opportunity for environmental lift.
- New bicycle rack issue: The guidance has to say that it is a “meaningful” amount of environmental improvement. The group will come back to this issue after the guidance has been drafted to see if it has been addressed.

Watershed Prioritization Criteria Review – Runoff Treatment

The group went back through the attached prioritization worksheet to decide the prioritization status for runoff treatment – see the attached prioritization worksheet. The group started talking about whether toxics should be added to the list of prioritization data for runoff treatment. There was some initial discussion as follows:

- Toxic controls should be transferred from like land use to like land use. For example, toxic controls should not be transferred from an industrial area to a forested area with no toxic runoff.
- There was a question as to whether this is a transferable control. E.g., cannot transfer Superfund or TMDL.
- How do you decide when toxics monitoring is required?
- The goal, as in the flow control discussion, is net environmental gain. The group will need to discuss how this works with toxics.

The meeting end time came, and it was agreed that this needed to be a topic for the next meeting.

Next meeting topics

- Should transfer of toxic controls be addressed in the guidance?
- Discussion of the article on toxicology – Heather B. will resend to the group.
- Other data missing from the runoff treatment data?
- Update on the Ecology guidance on stormwater control transfer programs.

Next meeting dates:

- April 20, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., City of Tacoma Central Wastewater Treatment Facility
- May 11, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle
- May 20, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., City of Tacoma Central Wastewater Treatment Facility
- June 1, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle