

Building Cities in the Rain
Working Group
June 8, 2015
Meeting Summary

Participants:

Phyllis Varner, City of Bellevue; Andy Rheame, City of Redmond; Bruce Wulkan, Puget Sound Partnership (by phone); Dan Gariepy, Abbey Stockwell, and Anne Dettelbach, Ecology; Erika Harris, Reid Haefer and Mori Wellner, Puget Sound Regional Council, Scott Stolnack, WRIA 8; Dana deLeon, City of Tacoma; Heather Trim, Futurewise; Doug Navetski, King County; Kerry Ritland, City of Issaquah; John Palmer, EPA; and Heather Ballash and Lynn Kohn, Washington State Department of Commerce.

Overview and discussion of Preliminary Draft of Prioritization Guidance:

Heather Ballash did a brief overview and explanation of the draft guidance. The group then discussed and provided comments on the guidance as follows.

“Receiving waterbody/watershed/waters”

It was pointed out that the guidance needs to recognize receiving waterbodies as well as receiving watersheds. The term “receiving waterbody or receiving waters” is defined in the permit as follows:

Receiving waterbody or receiving waters means naturally and/or reconstructed naturally occurring surface water bodies, such as creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries, and marine waters, or ground water, to which a MS4 discharges. (See Phase I and Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit Definitions)

A watershed describes an area of land from which all of the water that is on or under it drains to the same place. [This particular definition was not discussed in the meeting, but is provided here for clarification.] A waterbody is the waters within that geographic area to which the waters drain. The distinctions will need to be clearly defined in the guidance. However, scale is an issue that will be difficult to define. Local governments need flexibility to establish a scale informed by the size and extent of receiving waters in their jurisdiction – e.g. may only have the headwaters in a city.

The group agreed to use the two terms “receiving waterbody or receiving waters” together consistently throughout the document.

Scale of watershed

The group discussed what the scale of a watershed or area should be. Some expressed a concern that a receiving watershed (or the total area of receiving watersheds) not be too small compared to the sending watershed(s). Others did not think this was an issue. It was noted that it is hard to match up the size of individual watersheds – you may have two or three sending watersheds and one receiving watershed.

The real concern, however, may be reach length/area. The recent Salmon Recovery Conference focused on acreage of habitat (in a creek). However, it was noted that what is meaningful is impact and not size. The group was also reminded of the importance of abundance and productivity, which are not related to acreage.

It was noted that 70% of Redmond's watersheds are "sending" and 30% are "receiving." Without some concentration, the environmental benefits will not be realized. The goal is to try and restore salmon habitat more quickly. However, the Regional Growth Centers are concentrated areas with relatively little stream habitat. It should be a good sell to the environmental community because the impacts of growth are being limited to a specific area.

Opening paragraphs – Overview and Purpose of the Guidance

The guidance should note that a stormwater transfer control program creates an opportunity to contain the growth and provide environmental lift. One way to do this is to talk about balancing pressure and desire to increase infill development with the challenge of meeting stormwater and broader environmental objectives. Ecology's guidance talks about accelerating environmental benefit. Discussion of the high cost of stormwater management in this guidance should be revised to focus on the benefit of cost effectiveness. Then explain that the Ecology guidance is well suited for urban centers that impact small segments of water bodies. The tone should be changed regarding the impacts of stormwater regulations in urban areas. Sell this program as a win/win.

Other overall comments

- Tighten up and recast Section C to focus solely on how a stormwater control transfer program can help meet these regulatory requirements and targets. Maybe put some of it in an appendix. Start this section with salmon recovery and talk about the permit last.
- Use side boxes for examples (e.g., Redmond, Kitsap)
- Need to be clear about the audience – just planners, or also stormwater managers? Section C for planners and Section D for prioritization? [Note: The Ecology guidance is written for a more technical audience.]
- This is a how to document, not a marketing piece.
- Will need a two pager for marketing. Cities have been prioritizing streams (and watersheds) for a long time. But it has not been tied to stormwater management. This is a new tool that connects the two, and could bring stormwater into the salmon world.
- Add "Recommended" to title of Table 1 "Local Prioritization Data Recommended for Flow Control, Runoff Treatment, and Onsite Management (LID)"

LID transfers

The group agreed that the guidance should address prioritization data for LID transfers. Note that the same data would be used for LID that is used for prioritization for flow control transfers. Add "LID" to the Flow Control columns.

How does this guidance fit with the Ecology guidance?

The data table and "Steps" should be in both guidance documents. Ecology is open to recommendations of what should be included in its guidance. There should be references and links between the two documents. The group requested a second chance to review the Ecology document. Ecology has not yet discussed that option.

Next Steps

Heather B will incorporate comments received at the meeting and send another draft out to the Work Group by June 30 for written comment. Written comments from the Group will be due by July 31. In the meantime, Ecology will convene the group to work on Table 1. The written comments and work with

Ecology will be incorporated into another draft. The Group will meet in September to review and finalize that draft for public comment.

Next meeting date:

- To be determined – Ecology will convene the group in Heather B's absence to finalize Table 1 and the prioritization process in the draft guidance.