

Climate Impact Advisory Committee

Special Meeting Minutes

Date: March 18th, 2021

Location: Zoom



QUORUM	Y
Members Present	
William Bethel	X
Ginny Broadhurst	
Kaylee Galloway	X
Sue Gunn	X
Steve Harrell	X
David Kershner	X
Katherine Kissinger	X
Ellyn Murphy	X
Imran Sheikh	X
Phil Thompson	X
Eddy Ury	X
STAFF Chris Elder	X

1) Call to Order

- Meeting started at 6:30pm

Public in attendance:

Jack Willman: PSE

Carryn Vande Griend: PSE

David Hostetler

Hunter Hassig

2) Natural Resources Strategies and Actions (Water Resources & Ecosystems) – Chris Elder, Katie Kissinger

The first presentation was by **Chris Elder** on the Water Resources Strategies and Actions

(slide 2) Overview of Land Use and Natural Resource Goals

(slide 3) water resources specific goal: addressing the impacts of climate change on water resources specifically in relation to quality, quantity, storm surge, sea level rise, floodplain and stormwater management.

(slide 4) strategies relating to water supply, streamflow, demand, and floodplain management

(slide 5) strategies relating to flood risk, stormwater management, and climate resilience

(slide 6) water resource actions to resolve uncertainty around water rights.

- water rights resolution based on climate-based predictions of water supply
- monitoring water use
- smart metering
- connecting wellhead houses to water systems

(slide 7) actions to help streamflow

- projects to increase streamflow
- wetland restoration
- protection of headwaters

(slide 8) actions to reduce demand on water

- outreach and education
- drought tolerant landscaping
- ag. Drainage management
- revise codes and provide incentives for more efficient irrigation

(slide 9) actions to address water supply

- reuse in wastewater treatment
- rainwater harvesting
- reverse osmosis for desalination

(slide 10) actions to promote resilient floodplains

- planning and management focused around potential climate change scenarios to minimize risk
- educate landowners of the climate change risks of developing in the floodplain

(slide 11) actions relating to reducing flood risk in rivers

- channel migration zones to accommodate increasing peak flow levels
- reconnecting floodplains
- incorporate sea level rise into flood zone designations
- identify infrastructure likely to be impacted by increased flooding

(slide 12) actions to reduce flood risk

- infrastructure
- examine ongoing repairs to highlight problem areas that may need immediate attention
- acquire properties currently in the floodplain
- managed retreat planning

(slide 13) actions around stormwater

- future climate scenarios in management
- retrofitting stormwater flow control
- incentives to expand green stormwater projects

(slide 14) actions to build resilience

- increase restoration efforts
- fish passage

(slide 15) map of western Whatcom county

Chris mentioned integrating our strategies and actions with things that the county is already doing

Ellyn asked about the actions that are already being done and she suggested things in the text to be what is being done and suggesting actions as what is not being done

Chris said that he is adding background about the watershed mgmt. board has done over the past 20 years. He said that the wording of the actions can still be edited to convey what is already being done vs what is a new suggestion

Steve asked about metering and adjudication, if we are going to take a position on it?

Chris said that the Exec. Is taking a neutral position on adjudication

Steve asked about people whose property is affected by some of these strategies. Will there be compensation for these people

Chris yes, these things will require a negotiation with property owners and the county.

Steve said he agreed with Ellyn's comment of referencing the actions currently being taken by the county

Phil asked about some of the actions and the context in which they occur? What does that include, like code changes etc. He said there should be more clarity in the actions. He also asked about the river corridor and what the definition of that is?

Chris said that he could better define that, but this language was written by Treva. He said that the Channel Migration Zone is a better way to word this action.

The second presentation was on the Ecosystems section by **Katie Kissinger**

(slide 2) the ecosystems section has 11 strategies that are broken into categories for implementation purposes

Education & Outreach

1. Support community efforts to adapt to climate change
2. Increase awareness of ecosystem services
3. Restoring and protecting degraded lands and habitats

Planning & Development

4. Incorporate climate change projections and risks into new projects

(slide 3)

Research and Monitoring

5. Implement long-term monitoring of climate trends.
6. Improve the health of natural ecosystems for parks, ROW, and other County properties.

Regulations

6. Protect vulnerable areas within the ecosystem
7. Regulate zoning

(slide 4)

Programmatic and Management

9. Restore hydrologic processes throughout the watershed
10. Preserving areas of ecological value that store carbon
11. Improve air and water quality

(slide 5) actions to support community efforts

- working with local organizations that are already doing this work
- reach out to neighborhoods for community engagement
- expanding county-sponsored programs

(slide 6) actions around ecosystem services and restoring degraded lands

- education and outreach about ecosystem services
- restoration crews
- habitat enhancement

(slide 7) actions to incorporate climate change projections and risks into new projects

- vulnerability assessments
- public works planning
- critical areas ordinance
- fish and wildlife habitat conservation
- climate impact zones and geohazard zones

(slide 8) action examples around implementing climate monitoring and improving ecosystem health on county properties.

- monitoring critical areas
- assessing the health of parks and county properties
- restoration strategies to manage trees

Phil in Zoom chat: ROW = Rights of Way?

Chris in Zoom chat: Correct

(slide 9) actions to protect vulnerable areas

- expand protected areas
- protecting wetlands, riparian areas, and buffer zones
- protect and restore mature forests

Hunter Hassig in Zoom chat: I love 7.3 somewhat selfishly :)

(slide 10) action examples to regulate zoning and restore hydrologic processes throughout the watershed.

- maintain low-density zoning for areas adjacent to high-value habitats
- designate growth areas in locations that won't have a large impact on connected native vegetation.
- drainage management
- restoring floodplains
- floodplain connectivity and flood storage

William in Zoom chat: Maybe about development instead of zoning?

(slide 11) actions for preserving carbon stores, and improving air/ water quality

- soils, wetlands, trees
- wildfire management
- kelp forests

Dave asked about zoning regulation and if there was a better way to word it. He suggested revising or updating zoning regulations.

Kaylee asked if the zoning stuff should be in land use rather than ecosystems

Dave said that it is relevant to ecosystems, but that we should be using consistent language throughout the report

Katie said that she was wondering about some of the actions in her section being relevant to land use but that since ecosystems is so connected to everything, they seemed relevant enough to keep them in the ecosystems section. She said she would revise her language to be consistent with what is written in the land use section.

Dave in Zoom chat: Because zoning pertains to land uses in addition to development, I think “revising zoning” or “modifying zoning” are more appropriate terms than “regulating development,” which is narrower.

Kaylee in Zoom chat: I phrased my goal as “Revise land use policies and regulations...” then my NR strategy is “Strengthen zoning codes and regulations to limit development in sensitive areas and high ecological value lands such as riparian corridors, floodplains, shorelines, forestry, and agricultural lands that are not part of the urban growth area”

Sue suggested regulating development rather than regulate zoning

Dave said that revise or update zoning might be better received

Chris said that Dave’s suggestion seemed on track

Steve asked about how the ecosystems section ties into the rest of the report and the natural resources section. He asked if ecosystems was the best title for the section. He said that this section tries to tie in the rest of the chapters in the natural resources section

Katie said that ecosystems is at the end of the chapter and mentioned that William had made a similar suggestion in regards to renaming the ecosystems chapter earlier in the week.

William said that after reading the ecosystems draft and suggested that it could be clearer to readers if instead of ecosystems, we rename the section to be natural areas. Areas that gain value from ecosystem services and not through human development

Ellyn asked if there is a definition for the county on critical ecosystems

Chris said in the zoning code there are critical areas, there are five designated areas, one of them is habitat conservation areas. He said that we need to make sure we are not excluding areas that are not already identified by the county from protection in this document. He said that the terms of ecological connectivity or ecosystem integrity are more inclusive.

Steve suggested renaming the section Ecological Integrity

Phil said that there needs to be more specificity in the actions and suggesting things that could be taken over by the proposed office of climate action

Katie said that she is working on adding detail to the section

William in Zoom chat: Out of curiosity, how many sections have a suggestion for community outreach and education?

Phil in Zoom chat: Most, probably. We have at least two actions that use those terms.

Steve in Zoom chat: @william: that’s a major section in the Implementation chapter, and I’m going to ask the authors of all the natural and built environment sections to suggest specific examples.

Ellyn asked about ecosystem health in neighborhoods.

Katie mentioned the rain-gardens in Bellingham and greenery strips alongside roads. Also looking into canopy cover in neighborhoods where people live.

Sue brought up watershed rules and how many people who live in the watershed don’t comply with those rules. For example, not using nitrogenous fertilizers.

Katie agreed that was an excellent suggestion and also brought up a previous bus campaign that had posters encouraging pet owners to clean up after their pets on trail to prevent fecal coliform bacteria from being introduced into our water supply

Ellyn suggested that plots be set aside for specific monitoring and having areas be set up for that purpose. As a way to get more specific actions

Katie said that WSDOT has wetland plots that they monitor for a ten-year period that they acquire near roadways and measure ecosystem health with cover, density, and survivability of the plants in the wetlands. She said she could add an action that sets up a similar program with county managed properties

Steve suggested some kind of action that would encourage property owners to plant more native plants on their property. He said that there was a certification for having a

Katie said that she could definitely add something about pollinator friendly yards.

Kaylee in Zoom chat: Whatcom conservation district might be a good resource to discuss native plants with

Eddy in Zoom chat: Excellent work, props Katie!

Hunter Hassig in Zoom chat: Thanks for your hard work Katie

3) Status of Draft Climate Action Plan Chapters & Reviews – All

Ellyn proposed an outline structure and asked for comments on it. She highlighted the waste category and that 1% of our county's emissions

As for the structure of the chapters there are two main sections the main text and the appendix

The main text will consist of an

1. introduction,
2. background info.
3. goals and strategies. There will be a table of strategies with a description in the text of how the strategy will achieve the overall goal.

The appendix will have:

1. a timeline for the actions
2. how the actions will be measured if they are measurable. What data is needed
3. who is responsible for each action?
4. a text description of the actions and how they will be implemented and how success will be measured.

Ellyn said that the strategy table might be moved to the appendix.

The audience of the CAP:

Main text: for the general public, stakeholders, govt. entities, funding sources

Appendices: county staff, businesses involved in implementation

Ellyn said that Chris suggested releasing the appendices as a separate implementation plan for specifically the county staff

Ellyn suggested a timeline and discussed possible placement ideas and where it might be most useful in the report. She said that in the implementation section being written by Steve that we could have a short-term timeline of the most urgent actions to be taken in the next couple years.

Ellyn reviewed some specifics that Steve needs from the rest of the committee involved in writing the various sections is

- *Data (information) management*, what data is needed to measure the actions that is not currently available
- *Financing strategies*, potential funding sources
- *Timeline*, key actions that need to start in the next 3 years.
- *Community engagement*

Steve wanted to add that if there are any suggestion for community engagement to let him know. He also said that we could expand data in this context to also include information including crucial qualitative information that is important.

Ellyn suggested an amended schedule to allow for more time to get the chapters done

April 9th: deliverables to Steve

April 16th: all draft chapters to text editor

April 30th: Draft to county leadership

Phil said that the schedule seems doable for the transportation group

Kaylee asked about what the role of the climate office supposed to be vs our role as volunteers.

Steve said that he sent a new draft in the implementation group and that it provides a provisional answer to her question

Ellyn said that we are just putting forth our best suggestions but that it may or may not be implemented by the council

Phil said that we should just think about what needs to go into implementing our actions and to give it our best effort.

Kaylee said that she is not sure about what is required for county actions

Phil said that we shouldn't be spending too much time worrying about details of county implementation because that is the job of the county staff.

Steve said that our role is that of science-based advocacy to give the best recommendations to the council.

Phil said that we can just do our best to provide recommendations and then we can continue to advocate for our plan to ensure it doesn't just collect dust on a shelf

Ellyn said that we can get feedback from reviewers and we might need to start calling them to get their input

Chris said that our best bet for success in implementation is to further empower the county to do things that they are already doing and build upon those basic programs

Eddy commented about the workplan timeline and that our plan will be competing for attention with the cherry point amendments and shoreline master program.

William in Zoom chat: If anyone wants a map type graphic, I'd be willing to put it together for you

Dave in Zoom chat: There is also the question of how much the public can handle at once. Some interested groups may not have the bandwidth to carefully review the SMP and the climate action plan at the same time.

Chris agreed with Eddy that there are some big projects coming up for council and that he will ask about the timeline with his Climate group of county staffers. He also mentioned that Exec. Sidhu was pushing for us to present in June

Eddy asked what the role of the committee will be after the CAP

Steve said that will be discussed in his section

9) Old/New Business, Adjourn

- Meeting ended 8:00pm

Next meeting scheduled for April 1, 2021

Recorded By: Katherine Kissinger, contact kissinger.katherine@gmail.com for edits to the draft.

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