

LAKE BALLINGER/MCALEER CREEK WATERSHED FORUM MINUTES

Remote meeting via videoconference (Zoom)

February 15, 2022 2PM to 3:00 PM

Call to Order

Chair, Steve Woodard called the Lake Ballinger Forum Meeting to order at 2:00pm

I. Roll Call - Welcome and Introductions

- a. Approval/updates today's agenda
- b. Approval of minutes from December 14, 2021 meeting

Attendees:

- Steve Woodard – Councilmember, Forum Chair, Mountlake Terrace
- Jeff Johnson – Mayor, Lake Forest Park
- Diane Buckshnis – Councilmember, Edmonds
- Tracy Furutani, Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
- Keith Scully – Mayor, Shoreline
- Eric LaFrance – PW Director, Mountlake Terrace
- Laura Reed – Stormwater Program Manager, Mountlake Terrace
- Philip Hill – City Administrator, Lake Forest Park
- Kari Quaas – Community Engagement Manager, Snohomish Conservation District
- Zack Richardson – Surface Water Engineer II, Shoreline
- Jeff Betz – Rec & Parks Director, Mountlake Terrace
- Patrick Johnson – Stormwater Technician, Edmonds
- Jake Johnston – Johnston Group, LLC
- Warren McAndrews – Edmonds Resident
- Julie Rose – Edmonds Resident
- Andrew Silvia – Lake Forest Park Project Manager

II. Lake Ballinger high water levels

Patrick Johnson – Stormwater Technician, Edmonds updated the Forum pertaining to the water level in Lake Ballinger, he displayed a gauge from the Edmonds webpage showing the water level elevation during 2021-2022 winter storms. During the holiday snow event, precipitation froze, then melted and increased the lake level, which rose approximately 30 inches within the week. This caused Edmonds and Mountlake Terrace residents to experience high water levels on the lake, and some flooding due to the high level rain fall and snow. He shared pictures from the south end of the lake from local residents of lake flooding. He also showed a picture of a property closest to the lake (uninhabited) and mentioned that the City of Edmonds is looking into demolishing the building reconstructing the area for a green space.

Patrick remarked that lake level rise is a constant issue every winter.

Diane Buckshnis – Councilmember, Edmonds questioned if there is weir issue that’s causing the flooding, or anything that can be done or help with the flooding.

Laura Reed – Stormwater Program Manager, Mountlake Terrace
Responded that the issue of whether the weir was holding back water from the lake was examined by the Army Corp of Engineers back in 2010, and they reported that physically removing the weir would only affect the Lake by 0.1 of a foot. Even if the weir was completely taken out, what is controlling the lake level is the 1-5 culvert.

Zack Richardson – Surface Water Engineer II, Shoreline – remarked that WSDOT will have to replace the I-5 culvert.

Warren McAndrews – Edmonds resident, commented that from his research he understands that WSDOT has to replace three of the culverts with a larger pipe across I-5 and the designs process will start in 2023, with construction projected to start in 2025.

III. Review of Lake Ballinger Forum’s work plan

Laura Reed, Stormwater Program Manager, discussed a list of projects that have benefit for the watershed.

Current Forum Work Plan

- Develop hydraulic & hydrologic model from Hall Lake to Lake Ballinger (Hall Creek model to be funded by MLT in 2022)
- Ballinger Park Hall Creek Restoration Project (USACE & MLT – at 95% design phase; construction in 2023)
- Mathay - Ballinger Regional Infiltration Facility Project (Edmonds- planning phase)
- Lake Ballinger Aquatic Weed Control (MLT & Edmonds; Ecology grant will be funded in 2022)

IV. Federal funding landscape

Jake Johnston – Johnston Group, commented on the Federal funding options that are obtainable for the Forum. He focused on “what tools would be available to the Forum and what tools have changed over the past few years.” He stated if the Forum has projects that fit into the habitat restoration category, new tools can be deployed. He expressed that over the last few years there has been a radical reprioritization of watershed improvements relating to federal and state funding priorities. Part of that is the emphasis on culvert fish barrier removal that’s happened in the state of Washington. He remarked that there is a renewed focus on the types of issues that benefit watershed management.

- 1.) Congress has reinstated its ability to do directive funding. Within the FY22 development there is a limited number of grant opportunities. Congress is taking 1/2 of 1% from certain Federal discretionary grant accounts and determining where projects should go, through an open and competitive process. This would be a great opportunity to get a relatively low federal investment with very low federal oversight.

Grants are generally between \$1 million to \$3 million in scope, and they represent roughly 50% of the total cost of a project. However, if the Forum is looking for assistance to complete a project, or is challenged by a funding gap and isn't using other sources of Federal money, this process is an excellent tool to explore.

- 2.) FY23 ear marking process is not yet opened, but expected to open mid-March with applications due towards the end of April (timelines are estimated).
- 3.) The **Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill** was enacted in the fall of last year, and it has done some distinctive things, some are material for the Forum to consider as it looks through it projects.
 - a.) A new program (led by Congressman Rick Larson and Senator Maria Cantwell) which the Forum has been advocating for many years, has been "authorized." It's the first time a brand new Culvert Replacement Program was created and it has received authorization for over the next five years at \$750 million annually. This is a top priority of the Forum's delegation, and it's to be used as a federal match for some of the efforts taking place locally. It can also be used to augment what is happening in Washington, with the renewed emphasis on funding made available for these types of watershed replacement projects. This is a great new federal program. However there's a downside to federal projects, and not a lot yet about administering the program has been revealed. But it's an opportunity for the Forum to make their voice heard, and to take a hard look and shape the program as a useful tool for the Forum.
 - b.) Two federal programs that could be applicable tools to support with south end flooding on the Lake Ballinger.
 1. Property Acquisition Funding through FEMA – if the land needs to be acquired there is Federal money that could assist with this on a relatively accessible basis.
 2. Within the Infrastructure Bill Program there is a radical increase in funding for a \$1 billion annualized grant program (Administered by the Department of Interior) competitive grant program only for municipalities. It is a water storage and conveyance infrastructure program. If water storage capacity is part of the plan for lake flooding management, this maybe another opportunity available for the Forum.

Diane Buckshnis – Councilmember, Edmonds asked if there is anyone reaching out on how to determine whether the Forum can be fast tracked on getting the culverts done, has anyone reached out to federal legislatures.

Jake Johnston – Johnston Group, replied that the Forum as an entity and its members as individual municipalities have been having a good conversation with the delegation for a number of years, which has led to the federal funding opportunity to solve this problem. The first action to begin with is identifying projects that need to be funded. The second goal was to setup Federal funding opportunities in a way that makes them useful to the Forum.

V. On-going watershed planning efforts

Laura Reed – Stormwater Program Manager, Mountlake Terrace – Expressed that Ecology is requiring that all jurisdictions above a certain population size in western Washington do an in-depth watershed inventory and complete data collection to be turned in by end of March 2022. Laura stated that she is looking specifically at Hall, McAleer and Lyons Creek watersheds in terms of which basin will be selected for future stormwater investment. Currently, Hall Creek is at the top of her list.

Zack Richardson – Surface Water Engineer II, Shoreline commented that McAleer Creek is a basin that will progress to the next stage of City of Shoreline’s data analysis. However, Boeing Creek is a strong candidate for stormwater investment because it’s entirely in the Shoreline jurisdiction. No final decision has been made as of yet.

Patrick Johnson – Stormwater Technician, Edmonds stated that Edmonds completed their data collection process and public outreach process, and are waiting for the final survey results to come in. Lake Ballinger, the Halls Creek basin are potential basins, as well as the Edmonds Marsh, and the Shell/Hindley Creek watershed.

Andrew Silvia – Lake Forest Park Project Manager, commented that the City of Lake Forest Park watershed inventory is being created by a consultant. They are prioritizing and honing in on which watershed is the best candidate for future stormwater management action efforts.

VI. Forum Support for 25th Ave NE/Ballinger Creek Project

Keith Scully – Mayor, Shoreline commented that the 25th Ave NE/Ballinger Creek area is not within the same watershed that feeds Lake Ballinger and it’s not technically within the Forum jurisdiction. The site is an old maintenance yard inherited from King County along with arch-shaped an undersized concrete pipe that goes under the road and carries the creek. This site is a prime example of something done wrong to the environment that the City of Shoreline is making an attempt to fix. The site has contaminated soil, a gas tank, and the creek is forced into a tiny little spot, with zero habitat. The City received funding from the voters to look at potential for restoration for the site and the park next to it, as a potential stormwater park. The City would

like to use this opportunity to restructure and incorporate some habitat enhancements.

The next phase of this project is to ask the Army Corp of Engineers for 100k to do a feasibility study. The City of Shoreline would like petition to the Forum and ask for a letter of support. This is intended to be a Shoreline, Army Corp of Engineers, and WDOT project for funding. Mayor Scully believes the support of the Forum is crucial because of its relationship with the Army Corp of Engineers and ultimately because the area in question is right next to Lake Ballinger and this project is similar to some of the others the Army Corp had ongoing with the Forum.

Zack Richardson, Surface Water Engineer II, Shoreline remarked that this is a really cool project. The project proposes approximately 1,500 feet of in-stream restoration, which starts at Brugger's Bog Park. Currently, the outlet of the creek is a zero-passage fish barrier - no fish are getting through. The plan is to develop roughly 600 feet of new daylighted stream channel, enhance habitat within 230 feet of new fish passable culvert, and restore floodplain within adjacent City properties. The project also includes repair of a failing WSDOT retaining wall adjacent to the lower stretches of creek.

Diane Buckshnis – Councilmember, Edmonds proposed a motion for the letter of support be composed by the Forum for the City of Shoreline's project, which was voted upon and received unanimous approval by the Forum.

VII. Announcements & Updates

Laura Reed, updated the Forum on the Lake Ballinger Ecosystem Restoration Project for Mountlake Terrace. She announced that work is at 95% design submittal stage and is undergoing formal review for permits and starting the contracting process. Earthwork on the project will begin 2023.

I-5 Culvert Replacement, WSDOT is currently gathering preliminary design information and design work will begin in 2023.

VIII. Public Comment

Warren McAndrews – Edmonds Resident, remarked that he continues to receive complaints about the glare from the fishing pier. He also spoke of lakeshore residents' concerns regarding a pontoon boat on Lake Ballinger, he wasn't sure if it was electric or gas powered, but it was throwing a huge wave around. The lake has a ban on internal-combustion engines, and he is asking whether it would be possible to add a no wake zone rule for these type of boats.

Jeff Betz – Rec & Parks Director, Mountlake Terrace, remarked that there are jurisdictional differences and code changes on Lake Ballinger concerning speed. In County code there is a maximum of 8 miles per hour speed limit on the lake (also applies to multiple lakes within the county.) The code for Edmonds indicates reasonable speed, do not disturb others, and for Mountlake Terrace there is no code. He said: "We are looking into who has the ability to make code changes but it will take some time."

Julie Rose – Edmonds Resident asked whether there were storage and conveyance opportunities provided by the Ballinger Park Hall Creek Restoration project. She asked if there were, if those project components could be added, since there is already funding.

Laura Reed – Stormwater Program Manager, Mountlake Terrace remarked that because of the type of funding through the Army Corp of Engineers for this project (habitat restoration only) adding flood storage not possible with this project.

Julie Rose – Edmonds Resident asked about public comment on the viewing platform on the northwest corner of the lake.

Jeff Betz – Rec & Parks Director, Mountlake Terrace – Viewing platform design hasn't started but it's anticipated to start this year. He said the process would involve public comment.

Jake Johnston – Johnston Group, commented that Rob Larson is pleased with the work between the Army Corp of Engineers and Mountlake Terrace.

IX. Determine Topics for next meeting

- Ways of increasing meeting announcements for more public input
- Possibility for WSDOT involvement in the Forum meetings. Warren said he would reach out to his contact at WSDOT regarding it.

X. Determine date and location of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on May 17, 2022 at 2:00 pm on Zoom.

XI. Adjournment – 3:23 p.m.