

**Whatcom County
Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee**

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010**



Committee Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, July 11, 2023
10:20 AM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 11:20 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON,
SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil,
OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 10:21 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, and Kaylee Galloway

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Carol Frazey, and Kathy Kershner

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2023-457](#) Presentation on the North Cascade Grizzly 10(j) population designation
Andrew LaValle, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), read from a presentation (on file) updating Councilmembers on the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process evaluating options for the restoration of grizzly bears to the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE). This is a joint effort between the National Park Service (NPS) and USFWS. He updated Councilmembers on the background of the process, the North Cascades grizzly population, the ongoing rule-making for the 10(j) Rule experimental population designation, and a timeline and next steps for this process.

He and the following people answered questions:

- Brad Thompson, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Ann Froschauer, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Jason Ransom, National Park Service (NPS)

They answered whether there are enough bears in other areas to be relocated here and how that would affect those other populations, why the process of ecosystem evaluation and reintroduction has failed in the past in this area and how they got to the point they are now with the two agencies, how the amount of habitat is calculated, why this pocket of habitat stops in Southern Washington if grizzlies have historically been way down into California, whether less dense areas in eastern and central Oregon or Northern California are being considered for being grizzly recovery areas, whether this has been done in other places in the United States that we could look to as a model or for what to expect, how we keep the bears inside of the perimeter they designate and what happens if they leave that area, and whether the habitat is as good as we think it might be if bears have

been here (as evidenced by DNA) and have chosen not to stay.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2023-423](#) Presentation on new grant funding for the Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program

Ingrid Enschede, Public Works Department, read from a presentation (on file) about the Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program's purpose, the work they do to protect shellfish-growing areas in our community and how the PIC program fits into that, an overview of PIC Program funding, the new grant, for the next round of funding, which will be presented to Council at the next Finance and Administrative Services meeting, and what the grant will be funding.

Galloway thanked her for the presentation.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2023-445](#) Discussion of the Whatcom County Coastal and Riverine Compound Flood Vulnerability and Risk Assessment

The following people read from a presentation (on file):

- Chris Elder, Public Works Department
- Lindsey Sheehan, Environmental Science Associates (ESA) Project Manager (hired to facilitate an assessment of what our potential sea level rise and compound flood vulnerabilities are)

Elder presented on a history of the project. Sheehan presented on an overview of the project and its phases, hazard mapping based on sea level rise scenarios and compound flooding from both sea level rise and higher river flow rates, a new web viewer to look at different scenarios in any given area, assessing vulnerability for the bay in Sandy Point and Birch Bay, adaptation strategies to improve the ability of an area to cope with the impacts of climate change, and next steps.

They answered what "RCP" stands for as it relates to greenhouse gas scenarios and what it means. They stated it stands for Representative Concentration Pathways and has to do with the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and the trajectory of emissions into the future. Sheehan answered what it means that the adaptive capacity of roads is high in Birch Bay and whether there is a sense of where people's homes are in relation to exposure to hazard, and stated they focused mostly on public infrastructure

as opposed to individual property owners.

Elder answered what the land use designation is for the dark blue area going inland on the Birch Bay hazard map on slide number 16. He stated there is some of this area that is slated for additional development but they are not quite prepared to fully dive into that today. He stated they would like to come back in the future to discuss some more of those kinds of nuts and bolts questions of where we go from here, but at this point they just wanted to give the big picture. Hopefully they can then have a more focused discussion on what needs to change. He spoke about a new grant being offered to help expand some of this vulnerability assessment to the entire coastal shoreline and incorporate some of the bluff erosion models as well, and he stated they have been working with the Whatcom County River and Flood Division to consider exploring a similar vulnerability risk assessment process up the Nooksack River. When they come back to Council they will be looking for guidance on what level of risk they should plan around as they move into adaptation planning.

Galloway stated she would like to schedule a follow-up to discuss the action items that were outlined and Elder stated they had already planned on coming back to Council once they have completed the application for the second grant opportunity.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Kaylee Galloway-via email 7/17/2023

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE