

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, June 6, 2023
9 AM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 10:10 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 9 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

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

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2023-379](#) Presentation on the Yakima River Basin adjudication

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

- Tom Tebb, Washington State Department of Ecology
- Danielle Squeochs, Yakama Nation
- Steve Malloch, consultant to American Rivers
- Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District
- Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation

Tebb presented on an overview of the Yakima River Basin, its tendency for drought conditions, its challenges in balancing needs for fishery recovery while preserving the agricultural economy, the elements and goals of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and its workgroup members, and Integrated Plan accomplishments between 2013 and 2022.

Squeochs spoke about ongoing work in the basin in the areas of habitat restoration, conservation of watershed land, and forest health and acquisitions, including the Teanaway Community Forest.

Malloch spoke about habitat projects including the Yakima Delta restoration, bull trout recovery, and the Nelson Dam removal.

Eberhart spoke about water supply reliability projects to help prepare for erratic weather conditions and the changing way they are receiving their water supply.

Christensen spoke about structural and operational improvements, including the Cle Elum pool raise and Cle Elum Dam fish passage projects.

The presenters closed the presentation by talking about the lessons they have learned about the importance of working together.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, thanked the presenters and stated they are a perfect example of what works and what does not work and that is something our community needs. He stated their efforts in sharing their process have been inspiring.

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed that the collaborative governance model can and does work, that getting everybody up to speed and aware of the issues in the basin helps build a firm foundation, the fact that there was more infrastructure in place in the Yakima Basin than we have in place here, how we get around the use it or lose it doctrine, how we get everyone on board to the thought that maybe moving into the future the best approach is going to be a tightly managed system as opposed to an unmanaged system, and whether any of the solutions happen with an adjudication process.

Squeochs stated the trust water rights system addresses concerns about use-it-or-lose-it and the core of findings solutions is to sit together in a room, really listen to what others need, and see if there is a shared approach that you can go through. The solutions may look different in this area than in the Yakima River Basin.

Malloch stated adjudication does not solve the problem but it provides a significant amount of the information and clarity needed to get to a solution, and Elenbaas asked whether a judge is the right one to be deciding that.

Squeochs stated that all of them fighting for forty years brought them to a point where they did not want to do it anymore and forced them to recognize that there was no solution in that pathway.

Galloway thanked the presenters.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Kaylee Galloway-via email 6/7/2023

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

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