

Building Cities in the Rain  
Working Group  
February 3, 2015  
Meeting Summary

Participants: Phyllis Varner, City of Bellevue; John Palmer, EPA; Andy Rheaume, City of Redmond; Dan Garipey, Ecology; Larry Schaffner, Thurston County; Anne Dettelbach, Ecology; Lorna Mauren and Dana de Leon, City of Tacoma; Heather Trim, Futurewise; Erika Harris, Puget Sound Regional Council (by phone); Bob Vadas, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (by phone); and Heather Ballash and Anthony Boscolo, Department of Commerce.

Futurewise project with Bellingham and Whatcom County

Futurewise has received a NOAA grant to work with Bellingham and Whatcom County on a green infrastructure watershed plan. It will focus on stormwater and water quality, habitat and wildlife corridors, and community assets in the Little Squalicum watershed. There will be a robust stakeholder process. The plan will be an appendix for the Bellingham comprehensive plan. They are looking at existing data and hope that this effort can be replicated elsewhere in Puget Sound. The work of the Building Cities in the Rain Work Group could help with this effort.

RFP for NEP Watershed Protection and Restoration Grants

The group was reminded about the recent issuance for an RFP for the next round of NEP Watershed grants. Applications are due April 20. A webinar was held last week by Ecology and Commerce that is available for viewing on the [Ecology NEP Watershed Protection and Restoration grant web site](#). Dan and Heather B. informed the group that a city that might want to explore a stormwater control transfer program will be eligible for grant funding. While the guidance this group is working on may or may not be available at the time applications are due, a city would have the benefit of Redmond's work as a basis for applying (since Ecology has already determined that what Redmond did is allowable under the current permit).

Local data for prioritizing watersheds – preliminary question of prioritization goals

The group asked to review the range of prioritization goals that might drive a program like the one being considered by BCitR. Members indicated that understanding the prioritization goal can inform a discussion of what data are needed to prioritize among watersheds. Several different possible goals were discussed:

For the City of Redmond, the goal was restoring watersheds with the highest potential for successful restoration. This set of watersheds does not represent pristine watersheds but rather watersheds that have been impacted and present significant opportunities for ecological lift.

The Ecology guidance focuses on areas that are expected to respond quickly to rehabilitation efforts (e.g., environmental potential + impairment). These are not the most degraded watersheds and not pristine watersheds. Ecology shared a list of prioritization principles that it asks program participants to consider: higher priority for (1) watersheds with low to moderate impacts, (2) where the municipality can exert influence, and (3) where regional rehabilitation efforts are underway or focused. Because restoration will be very expensive, it will be important to take an economic look, to be strategic and find areas with the opportunity for more environmental lift.

King County's program focuses on restoring the most heavily impacted watersheds first.

Larry noted that establishing an appropriate prioritization goal was the first discussion that WSDOT had. Their goal is consistent with Redmond's and took a conservation biology approach. WSDOT's "urban fringe" criterion for prioritizing road segments for retrofit included those areas that were undeveloped/underdeveloped areas within designated Urban Growth boundaries. The purpose of that criteria is to protect the the receiving waters in good shape and enhance those relatively healthy ones at risk from pending development.

A few members also noted that the prioritization goal in highly urbanized areas may instead want to focus on highly impacted watersheds (e.g., the Duwamish) that, if not rehabilitated (e.g., to address toxics), can have widespread impacts on connected/nearby watersheds.

In response to these proposed prioritization goals, members offered the following observations:

- Guidance should include a backstop that prevents a watershed that is low-impaired with parkland and low density development from being designated as a receiving area as these watersheds present minimal ecological lift potential.
- Watersheds "at risk" may be most appropriate to prioritize as receiving waters. However, we should not categorically exclude highly degraded areas such as the Duwamish, from consideration.
- Local governments need to be allowed to articulate the goals of their program. For example, Tacoma may have different goals than another city. (i.e., highly urbanized, industrial, dense development vs. rural, suburban, residential)
- Guidance should consider how local priorities fit into broader regional priorities. [This was added to a parking lot list, too]
- A program needs goals that demonstrate a tangible ecological lift e.g., improved BIBI scores, removal from 303(d) listing, reduction of toxics, etc.
  - In Redmond, the Monticello Creek environmental lift was to remove the 303(d) listing, stabilize stream banks, and reduce streambank incision.
- A local government needs to state reasons why the watershed needs to be tackled – a statement of the problems to be addressed.

NOTE: Several times the group noted that we will not "write off" sending areas. Local governments will still be required to hold the line in those areas and the program must include backstops to make this happen. We must prioritize the ones to fix first, or won't have anything after many years of investment.

Question – can we talk about the data without a specific prioritization goals? Local governments will be prioritizing receiving areas over sending areas. Will there be a different set of data needed for prioritization in urbanized areas?

Question – do we need the same data to prioritize among watersheds for flow control vs. runoff treatment vs. LID? The group decided to focus first on flow control and to revisit runoff treatment and LID at a later time.

Question – does the prioritization change depending on whether the program relates to redevelopment vs. retrofits? Redevelopment and retrofits have separate requirements under the Phase I permit. Some jurisdictions have mixed the programs between those two provisions – this was an issue in the Clark County appeal. Do we need to separate retrofit prioritization from prioritization of control transfers? If

they are separate, like to like may make sense. [“Like to like” was described as from an area zoned for a mix of residential, commercial and industrial to another area with similar land uses, but not necessarily the same intensity of uses.] If they are together, may not want like to like. In this context, receiving areas would be targeting both transfers and retrofits. Receiving areas should be targeted for both. We need to be clear what we are talking about.

NOTE: Ecology’s guidance makes clear that its Stormwater Control Transfer Program cannot be used to implement the Phase I structural retrofit program.

The group briefly reviewed the [map](#) of Regional Growth Centers and 40/20 basins. The group agreed to add two operating assumptions to its list:

- Receiving areas can be located in Regional Growth Centers. [It was noted that designation of Regional Growth Centers may have taken the environment into account, but not necessarily stormwater issues.
- Not all Regional Growth Centers will be designated as sending areas. [It was noted that cities within the 40/20 zones would not have a reason to adopt a stormwater control transfer program for flow control as these areas only need to match pre-project conditions for flow control. Others may be identified as an environmental priority to target for retrofit.]

#### Review of Specific Prioritization Approaches—WSDOT and Redmond

The data versus criteria discussion came up at WSDOT – the result was a multi-tiered process, with the first tier based upon existing statewide GIS data sets. The first cut screen (tier 1) help screen sites for further prioritization. Redmond had a similar screening process, and then honed in. DOT made sure that the initial screen did not overscreen to avoid prematurely screening out potential sites. The bar was set relatively low but weeded out the obvious (see the [Stormwater Retrofit Investment Prioritization](#), 11-3-14). For example, they didn’t use 303(d) listing data in the first tier screen because it the 303(d) list since it is largely of fuction of where certian data parameters have been collected. Different data/information types are evaluated at different stages of the process. Local knowledge was considered a very important component in the 2<sup>nd</sup> teir of the screening process.

If a jurisdiction is going to prioritize creeks, Redmond has a matrix that is a great place to start. Redmond started with the Ecology watershed characterization model based on flow only. Then the City used local data. They focused on small streams because they wanted them to come back soon. WSDOT’s stage 2 used local knowledge that was not necessarily in a data base, but rather had to be gathered as part of the evaluation process. It is a very transparent process. It was noted that WSDOT did not use watershed characterization as it wasn’t watershed base, but allowed for those inputs during the 2<sup>nd</sup> teir of the screening process.

Several participants noted that local knowledge is essential to a prioritization process.

Bob Vadas noted that a local government needs to look at other species of fish and escapement data.

Action: The group agreed to look at Redmond’s criteria and to provide feedback on what data would be essential to have, and what data would be nice to have through Survey Monkey or an Excel spreadsheet before the next meeting. While all agreed that all of the categories of data are needed, it is the level of detail that is the question.

Bicycle rack<sup>1</sup> issues:

- Regional priorities should overlay the program. If the program is limited to a city, it will be hard to deal with regional priorities. We need to consider whether a program can go across jurisdictional boundaries. Thurston County is interested in a regional program.
- Explore further whether, transfers need to be from like land use to like land use – for example, from an area zoned for a mix of residential, commercial and industrial to another area with similar land uses, but not necessarily the same intensity of uses. Like to like seems to become relevant for transfers of runoff treatment. If only flow control is transferred, it can still be a concern if the receiving area is really rural. It would be okay if the receiving area is within a city.
- What is the geographic range/nexus between sending and receiving areas?

Next meeting:

- Tuesday, February 24, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Puget Sound Regional Council

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<sup>1</sup> Erika provided a new term to use instead of “parking lot” that is less pollutant generating and more compact☺