

Building Cities in the Rain
Working Group
September 22, 2015
Final Meeting Summary

Participants:

Andy Rheaume, City of Redmond; Bruce Wulkan, Puget Sound Partnership (by phone); Dan Gariepy and Anne Dettelbach, Ecology; Erika Harris, Puget Sound Regional Council, Scott Stolnack, WRIA 8; Lorna Mauren and Dana deLeon, City of Tacoma; Heather Trim, Futurewise; Doug Navetski and Claire Johnson, King County; Kerry Ritland, City of Issaquah; John Palmer, EPA; Larry Schaffner, Thurston County; and Heather Ballash and Lynn Kohn, Washington State Department of Commerce.

Ecology draft Stormwater Control Transfer Program guidance

The Department of Ecology provided a summary of the comments they received on the draft guidance. Full comments can be viewed on the agency web site at

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/controltransfer.html> . Ecology plans the following revisions to the first Stormwater Control Transfer Program guidance document:

- Limiting transfers to flow control requirements. Transfers of runoff treatment and Low Impact Development (LID) can be allowed, but they will not be addressed in this first version of the guidance. Ecology wants to start slowly with this program.
- Language will be added regarding how and when to engage the public and natural resource agencies.
- Approval of a stormwater control program will not be connected to Section 7 of the municipal stormwater permits. It will only be connected to S5.C.5.a.i for Phase I permittees and S5.C.4.a.i for Phase II permittees. Approval will be appealable to the Pollution Control Hearings Board.
- The process and data table from the Building Cities in the Rain guidance will be pulled in to the Ecology guidance as one way to establish prioritization of receiving areas. (Note: These tables are still a bit in flux so Ecology did not yet commit to incorporate them verbatim.)
- Some smaller changes in response to comments.

Ecology anticipates issuing a second draft for public comment.

General discussion/ recommendations for next steps for the Ecology guidance

Why do we keep saying there will be ongoing degradation at the site? One concern with the Stormwater Control Transfer Program for some groups is that streams will continue to degrade, even though you are not making existing conditions worse with redevelopment. With the redevelopment of urban centers, won't you be reducing pollution generating surfaces through the redevelopment process (e.g., by converting a parking lot (pollution-generation) to a building with a covered parking garage (non-pollution-generating)? Should we recommend some amount of flow control improvement on site compared to existing conditions, such as including some low-impact development treatments like street trees or planters? This may already be required in local development regulations.

Why limit the guidance to flow control ? If you just do flow control, there will be improved conditions on the site. However, the environmental lift opportunities for transfers will be less because flow control and runoff treatment are often combined to create a multiple benefit facility. We won't get there very fast if we stick with a redevelopment patchwork for water quality (i.e., runoff treatment). We will be

back to a site-by-site approach. Redevelopment may not occur where we need it. Maybe we need to let it be appealed and get it fixed before the Pollution Control Hearings Board.

The narrative/context needs to be strengthened. We need to do a better job with the narrative to paint the picture, intent and desired outcome – a marketing piece that tells the story. We need to engage stakeholders in the outcome – criteria to get them invested. This draft didn't have that. Case studies from Redmond, Tacoma, etc. might help. We need two different narratives – one for the conservation community and one for developers. We need to talk more about how a targeted approach will result in more environmental lift than what the default approach can provide. We need to discuss how far we will be from the desired outcome without this tool. The redevelopment rate is way too slow. We need data to show the benefit of doing something different (Tell the story of how to “leverage development to improve the environment.”

This is the start of a much broader discussion. This is a narrow tool that not many will use. However, Thurston County is interested in using it regionally.

Use of prioritization – Building Cities in the Rain

What counties and cities should use is a prioritization of environmental assets rather than a transfer program. A stormwater control transfer program won't generate enough revenue to invest in stormwater infrastructure.

We need a tool to help drive programs to the basin and watershed level across jurisdictional boundaries. Am disappointed water quality treatment is being pulled from the Ecology guidance. All of this needs to be linked with other efforts – restoration, land use, etc. If we don't, funding sources will be cut off.

This is a big opportunity to use urban design on stormwater projects to create environmental lift – stormwater design guidance with smart urban design. We need a broader dialogue to bring together urban and stormwater professionals – how can we work together with smarter design for the environment?

In Puget Sound, we have not identified priority areas as to where to invest. If we get there, we can start having these conversations and pull in resources. Some of the salmon watersheds have done this. WRIA 9 has done it. Need it at the local level. Doing it on basins that are several hundred acres in size can work. No basin in Western Washington has been completely retrofitted to current design standards. Redmond is the first to try to get there. How do we decide where to focus first? This is the value of Building Cities in the Rain.

Decision point – based on the above discussion, the Work Group agreed that the prioritization for stormwater retrofits has value regardless of whether it is used for stormwater control transfers. It was agreed that this prioritization guidance should be rewritten to indicate a broader application that would still include reference to stormwater control transfers as described in the Ecology guidance, but would also include other purposes such as planning for retrofit investments. It could be used for prioritizing retrofits/capital investments, for example. It was also agreed that the water quality and LID data should remain in the document as contributing to the broader value of prioritization.

The Work Group agreed that this could be a Commerce sponsored document on behalf of the Work Group, with references to but separate from the Ecology guidance. Ecology can pull the appropriate information from the data table into the Ecology guidance.

Changes to the Building Cities in the Rain guidance – based on the discussion, the following changes were suggested to the guidance:

- Refocused introduction:
 - Note that this type of process helps address issues around managing stormwater in urban centers. E.g. a stormwater control transfer program provides a new tool that is perfect for situations with the potential for high cost in urban areas.
 - GMA can help recover salmon. Redevelopment can produce more environmental benefit than just reducing sprawl.
 - Can use to strategically invest in retrofits both locally and regionally.
 - More partnering of stormwater planning and salmon recovery.
 - EPA NEP funding has been linked to the watershed characterization tool. It should be a screen.
 - With the evolving nature of grants, a local government will be more successful if it does prioritization.
 - Prioritization adds value for integrated planning.
- More up front on the why and justification with photos.
- More case studies.
- Social equity and climate change are not addressed. Climate change should be a driver for prioritization (Heather T. agreed to work with Heather B. on some language for this).

Land use and how it fits with prioritization

This is a follow up on the August 18 conversation about the data table. Existing and Future land use is good information for siting retrofits. Use this information for at-risk areas. Use future land use/full buildout data to plan long term for retrofits. It should be its own bullet on page 16 rather than under “Coordination with state, regional and local plans”. Land use will not necessarily determine what priority the area has, but it is good information to know. The prioritization process may also inform future land use planning as plans are being updated on a regular basis.

Next steps

- Heather B. will rewrite the guidance based on input received at the meeting and send it out for comments and consideration at the next meeting.
- Define “ecological lift” at the next meeting.
- Heather B. will work with Heather T. on climate change and social equity.
- Heather B. can talk to Mike Grady at NOAA Fisheries about the guidance.

Next meeting

October 21, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Center for Urban Waters, Tacoma

