

## Little Squalicum Park Master Plan

### City of Bellingham Staff, Stakeholder and Consultant Site Reconnaissance (Stakeholder's Meeting #2)

6/18/09

### Meeting Summary

**REVISED 07/22/09**

#### Attendees

Gina Austin, City of Bellingham  
Tim Wahl, City of Bellingham  
Fritz Anthony, City of Bellingham  
Rod Lamb, Whatcom County Parks & Rec.  
Mark Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl Consulting  
Vanessa Rayner, Ecology & Environment  
Mark Longtine, Ecology & Environment  
Kurt Baumgarten, Dept. of Ecology  
Jeanne O'Dell, EPA  
Mary Jane Nearman, EPA  
Frances Badgett, Columbia Neighborhood  
Dan Welch, Birchwood Neighborhood Association  
Eve Magyar, Bellingham Technical College  
Maw Herring, Heering Ex  
Chris Secrist, Oeser  
Jon Gunschel, Oeser  
Wendy Steffensen, RE Sources  
Randy Whitman, CH2MHILL  
Ellen Southard, Belt Collins  
Bob Walsh, Belt Collins  
Chris Webb, Belt Collins  
Analiese Burns, NW Ecological Services  
Molly Porter, NW Ecological Services  
John Monahan, GeoEngineers  
Aaron McCain, GeoEngineers

#### Distributed Via Email To:

Gina G. Austin, PE, City of Bellingham  
Leslie Bryson, City of Bellingham  
Mike Stoner, Port of Bellingham  
Eve Magyar, Bellingham Technical College  
Chris Secrist, Oeser Cedar  
Fritz Anthony, PE, City of Bellingham  
Tim Wahl, City of Bellingham  
Renne LaCroix, City of Bellingham  
Frank Ordway, Birchwood Neighborhood Association, Acting President  
Edie Norton, Columbia Neighborhood Association  
Bruce Sheppard, BNSF  
Jack Weiss, City Council  
Todd Kuhn, BNSF, Manager Public Projects

Becky Schlotterback, Birchwood Neighborhood Association  
Lynne Givler, Whatcom County Parks  
Frances Badgett, Birchwood Neighborhood Association, President  
Mark Longtine, LG, Ecology and Environment, Inc. (USEPA)  
Mary O'Herron, WA DOE  
Meredith Murray, Columbia Neighborhood Association  
Judy McCarthy, SALSA-G (Security @ Little Squalicum Action Group)  
Mary Jane Nearman, EPA  
Wendy Steffensen, North Sound Bay Keeper (ReSources)  
Rod Lamb, Whatcom County Parks Design and Development Supervisor  
Jane Blume, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board  
Mark Herrenkohl, LEG, Herrenkohl Consulting (part of City's consultant team)  
Vanessa Rayner, Ecology & Environment  
Kurt Baumgarten, Dept. of Ecology  
Jeanne O'Dell, EPA  
Dan Welch, Birchwood Neighborhood Association  
Jon Gunschel, Oeser  
Randy Whitman, CH2MHILL  
Ellen Southard, Belt Collins  
Bob Walsh, Belt Collins  
Chris Webb, Belt Collins  
Analiese Burns, NW Ecological Services  
Molly Porter, NW Ecological Services  
John Monahan, GeoEngineers  
Aaron McCain, GeoEngineers

**Notes (Recorded by Bob Walsh, Belt Collins)**

The following notes were taken by the consultant team during the two hour site visit with City of Bellingham Staff and the Project Stakeholder Group. The purpose of the site visit was to gain an understanding of the project background, issues and opportunities and to discuss the preliminary clean up concepts.

Bob provided a brief overview of the project process and schedule. Upcoming project milestones include:

- July 15 - Stakeholder Workshop #1
- July 22 - Public Meeting #1

Bellingham Technical College's 20-year Master Plan map was presented.

- The northern half of the park site will become a prominent feature within BTC as new campus facilities develop along W. Illinois Street.
- The park site offers a potential link and greenway between the outlying buildings along W. Illinois and the Main Campus.
- The BTC Master Plan documents are available on the BTC website:  
<http://www.btc.ctc.edu/welcome/MasterPlan/MasterPlan.asp>
- The infiltration capacity is good at the park adjacent to the parking lot.

At the beach overlook Gina and Bob discussed some of the existing site conditions and preliminary park improvements concepts.

- The park boundary is approximately 25 feet north of the centerline of the railroad.

- The area south and west of the railroad including the beach is owned by the Port of Bellingham.
- The beach is highly prone to erosion and is one of the most dynamic in Bellingham.
- The beach receives a lot of freshwater influence from surrounding rivers (Nooksack, Squalicum, Little Squalicum).
- There are two shell midden sites in the park. One exists in the lower creek area.
- The concrete culvert that empties into the bay should be removed.
- Preliminary concepts include a bridge over the creek just north of the railroad.
- An informal connection from the main trail to the beach is proposed.
- The terminus of the main trail may include an ADA accessible outlook or view point at the beach.
- A separate study managed by Renee LaCroix (Bellingham Public Works) is looking at improving the beach and the possibility of creating a tidal influx to a new lagoon north of the existing culvert/trail.
- The extent of contamination in the lower creek is significantly lower than that found in the upper creek.
- The EPA plans to work with the City to continue the contamination warning signage in the Park. The content would likely be similar to what the City has used up to this point. The Cleanup Team will help the City with changes to wording as needed. Changes would then be passed to County Health for their review. After their review, the City will run any changes by the EPA.
- Vanessa of E&E passed out a figure showing preliminary considerations for remediation. The EPA emphasized these are initial ideas, but they have laid out some selective remedial alternatives to consider including excavation and capping options for the upper creek, historical creek, and lower creek areas.
- The existing clay layer would be the base line for exaction in areas where exaction was the selected remediation method.

At the West Meadow site Gina described some of the conceptual park improvement concepts:

- These improvements might include expanding the existing meadow and opening the tree canopy as well as enhancing views to the water.
- Preliminary concepts call for rerouting the existing path to provide a more serpentine connection to the water along the south and east sides of the proposed meadow.
- Vanessa indicated the EPA cleanup team was also looking at rerouting the upper portion of the creek between the historical creek and current creek locations. Cleanup might include capping of both upper and historical creek locations. There was an extensive discussion about this option including the necessity to provide a liner for a new creek bed because of potential drainage problems in this area of the site.
- There was further discussion of the EPA figure. An EPA representative explained that the EE/CA will be out shortly. Alternative 2 is on-site excavation of the current and historic creek channel and off-site disposal. Alternative 3 is excavating the lower creek and keeping it in the current channel and capping and re-routing in the upper creek.
- Attendees asked if the EPA has considered re-routing the creek to the historic channel. They said that is not a current alternative. The re-routing is in a neutral location between the existing and historic channels.
- There was discussion about whether a creek liner is needed to prevent infiltration and provide separation of the creek from contaminated soils left in place.
- EPA said they envision a cap to be two feet in depth.

- Bob Walsh asked if the proposed remediation alternatives would preclude future park uses or recreation. Mark Herrenkohl noted that institutional controls would be needed to prevent damage to capped areas. Mary Jane indicated there would be no restrictions on park activities if capping was used to contain contamination in the creek areas. She indicated vegetation could be planted, picnic tables could be placed on top of the cap for human use, etc.
- Gina stated that the master plan was in process before the contamination was discovered and that we are, “picking up where we left off.” She further stated that the master plan will guide the cleanup and that the cleanup should not make any restrictions on the master plan.
- Chris Webb asked if different caps allow for different types of uses. EPA Project Manager said this type of contamination is not a big deal and you can do almost anything over this type of contamination/cap (institutional controls will not be significant).
- EPA Project Manager said they would like input to help inform which capping method would be most appropriate.
- There was discussion regarding what type of plantings would be allowed over the cap. EPA representatives said planting alternatives would be taken into consideration. They did not rule out any suggestions including trees.
- Oeser has an NPDES permit that allows 9ppb of (material?); Mary Jane said for the contaminants to threaten living organisms, the concentration would need to be (quantity?) ppm far above what is currently permitted.
- Wendy Steffensen (Bay Keeper) would like one of the alternatives to include relocating the creek back to its historic channel. She asked whether removal of contaminated soils and sediments in the historical creek would jeopardize or change the hydrology of the creek. Mark Herrenkohl doesn't think this would be the case since only the upper 2-3 ft of soil and sediments are impacted in this area with additional creek bed and low-permeable wetland soils below this depth in many areas. However, some lining may be necessary to avoid drainage to underlying areas since some of this area has been altered by historical sand/gravel mining.
- An Oeser representative said vegetation in the park is approx. 35 years old. The area was most recently used for log storage.
- The historic channel currently considered for capping is a wetland. There was discussion as to whether or not 2 feet would be enough fill. How high would the “berm” be? Would you need to do wetland mitigation for this fill? Gina answered “yes”. If they need mitigation, do they know where they would do it -on site?
- Question to EPA representative about whether there is still flexibility in the EE/CA to incorporate land uses the City wishes to see. He wasn't sure whether or not there would be flexibility.
- Randy Whitman (Ch2M Hill – ph: 425-233-3276) was brought into project by Mary Jane at the EPA. Randy is encouraging Mary Jane to work with Oeser Company to consider the “maximum stream restoration budget”, and then share that number with him so design alternatives can be developed that meet that budget.
- Randy cautioned Mary Jane against the “myth of the sinuous stream”. Randy suggested that the stream channel may not need to be especially sinuous given available volume of water.
- Randy expressed concern the proposal to route the stream from the Oeser site toward BTC, then through the old channel may not work due to low gradient or risk of trying to move water upgrade. There was concern by others regarding mosquitoes. This concern would support Randy's suggestion to keep water moving downgrade and minimize low-velocity areas (mosquito larvae habitat).

- Chris Secrist noted significant changes in the hydrology of Little Squalicum Creek since 1915.
- Chris Secrist noted the riparian edge and canyon bottom was comprised largely of “volunteers”. In his opinion, controlling unwanted vegetation may be a bigger challenge than establishing/planning new vegetation and upland habitat.
- Chris Secrist indicated that Oeser is testing the viability of sand fleas (sic – perhaps Cladocera – Daphnia?) and some type of minnow in the Oeser runoff. This study offers a potential data source for creek habitat.
- Mary Jane indicated the EPA has summary information useful to biologists. The remediation information is voluminous and not particularly reader-friendly.
- Mary Jane expressed interest in having Randy at Ch2M Hill and John Monahan (GeoEngineers) work together in developing stream restoration design alternatives.

#### Proposed cottonwood gallery location:

- There’s approximately 2 ft of contamination in most locations, with the exception of an area near the trail where 4 feet of contamination is present.
- EPA representative was not sure what utility the historic stream channel provided other than substrate. The topography is uniformly flat.
- Analiese mentioned that a wetland exists in the location of the historic channel. Because the system is “water limited”, can we retain this source of water if they cap the wetland? Do they know if it is groundwater or perched surface water? No answer from representative on the source of the water but he said it is still feasible to design retention of this water source.

#### BTC parking lot and field

- BTC is planning a new building next to the field along the northeast corner of the site. The field has always been a field (sometimes hayed) in recent memory.

#### West Illinois Street

- Historic use was an access to Morse Steel and BTC.
- W. Illinois improvements are in permitting right now (waiting for agency approval). They hope to break ground this summer (late). The permitting review is related to required clean up of arsenic found in the roadway base. The arsenic is probably related to spraying RR ~~ballast ties~~. The clean-up is currently under review by Ecology.
- The new road is planned as an arterial standard from Nome St. to ~~Marine Drive the County ROW~~. The road will consist of 2 lanes, bike lanes, and a sidewalk on the south side.
- The road will serve as the primary access to Morse Steel and BTC.
- There was a question asked about requiring Oeser to use W. Illinois as a primary access rather than going through the neighborhood. Oeser could use the road as an access in the future, although their property is separated from W. Illinois by a RR ~~property easement~~. Access would require permitting from the RR. This consideration is not part of the W. Illinois St. project. ~~The ROW adjacent to West Illinois is being cleaned up to allow for a possible future connection to Oeser.~~
- ~~Soils along W. Illinois showed low infiltration capacity so storm water option was pursued.~~ Soils along West Illinois showed low infiltration capacity so a piped/vaulted system was designed.
- Storm water on the east ½ of project would empty into the Birchwood/BTC storm water system and discharges to Little Squalicum Creek.

- Storm water on the west ½ of project would empty into the Marine Dr. system and discharges to Little Squalicum Creek (lower down).
- There is potential to tie into the W. Illinois storm water to recapture some water (per Fritz). We need to keep Fritz posted and in the loop. However, he's reluctant to make changes to W. Illinois design at this time.
- The landfill clean up is being managed by Public Works and is not related to the W Illinois St. project. The contaminants prompting the clean up are high levels of lead and zinc.
- The EE/CA will be finalized in September (EPA hopes). They are anticipating a draft EE/CA in the coming weeks. The schedule for the draft document and public comment period will be decided next week and communicated to the stakeholders by Mary Jane.

Additional notes from John Monahan regarding the City Staff and Consultant Field Trip on 6/8/09

- Tim Wahl noted the wetlands on-site were created. We may need to eliminate or significantly modify some of the wetlands to accommodate new features. He encouraged looking at wetland protection and enhancement as part of a long-term, large scale project rather than constrain the site plan by preserving their current location and function.
- Tim envisions engineered log stabilization features between the RR and beach as well as dispersed access points to the water. Development of a transition to intertidal area upstream from the RR - if elevations can be worked out.
- Tim noted there are french drains along the pit. These are a potential source of water. We must address quantity and quality. There are also spring sources at elevations above the creek channel. There is potential to pipe water upstream and increase the length of the channel.
- The steel pipe under Marine Drive was previously utilized by Bellingham Cold Storage. The pipe extends to the Nooksack River. We could consider using it as a potential water source during high flow periods in the Nooksack. We would need to investigate water rights and salmon olfaction concerns. Stowe Talbot ([stowe.talbot@bellcold.com](mailto:stowe.talbot@bellcold.com)) of Bellingham Cold Storage is a bit of a historian and may be a good contact for further inquiry about a Nooksack River/Marine Drive piped-water alternative.

This meeting summary is a general overview of the items discussed at the subject meeting. Any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of Gina G. Austin, P.E. at 360-778-7000, [gaustin@cob.org](mailto:gaustin@cob.org).