

WASHINGTON CLIMATE CHANGE
Coastal/Infrastructure Preparation/Adaptation Workgroup
Meeting #5 – October 2, 2007 9:00am – 12 p.m.
Ecology Headquarters, Lacey

Attendance:

Preparation/Adaptation Workgroup Members:

Todd Zackey, Tulalip Natural Resources Department
Lara Whitely Binder, Climate Impacts Group (via phone)
Cyrilla Cook, People for Puget Sound
Joe Cloud, EDAW
Nancy Boyd, Washington Department of Transportation
Mike Doherty, Clallam County Commissioner (via phone)
Clare Fogelsong, City of Bellingham (via phone)
Richard Myers, Washington Public Ports Association
Mike Rechner, Department of Natural Resources
Doug Peters, Washington State Department of Community, Trade, & Economic Development
Doug Myers, Puget Sound Partnership
Patty Glick, National Wildlife Federation
Grant Nelson
Guy Gelfenbaum, USGS (via phone)
Dan Huppert, UW-CIG (via phone)

Washington Department of Ecology staff: Tom Clingman, Spencer Reeder (via phone)

Other Support Staff: Andy Chinn, Ross & Associates Environmental Consulting (via phone)

Background Documents:

1. Summary notes of 9/11 PAWG meeting
2. Table: Sequencing Homework for 10-2
3. Draft PAWG Report Outline

Discussion Items:

1. Updated on HB 1303 from Dan Huppert, UW CIG

- The CIG is looking at the impacts of sea level rise in three geographic areas:
 - Willapa Bay
 - The Skagit Delta

- Seattle and Olympia Ports
- The CIG is currently compiling data and working on climate change scenarios but has not reached definitive agreement on sea level rise scenarios. The CIG will likely not look at erosion problems, although they recognize that this will be a problem due to sea level rise and storm intensity.
- The mapping that is being done will be static

Key comments from PAWG:

- The CIG could do a side-by-side comparison with the report by the National Wildlife Federation on sea level rise in the Skagit Delta, not the ecological effects but the flooding. The problem is that there is not a good aerial picture of the dikes in the Skagit Delta because they are narrow and do not show up well on LADAR.
- Erosion issues are significant; the coastline is a process, not just a static location.
- There are erosion models that exist, but they are very complex. In areas like Long Beach there are questions about storm intensity and storm tracking that can be more important than a static rise in sea level.
- The CIG is trying to finish its report for the legislature by December 1st. For next year's schedule they can try to build in erosion modeling.
- At some point policy makers must make choices about coastal protection and will need to know what the trade-offs are for protecting certain areas and not others. This can be done at a local scale, but can it be done at an intermediate scale?
- One concern with climate modeling is that the models focus on mean expectations. When planning for coastal areas, a risk avoidance strategy is preferable to trying to find the most likely outcome. This group is focused on preparation and adaptation, therefore we do not need exact modeling to create scenarios to which we can adapt.

2. Sequencing of PAWG Priority Actions

Key Comments from PAWG:

- Monitoring erosion in Puget Sound.
 - One of the PAWG's priority actions should be *current monitoring* of the impacts of climate change on sea level rise. This might be already covered under the "research" category, but if so it would be less important than putting it into an "action" category. In Puget Sound, sea level rise will result in more impacts near the shoreline than a simple "bathtub" effect, and we will only be able to monitor these impacts by installing additional instrumentation. Ecology has the ability to implement a monitoring program in Puget Sound similar to the monitoring program that has been ongoing on the coast of Washington for the past nine or ten years. The coastal

monitoring program involved coarse-scale beach profile measuring an identified the temporal and spatial scales at which the coast is changing. This type of program alone would not distinguish drivers of change (e.g., development, sea level rise), but it would at least monitor the changes that are occurring. Guy Gelfenbaum, Hugh Shipman, and George Kaminski at Ecology could put together a monitoring program fairly easily.

- In order to obtain funding for a program to monitor erosion in Puget Sound, there must be an underlying risk aversion rationale such as in the case of the Washington coast monitoring program.

- The PAWG decided to change the name of the research category to “monitoring and research” and to make sure that the need for ongoing monitoring is appropriately emphasized in its report.

- Modifying SEPA, GMA, SMA, or local government regulations
 - For the PAWG’s recommendations it will be important to not only state the strategy, but to clearly articulate the goal of the strategy. For the SEPA recommendation, suggested strategic statements include “promote resiliency” or “improve ecological resiliency and protect communities”.
 - A year-long review of these three planning statutes does not take advantage of the opportunity to address this issue and make it real for local communities. The PAWG should not lose the opportunity to get information out to local communities, and should proceed with what is possible now, rather than conduct a study of SEPA and GMA to see which is the best tool.
 - The question of how to incorporate climate change into local governments’ SMP updates was asked. Comments:
 - It was suggested that the issue could be raised at the annual meeting of county commissioners in November.
 - There is a great deal of recognition throughout Washington cities on climate change already, and the PAWG can define what must be done with this recognition in a more proactive manner.
 - Professional planners are aware of the importance of climate change but elected officials are in denial. In addition, real estate agents must be required to give full disclosure, including potential climate impacts, and someone at a high level needs to discuss this with the insurance industry.
 - In the shoreline area, there is an evaluation process that the state has to approve, and they are already required to take into account all existing information. If the PAWG recommends including climate change into SEPA checklists, it will be critical to create an

evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of local communities' actions.

- Getting back to the concept of risk management, it is important to highlight the need to give a range and not a specific number.
 - UW CIG just issued a “guide to local government” that addresses some of these issues. The PAWG can link to this on the Ecology website.
 - The PAWG must not lose sight of the strategy of promoting resilience and making sure that the public is informed of risk.
 - Part of informing the public would be to get better *compliance* with SEPA. Many times SEPA checklists have been marked “N/A” on both sides. If the public recognizes a climate change element to SEPA as pre-disaster planning rather than just a bureaucratic hoop it would be more effective.
 - At this point in time, sea level rise is not built into FEMA insurance because it's all based on historic information.
 - GMA and SMA do not need modification, since they already require communities to use best available science for their reviews. What the PAWG needs to recommend is an action item that disseminates the definition of best available science to local governments and recommends guidance documents to help them find the best available science when updating their GMAs or SMAs.
 - Ecology is providing funds for GMA and SMA updates, but they need to include an appropriate examination of sea level rise issues, including detailed mapping of erosion hazards, not just conceptual models. There is currently no funding for this, only funding for disaster planning.
 - The most useful role for SEPA is information disclosure. In order to have an effect on risk avoidance, shoreline planning is the most useful tool.
- Federal Funding and Insurance
 - One potential obstacle is funding, and one option is to build a dedicated federal trust fund. Another option is to set a minimum expected standard for risk management that local governments must meet in order to qualify for federal disaster relief funds. Insurance rates would also be dependent on a community's compliance with standards.
 - If the extreme climate change predictions come to pass, there will not be sufficient money for mitigation. It would be more useful to focus on reducing government liability, protecting natural systems, and informing people of the risk involved in building in at-risk areas.
 - The PAWG should recommend that no federal funds be dedicated to rebuilding in at-risk areas.
 - There must be a component to public education that includes notifying the public when private insurance will be difficult to access or non-existent.

- Setbacks
 - A fundamental issue is that setbacks should be much larger than 20 or 30 feet but communities are not acknowledging that. There should be compensation for good planning practices, but not compensation for bad setback numbers. One of the PAWG's recommendations should recognize the need for larger setbacks but should acknowledge that we don't currently know what the number should be. The standard recommendation is always variable based on specific sites but the current standard minimum is generally 1 to 1 (vertical to horizontal). The other problem is that it is fairly easy to get a geotechnical engineer to confirm that a twenty foot setback will mitigate the erosion hazard.
 - Setbacks should be discussed in the context of critical area designations; areas with landslide hazard are considered critical area under the GMA.

3. Report Format and Assignments

- Barb McGregor is going to compile the PAWG reports into a single report to the governor which will include overarching issues such as public engagement and philosophical approaches (e.g. the precautionary principal, risk mitigation). The CIG will submit its findings on climate impacts by October 12 and PAWG recommendations are due on November 16. There will be a public review of the report sometime in mid-December or mid-January. Nancy volunteered to be a point of contact as Ecology and the PAWG's work on public engagement. There will be two summits for public outreach on climate change, one in Seattle on October 17 and one in Spokane (at Gonzaga) on October 25. In addition there will be a conference of environmental educators in Seattle from November 7 through 10 which will provide another opportunity for public outreach.
- Patty Glick offered to help think about how to incorporate sea level rise into restoration efforts.
- The sea level rise document that Spencer, Hugh Shipman, Phil Mote, and Sascha Petersen are working on will look at some global issues and uncertainties and also some local issues. They are on the second round of the draft right now and will get a draft to the PAWG by October 11.
- There will likely be working groups formed around this issue in the upcoming legislative session. Tom will keep the PAWG informed if it is asked to present its findings.

4. Final Discussion

- The EPA has held meetings with coastal managers on Chesapeake Bay to determine what their plans are for coastal protection for the next 20 years. This type of program might be useful to initiate in this region.
- Since many of the recommendations the PAWG is making will not be addressed until 2009, the PAWG should be thinking about why some

- items are actionable now and why some are actionable later, in order to sustain the public's attention.
- Tom updated the PAWG on a meeting with King County to discuss their efforts to use SEPA to define climate change issues. The first phase is through voluntary efforts and uses the checklist to take a basic carbon footprint. Essentially King County is using the disclosure element of SEPA to disclose the climate impacts of development projects to motivate people to change their behavior. The next phase will be policy development; King County is updating its comprehensive plan to include climate change. In the long term the comprehensive plan provides an umbrella for the revision of development regulations, providing the ability to put certain energy conservation practices into building codes and development codes.
 - A recent case on Bainbridge Island on the subject of bulkheads is relevant to the PAWG's work. The SMP on Bainbridge Island prohibits bulkheads in high-value areas for hydrological and ecological processes. In this case, the courts upheld language protecting the natural processes. A small but interesting part of the decision involved off-site mitigation. The HPA for the project said that replacement gravel had to be brought in over 20 years and if there was still impact then mitigation had to be done; basically, in this case mitigation was not acceptable.
 - This is a good example of having institutional messages in place to make good decisions. Maybe the argument is to make this process applied more consistently across the board.

Next meeting: Tuesday October 23, 9 am – 12 pm.

[meeting adjourned]