

WASHINGTON CLIMATE CHANGE
Coastal/Infrastructure Preparation/Adaptation Workgroup
Meeting #6 – October 23, 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
Nancy Boyd, Washington Department of Transportation
Clare Fogelsong, City of Bellingham (via phone)
Richard Myers, Washington Public Ports Association
Mike Rechner, Department of Natural Resources
Doug Myers, Puget Sound Partnership
Patty Glick, National Wildlife Federation
Guy Gelfenbaum, USGS (via phone)
Tim Gates (For Doug Peters), CTED
Randy Carmen, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Anita Chang, BNSF

Washington Department of Ecology staff: Tom Clingman

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

General PAWG Business

- By November 16 the PAWGs should have their recommendations in, to be compiled by December. Today we will try to drive toward identification of priority recommendations from the Coastal PAWG.
- There will be some type of public information effort to disseminate the work of the PAWGs and the CAT sometime around the last half of December. Tom Clingman will notify the PAWG when that is coming up.

Update on the Climate Impacts Group and HB 1303 and Connection to the Coastal PAWG's Work

The CIG will issue two reports. The first is a status report in December 2007 that will show what has been accomplished with the first six months of funding. There will probably not be any recommendations in the first report. The second report is a full report in December of 2008. The timing is unfortunate because it would be preferable not to have these processes happening simultaneously. A major issue is limited funding, but the hope that this is the start of a more intensive look at this issue. If there are major research need identified by the PAWG, then they need to be highlighted because this information can be used to leverage dollars from the state or federal government. The PAWG should think broadly about physical research as well as social science analysis (legal issues, for example).

Comments from PAWG members:

- The CIG is oriented toward low-lying area mapping and should devote some energy toward the dominant land form of the Puget Sound shoreline (bluffs). HB 1303 could be used to accomplish this basic characterization.
- LWB: I will see Dan later today for 1303; I will ask him where he is on that; I don't know how much they've thought about changing the scope for 2008. * LWB will find out and get back to TC via e-mail.
- The group at Ecology working on climate change report that the Legislature's hope is that the report that the CIG will compile will be the technical basis for state's direction on CC. In order for the state to set an accurate direction, it will be important to look at coastal bluffs and their reaction to sea level rise.
- The CIG may not be able to get to this issue within the scope of this round of funding, but it will be a high priority in any future work.
- We need to make sure that coastal processes are incorporated into any future work. The technical expertise exists, it just may not be included in the initial analysis.
- We need to make it clear that that modeling doesn't drive our recommendations.
- Since the first report is not so much recommendations but a status report, it might be an opportunity to point out where the scope is insufficient because of lack of funding or expertise.
- During our previous meeting, the PAWG discussed whether or not there was an opportunity to have local governments start thinking about using best available science. It is not fair to have local governments required to do so without the state endorsing it and providing tools.
- CTED should adopt guidance for local governments on a host of specific topics. This year CTED is updating its guidance on local development and could make clearer geological hazards, including sea level rise. The procedural criteria for critical areas will be updated. This is part of the Washington Administrative Code, which is much easier to update than a statute.
- Snohomish County is going through the process of amending its Growth Management Act/Comprehensive plan to include climate change. (Note: Lara Binder distributed a draft text of this amendment to the Coastal PAWG via e-mail)

Announcements

- WASDOT has a representative on the Transportation Technical Working Group, reflective of the agencies' need to incorporate climate change into its mission.
- WA DFW has an internal working group on climate change, and at this point there is discussion of having a staff dedicated to CC issues. There is some feeling that DFW was not fully represented on the CAT. The

National Wildlife Foundation is looking to partner with DFW on climate change issues.

- Update on the joint Ecology-CIG sea level rise document: There are some additional edits being made; Spencer Reeder and others decided not to rush the document out. The changes that will make the document accessible to all levels of public. The document is being sent out for internal review. It will not change any assumptions of the PAWG. This is not the definitive, exhaustive document, it is a snapshot of what can be said based on global and limited regional information.

Draft Recommendations

- *Discussion of Best Available Science: What is the threshold for use of best available science? Does publication of a relevant scientific document qualify as notification?*
 - Best available science does not have to be incorporated into a rule, it could be a technical document on record.
 - Think there is some consideration in the question on SEPA. There are no state rules on how SEPA works in every community. Its most dominant use is for traffic mitigation, and every community develops its own framework. Transferring that to climate change is going to be a real challenge. If SEPA is used as a disclosure document, opponents of projects might say that a significant impediment has been identified, and this could happen before technical mitigation measures have been developed. California and Massachusetts have developed lists of mitigation tools, so examples exist.
 - One of the purposes of changing the SEPA checklist is not only for disclosure but also for the accounting process. King County Executive Ron Sims is concerned that the state will say that local government cannot develop thresholds because the state will claim responsibility.
- *Discussion of Certainty*
 - The document that is intended to lay out the issues that logically step into the recommendations of the PAWG is the “Key Impacts and Issues” document. Tom Clingman basically took Hugh Shipman’s presentation and used the text from it. If you have specific comments on this, please provide them to Tom. This will be the PAWG’s submittal to the introduction to the chapter. Barb McGregor will be trying to compile all of the work into a coherent report.
 - Comment: It would be helpful to have a couple of bullets that describe “60% of population of PS area is along the coastline”.
 - The CIG has created a baseline that has been included in the PAWG report outline. Early in the overall report there will be

discussion of temperature and precipitation projections for Washington. Lara Binder will check and see if sea level rise projections will be in this document or in the specific overview of the Coastal PAWG. Either way it will be in there. The sea level rise document that ECY and CIG have been working on will have some overlap, but it is more of a white paper/general guidance document. It will have projections but not recommendations. Sea level rise is tricky because it becomes a risk management issue in terms of how much of a range for which to plan. This is specifically mentioned in the white paper: How much you want to plan for sea level rise comes down to personal choice for risk tolerance. The sea level rise document is on a fast track and will hopefully be done within the next two weeks. Barb McGregor has a draft of the baseline document. Lara Binder will make sure the baseline reflects the white paper estimates and will send a copy of the draft to the PAWG.

- There are many uncertainties that call for more research. For example, even sea level rise is known exactly, it is unknown how different habitats are going to respond. The skill to predict this does not currently exist. It is also site specific and hard to do on a regional level.
- Lack of certainty is not a problem, there is time to start collecting information and continue to improve the assessments.
- This gets back to risk management, as there is a certain amount of information and from that it must be decided what level of liability is acceptable and what should be avoided (e.g. only catastrophic incidents or everything)
- Both science and policy need to be reflected in the PAWG's recommendations.
- The PAWG is currently identifying key impacts, things that should be looked at in terms of what we are trying to avoid and plan for. As this project moves forward and predictions improve, some of it may be questioned. It is not clear that the science currently exists to make these predictions sharper.
- The first thing is to try to understand the time scale at which the coast is changing, and why it is happening. There is a use for that information but there are still other drivers, such as need for local tax base via development – economic needs that are in conflict with changing coast. Having the groups together talking is powerful.
- *Discussion of Urban and Rural Puget Sound/Local Government*
 - In urban Puget Sound there may be some more capacity to make decisions on growth since the entire community is not in a hazard zone, and there is a more distributed tax base. Rural areas face a much different question as far as balancing economic questions.
 - (Disagreement with previous statement) Property in Puget Sound is the most expensive in the state, and there is an expectation to put it

to the highest use, which means building near the water. There is more opportunity for setting growth patterns in rural areas. I don't think it's so simple as urban versus rural.

- One of the challenges is in giving local government more ability to have fewer exceptions and variances. The best the PAWG can do is tell the governor to tell local governments that they can pay now or pay later. Basically it should be expressed that planning now is cheaper, better, and safer than waiting. That is what the risk assessment should be: We don't know much now, but we know it's cheaper to act now. Our role is to notify local governments of risk and how to avoid it.
- Small communities do not have the resources to hire consultants to get the knowledge for good planning.
- *Discussion of Public Outreach and Information*
 - Regarding box A-8 of the draft recommendations: Did the PAWG adequately describe the "inform" part? It will be fundamental that people have a basic understanding before making decisions.
 - There is a lack of understanding, especially among people that live on the water.
 - The PAWG could recommend kiosks at state parks. However, public outreach is also a message to private property owners, and kiosks do not address that. It is important to make a distinction between broad public outreach and specific outreach to private property owners.
 - The best education is likely to come from the insurance industry, however there are things other than property that the insurance industry will not cover (in terms of education).
 - The main objective under risk is to enhance the ability to prepare and adapt. Most actual land use applications occur at the local level, so this is where the PAWG should focus. If a local government is updating its CAO, a clear recommendation would be to provide a number for the setback or minimum buffer, the more specific the better. The next step is enforcement.
 - There should also be a grass roots education campaign in case some of these things need to be voted upon.
 - During the permitting process the reviewing agency has the burden of clearly defining a detrimental impact, and it should be the other way around. The review process should change so the permit applicant has to define the detrimental impact. This underscores the whole idea that you can argue both ways for shoreline protection. The question is: If we allow development on the shoreline, who is responsible?
 - Recommending a rule on public disclosure has proven to be problematic in at least one case. In Maine that rule was put in and housing prices doubled because people realized that no more building would be allowed.

- *Discussion of Funding*
 - The PAWG was previously discussing have the state provide funding for SMP updates. The discussion included the statement that the state should not provide hazard mitigation funds without proper planning. This is similar to federal flood insurance when people build in risky areas. Is there something at state level that is acting in the same manner, and are there ways to discourage development in these areas from the flooding perspective?
 - Another aspect is bailing out local governments with state money. This might fit under disaster funding.
 - The PAWG previously discussed recommending development of a strategic plan to acquire properties that enhance coastal resilience. The PAWG should add language that takes into account existing habitat that is lost due to climate change.
 - Providing guidance or monetary assistance to rural or small ports is important, because local governments often do not have sufficient resources.
 - The PAWG should recommend funding DFW to do a long-lived climate change adaptation strategy similar to Chesapeake Bay's wildlife adaptation study. The state could provide matching funding for long range planning for wildlife.
 - The state legislature appropriated \$320K during the last session to develop nearshore habitat designations for local governments.
 - Additional federal funding is also being sought. Because this is a resource and time issue not many fish and wildlife agencies are incorporating adaptation strategies. This should be under priority recommendations for monitoring and research.
- *Discussion of Monitoring and Research*
 - The PAWG can assume that there will be plenty of work left to do after the scope of work has been determined for 1303. Statewide mapping of vulnerability is a very big item that could potentially be addressed. A vulnerability assessment will feed into public policy discussion over priorities, which will be several years down the road.
 - Risk reduction guidelines can be offered without being pegged to specific sea level rise numbers. There may be a need to have a periodic updating of sea level rise estimates that is predictable to the public. For example, the IPCC estimates come out every five years.
 - The PAWG should keep in mind the disparity between small governments and entities such as the Port of Seattle that have greater resources to hire consultants or engineers when they have a question.
 - Research will not be deferred. The PAWG is stating that the research is imperative to making the correct policy decisions.

Summary and Next Steps

- PAWG members will review the updated recommendations document, and vote on their five most important recommendations, via e-mail.
- PAWG members who put something forward as a priority recommendation will be asked to refine it for the final report.
- The PAWG agreed previously that all of the recommendations would be in the report. The recommendations that the PAWG chooses to advance are the ones that build toward success in preparation/adaptation. The remaining recommendations will be listed in an appendix/addendum to the report.
- Cyrilla Cook volunteered to distribute the draft document by October 27th and distribute the final edits by October 30th. A final version will be distributed by November 2nd.
- PAWG members should also recognize the West Coast Governors Initiative efforts at sea level rise modeling (information sent to the PAWG previously by Tom Clingman via e-mail). This initiative may look at lowland inundation rather than erosion. It will be important to phrase an action item that supports this effort but also ensures that the need to look at bluff erosion is also covered.

[meeting adjourned]