

LAKE BALLINGER/MCALEER CREEK WATERSHED FORUM MINUTES
Remote Meeting via
Video Conference (Zoom)
July 19, 2022 2PM to 3:30 PM

Call to Order

Steve Woodard called the Lake Ballinger Forum Meeting to order at 2:00pm

I. Roll Call - Welcome and Introductions

- a. Approval/updates today's agenda
- b. Approval of minutes from May 17, 2022 meeting

Attendees:

- Diane Buckshnis – Councilmember, Edmonds
- Donnelle Dayao – Parks Project Manager, Mountlake Terrace
- Hal Diamond – Resident
- John Featherstone – Surface Water Utility Manager, Shoreline
- Don Fiene – Former City Council Member, Lake Forest Park
- Rikki Fruichantie – Community Relations Specialist, Mountlake Terrace
- Tracy Furutani – Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
- Patrick Johnson – Stormwater Technician, Edmonds
- Gail Meyerson – Lake Resident, Edmonds
- Warren McAndrews – President, Lake Ballinger Residents Association
- Dale Newman – President & CEO, Nile Shriners Club
- Mark Philips – Former Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
- Kari Quaas – Community Engagement Manager, Snohomish Conservation District
- Laura Reed – Stormwater Program Manager, Mountlake Terrace
- Zack Richardson – Surface Water Engineer II, Shoreline
- Julie Rose – Resident, Edmonds
- Barbara Sharkey – Resident, Lake Forest Park
- Bernadette Taylor-Moses – Administrative Assistant, Mountlake Terrace
- Keith Scully – Mayor, City of Shoreline
- Andrew Silvia – Project Manager, Lake Forest Park Public Works
- Bob White – Resident, Lynnwood
- Steve Woodard – Councilmember, City of Mountlake Terrace

II. Staff Proposal On Forum input to WSDOT on McAleer Creek Culvert Replacement Creek

John Featherstone (Shoreline Surface Water Utility Manager) began the meeting with an update to the Forum regarding the response to WSDOT regarding the planned replacement by WSDOT of the McAleer Creek culvert underneath I-5. As the downstream jurisdictions, the City of Shoreline and the City of Lake Forest Park

would like to get an understanding of what impacts might result downstream of this WSDOT culvert replacement (without getting into the nuts and bolts of the hydraulics.) Currently, the culvert is smaller than the future culvert will be and a larger culvert usually correlates with larger downstream flows during storm events. As we know, this is a fairly urbanized well developed area given to urban hydrology “flash flooding” where you see a high increase of flows of during large rain events. Large peak flow events are primary concerns for Shoreline and Lake Forest Park. As Forum members, City of Shoreline proposed to work further with WSDOT regarding this concern. Some of the history behind this Forum was to try to balance flooding around Lake Ballinger with development, and not to send flooding down to McAleer Creek (one of the founding principles of the Forum.) Staff would like to make sure that WSDOT understands the history of the Forums’ concerns. The primary concern is whether or not WSDOT understands and evaluates what is going on upstream and downstream, so that they can account for potential impacts to these areas in their design. Staff proposes to provide a review of existing available data to WSDOT (since this issue has been studied before), covering the history of the concerns about downstream and upstream flooding.

Andrew Silvia (Lake Forest Park Project Manager) detailed his concerns on how the WSDOT project will unfold, and on the timing of the coordination (how the project is taking shape.) He reached out to Tim Nau (WSDOT Project Manager for this project) to get a better idea of exactly where WSDOT is in their project development process. At the last Forum meeting, the presentation by WSDOT described their project steps in broad strokes. Andrew didn’t hear a lot of specifics, or time frames associated with those steps. One thing concerning him was that WSDOT would be planning to complete the project using a design/build concept.

This marketed appeal of design/build is that it allows you to get the work done a lot faster, which Andrew reads as “Let’s not miss an opportunity.” The headline news is that we are in better shape now. WSDOT has an extensive process, and they are at the starting gate right now. WSDOT mentioned at their presentation that they are currently working to develop a preliminary hydraulic design of this site which they define as the culvert project footprint plus some distance upstream and downstream.

During their conversation Tim Nau (WSDOT) shared with Andrew that procurement would not be complete until next spring (April 2023 is the likely target for this milestone) and that this step represents the starting point of WSDOT procurement for the design/build contract (a two-stage process.) WSDOT starts with an RFQ to develop a short list of design/build contractors. As they undertake this first stage of the procurement, they are starting to develop a 30% design, which would become a part of an RFP issued to the design/builders, when they are short-listed through the RFQ process.

WSDOT issues the RFQ, gets their list of qualified contractors down to a small number, and then they issue the RFP. The RFQ will have the 30% design, an important milestone in terms of setting the key requirements of the project (including requirements developed in coordination with local officials.) This will help the design/build contractors to understand what is going to be required.

It will take approximately a year to get through procurement, and 9 months from April 2023 until the 30% design is ready. There is a good amount of time for us to work with WSDOT in reviewing the analysis, and communicating other concerns. It was conveyed by Tim Nau (WSDOT) that this exact concern (upstream and downstream impacts) is common on the culvert projects, and WSDOT has developed a process of working with local officials with weekly meetings once they are at the RFP stage to ensure that local voices are heard.

John Featherstone (Surface Water Utility Manager) stated that Shoreline and Lake Forest Park will lead the coordination with WSDOT on behalf of the downstream jurisdictions. They will be working with Forum staff partners, and potentially returning to the Forum with updates. If we have a need to get the full voice of the Forum behind some responses to WSDOT, we will be coming back - so this topic will continue.

Steve Woodard (MLT Councilmember) then opened the Forum's floor for questions to relay to WSDOT or consider as part of the process.

Q. Barbara Sharkey (Resident) commented (since she had a previous experience at the golf course years ago with the Forum) that she was under the impression that the culvert under I-5 was holding back the water from the lake, and that it was part of the flooding problem at Lake Ballinger. She asked if her understanding was correct.

A. Laura Reed (Stormwater Manager) responded with a comment that there are two studies, one by NW Hydraulic Consultants and the other by the Army Corp of Engineers that both indicated that the culvert was a flow restrictor for the lake, which is why this key information needs to be relayed to WSDOT (so that they are aware.)

Don Fiene – (Former Councilmember) Commented that one of the purposes of the Forum was that it gave all the jurisdictions sharing the watershed a way to work together, and to bring up some common problems. He stated that the other big function of the Forum was that it gave us the ability to go back to Washington with four or five jurisdictions looking for money to solve common problems, and the Forum has been pretty successful in getting money to help solve problems common to the watershed.

The culvert under I-5 has always been an issue. In a sense, it was the only real control point for how much water comes downstream. Lake Ballinger is under Snohomish court order for maximum lake levels. And the weir at the golf course originally was undersized, and so in large rain storm events, the outflow of Lake Ballinger would overwhelm that device, and the only controlling factor became the culvert underneath I-5.

Lake Forest Park has been working on some of its downstream culverts. We use (as a rule of thumb) the maximum outflow through culverts we are replacing to size the work that we've done. There are two or three culverts on McAleer Creek that have the potential of being overwhelmed, if the flow out of Lake Ballinger is increased. I think going back to the history, documentation, and hydrology reports will clearly illuminate that.

Q. Diane Buckshnis, (Councilmember) commented that if Chinook salmon are coming up the stream, we can look for WRIA 8 Grant funding. She is concerned about downstream,

because if you don't fix everything upstream, having culverts downstream, you will continue to get flooding.

Barbara Sharkey (Resident) clarified that there was only one fish whose GPS probably was off and that it took a wrong turn to get to Lake Ballinger.

Diane Buckshnis, (Councilmember) commented that although this fish took a wrong turn, we are trying to restore the creeks, so they can be salmon-productive.

Q. Julie Rose (Resident) asked if there will be any representation from Edmonds with the communication with the WSDOT project.

Don Fiene (Former Councilmember) Commented to staff working with WSDOT, that WSDOT needs to be aware of downstream impacts of their actions. And as a result they should put in their budget some funds to help alleviate the effects of downstream impacts. Edmonds is a valuable member of the Forum and should be supported.

A. John Featherstone (Surface Water Utility Manager) responded stating that at the staff level, we do have our Forums staff meetings, and Patrick Johnson as our primary representative from Edmonds, so Edmonds will be represented. The thought behind Shoreline and Lake Forest Park being the primary leads on coordinating with WSDOT is the downstream impact; part of that is making WSDOT aware what is going on both upstream and downstream of this culvert, and how the culvert impacts both areas. He further stated (informally) that he had a hard time imagining a scenario under which the lake does not flood less frequently. It would be surprising if WSDOT is either able to (or is compelled to) restrict flows to the point of being equivalent to restriction of the existing culvert. It is mostly about mitigating downstream impacts. There will be an improvement of conditions upstream no matter what you do, just because you are opening up the size of the culvert. Also, City of Shoreline has Zack Richardson, who is intimately familiar with the Edmonds side of things.

Pat Johnson stated he will continue to be a representative for Edmonds, he will be connected to the process with all the jurisdictions' interests in mind.

Q. Keith Scully (Mayor of Shoreline) inquired to confirm his understanding that the Forum is approaching this process through the lens of "How do we help WSDOT make this happen, in a way that makes as little impact as possible for folks in my city and in Lake Forest Park?" He continued stating that he has a hard time seeing this project being anything but a good thing for both flood control and fish passage. He expressed that he does not want to see the Forum become an obstacle. He asked if his understanding of the Forum being an organization that would be considering all the impacts and data was correct.

A. John Featherstone (Surface Water Utility Manager) responded that there will be consideration of multiple factors. He stated "This is a long-term improvement, we want to make sure WSDOT is aware of all impacts, and are able to use our input to help them weigh their decisions. Ultimately, WSDOT will be able to move forward with their project, we will not be obstructing it. We want to make sure they are working with the

best available information and that we are doing our part in making sure they have that information.”

Q. Gail Meyerson (Edmonds Resident) stated that she was an original member of the Forum’s association, and the reason for the collaboration was because of the flooding. She stated she believes this approach with the state has been considered already, and asked what the next steps are when dealing with the state?

A. Laura Reed (Mountlake Terrace Stormwater Manager) responded to clarify - Gail was referring to the restrictive culverts on the Nile golf course that were removed and replaced with bridges a few years ago? Laura confirmed the culvert replacement inside the Nile has been completed, and noted that the current discussion with the state is with WSDOT, the agency that is intending to remove the existing culverts to make more fish-passable culverts on McAleer Creek (and that the project is not intended to alleviate flooding on Lake Ballinger.)

Diane Buckshnis (Edmonds Councilmember) stated: “I want to see this project go forward, I am no scientist, but I know a lot about how grant funding works. We need to get WSDOT to cooperate with us, and get something started. We have the State Route 104 culverts in Edmonds, and I have seen a lot of culvert replacements happening elsewhere. I just want to get started, so that we have at least a precedent. Everything flows downstream; and we have serious issues here in Edmonds. We want them to move forward, but keep them in the know, so that they are aware that there are issues. My understanding is that they have a very strict window and can only work within that window. It is important that we get things started, get this partnership started, and then we can probably try and expand it. But I really felt that the presentation they presented last time was good, and I learned a lot.”

III. Update on Lake Ballinger water quality summer 2022 (Julie Rose, Edmonds resident)

Water quality monitoring is going well. Because of the cold air this spring, things are not looking quite as bad (in terms of water quality for the lake) as they have during past years. Julie updated the Forum that she goes out every other week for water quality testing, and once a month she takes samples which are then sent to a lab for analysis. Snohomish County keeps those records, and the information helps Snohomish County to know how well the lake is doing from a water quality standpoint. The information will also hopefully help the Forum make great decisions. Julie looks at the weather condition, water clarity, whether or not there is algae, water color, dissolved oxygen, and water temperature. Thus far this season there has been no blue/green or surface algae bloom, a sign that the lake is in balance.

Q. Tracy Furutani (Lake Forest Park Councilmember) asked if the lake turns over seasonally.

A. Julie responded that the lake does turn over (de-stratify) in the spring and the fall.

In the hot time of year, sometimes the band where the fish are living is deeper than. It is a relatively shallow lake, and is affected by the ambient air temperature.

Q. Tracy asked if copies of the Lake Ballinger water quality reports were accessible.

A. Patrick Johnson (Edmonds Stormwater Technician) stated that if it's not posted on the Snohomish County Lake Ballinger website already, the Forum can look into making that information more publically available.

Kari Quaas (Snohomish Conservation District Community Engagement Manager) mentioned that there was a total of 70 people in attendance at the Youth Day event at Lake Ballinger (34 kids and 36 adults.) The adults had just as much fun because they were able to get involved in activities with their children. The kids were able to participate in water quality testing, the poop toss game (to teach about proper pet waste disposal), learn about infiltration, make seed balls, play with a watershed model, and make salmon art. MLT News sent a photographer and covered the story. This was a summer event, based on the success of the Orca Recovery Day event last fall. We thought: "Why not have something in the summer when the weather is nice?" The families love it.

Steve Woodard (MLT Councilmember) expressed a thank you to Snohomish Conservation District.

Mark Philips (Former Councilmember) commented he does water testing on McAleer Creek and Lyons Creek downstream from Lake Ballinger, and that this major effort to encourage fish to migrate into Lake Ballinger and out. The kind of data that Julie is collecting is extremely important to understanding what kind of environment in the lake are we creating for fish. We would like to see, for me a gold standard would be to have a Kokanee salmon (land-locked sockeye) population that could use the lake. I have a sense that water testing we do for streams is quite different from water quality testing for lakes. It would be helpful to have a fish biologist work with the Forum, to understand how conducive the lake environment is to increasing populations of fish in the lake. There are things that we can do to effect the lake temperature stratification. I would like to hear a biologist talk about how these kind of lakes compare to Lake Ballinger (maybe in more pristine areas), and what realistically we might expect if we did as much as we could to increase fish population in the lake.

IV. Overview of Ballinger Park Hall Creek Restoration (Laura Reed)

McAleer Creek maintenance update: Only one partially constructed beaver dam was found this summer. Crews attempted to trap the beaver, but it was a young one which appears to have instead moved on somewhere else. The MLT O&M crews continue to patrol for other potential obstructions in McAleer Creek.

Ballinger Park Hall Creek Restoration Project. This is a highly ambitious large scale habitat restoration project, a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Costs for the project construction will be paid 65% by the Army Corps and 35% by Mountlake Terrace. The preparation for this project (scheduled to break ground in 2023) has been almost ten years in the making, starting with the 2015 master plan for Ballinger Park, where folks from around the lake came together to determine what they wanted to see in the new park. The feasibility study for the restoration project was completed in 2019.

The project improvements include:

- Flood plain reconnection, with the removal of a defunct tennis court and the addition of large woody debris and native plant species.
- For the downstream section along the playfields, removal of invasive species and planting out with native plants.
- Within the main body of Ballinger Park, a new creek channel with laid back slope will be dug and established as the new channel. The old channel will be blocked with an earthen plug, then creek water will be diverted into the new channel.
- Fly-over boardwalk that connects the east and west sides of the park and also to prevent folks from trampling new plantings.
- Total replanting area will be 16.4 acres
- Views from the trail so people can see from the trail to community center.

Q. Tracy Furutani asked if are there any expected changes to the sedimentation in the lake from the project.

A. Laura Reed replied that this is strictly habitat restoration project, not related to flood control.

Q. Bob White (Resident) asked: How does this tie into the trail that is being constructed this summer?

A. Laura Reed affirmed that the plan is to designate areas where no planting will be done. These are the areas where future paths will be put in by the Parks department, connecting at the boardwalk.

Q. Bob White: Will the restoration project include the trail construction on the west side and tie into Edmonds?

A. Laura Reed: No, that is not part of this project. The trails are to be built by the Parks department at a later date.

Q. Bob White: What is the status of the trail program on the east side, I understand there was a bid opening yesterday?

A. Donnelle Dayao (MLT Parks Project Manager) replied that yes, there was a bid opening yesterday for a north to south connector on the east side of the park. It will connect the MLT Senior Center parking lot with the parking lot for the boat launch.

The process started yesterday. We are going through our verification process to get a contractor on board, and hopefully will start construction will start in the next few weeks or so. We should have someone mobilized out there soon, you can look for that in August.

Q. Gail Meyerson asked: How do you keep the ponds from becoming stagnant?

A. Laura Reed replied that the ponds are groundwater-fed. We are not actively doing anything to change the way the park ponds function as part of this project.

Steve Woodard stated the universal design playground is only one of the forthcoming changes around the lake, and that the fly-over boardwalk sounds exciting.

Bob White commented that this is a regional park, and the west side trail is critical for the folks on the west side to get to the park and enjoy the amenities. He is concerned that the trail being constructed on the east side with the fishing pier and boat launch ties into the trails on the west side.

V. Announcements & Updates

Stormwater Management Action Plan (SMAP) update from city staff

- Laura Reed (Stormwater Program Manager, Mountlake Terrace) indicated that as a result of the watershed inventory and public input, Mountlake Terrace will focus on Hall Creek as the drainage basin of interest for their SMAP. This means that the city will be writing a plan over the next year to improve water quality in the Hall Creek basin, look for retrofit opportunities, and explore other opportunities to make the lake cleaner and Hall Creek healthier.
- John Featherstone (Surface Water Utility Manager, Shoreline) said the criteria for Ecology requirements and Shoreline's prioritization process identified the Boeing Creek drainage basin as Shoreline's top priority. Boeing Creek basin is the city's second largest basin, and the basin closest to Puget Sound. It is also exclusively within the Shoreline city limits, and that fact ended up being the probably the most single decisive factor in determining which basin was selected. Ecology wants cities to look at how much influence they will have over a basin as part of the prioritization process, and that was a big part of why Shoreline selected Boeing Creek.
- Patrick Johnson (Stormwater Technician, Edmonds) shared that the watershed selection in Edmonds came down to how much of our selected basins fell within our city. While the Lake Ballinger and Halls Creek did rank very high (in the top three), Perrinville Creek was selected as the priority basin. This is due to different problems we are facing as the creek has shut itself off from Puget Sound and has serious issues with erosion and sediment deposition. He also mentioned that moving forward, if the Department of Ecology choses to revisit this basin selection process in another permit cycle, he can see Lake

Ballinger scoring very highly.

- Andrew Silva (Lake Forest Park Project Manager) said that Lake Forest Park has made a basin selection. Our initial work to prioritize a basin for the SMAP has led us to select the Lyon Creek basin. Ecology has acknowledged that it is okay to make adjustments in prioritization as you go through third and final phase of this plan development process (stormwater management and action identification and planning.) The interesting thing about what happened in Lake Forest Park is that there are strategies for achieving your water quality goals which Ecology states you must consider in developing this plan. They don't say you have to use them, but you must consider them. We learned in prioritization process that depending on which tool you select to make water quality improvements, different basins benefit to different extents. So in this final phase, we will be doing a lot more public engagement to try and identify what types of tools are most palatable to stakeholders (internal and external to city government) and it may lead to us revisiting that selection, but right now, Lyon Creek has been selected.

Andrew also provided a plug for website tool that provides feedback and helps Lake Forest Park make these type of decisions:

<https://www.cityofflp.com/656/Stormwater-Management-Action-Plan>.

This page on our city website provides an overview of the city's Stormwater Management Action Plan (SMAP), including purpose, why we're developing it, how long it will take to complete, and key milestones along the way. The overall goal of the plan is to identify actions the city will take to achieve our water quality goals in at least one of the city's surface water basins over the next 20 years. As we develop plan documents, we are posting them to this page, which visitors can access by clicking the links on the right side of the page. For instance, we completed a "Receiving Water Assessment" in March and the report is posted on this page. We have also developed a "StoryMap" tool that residents and others can use to learn more about the plan and share feedback, and this is also linked on the right side of the page along with a [video of a presentation](#) our planning team gave last month that helps explain how to use the tool. As a shortcut, interested parties can visit <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/07bceb383a274f168751a9033d2aa52d> and scroll through the page all the way to the bottom to access the feedback collection map. We're seeking any feedback people think is relevant to stormwater and surface water management. I encourage everyone to use this tool, it might surprise you how many types of work or phenomena we observe in our surrounding environments which are related to storm/surface water management. My request of anyone using the tool is to cast a wide net in the types of feedback they offer, as you never know what might be useful for our team to consider.

Results of annual aquatic plant survey on Lake Ballinger (Laura Reed)

- Eurasian watermilfoil – was dominant previously, current populations are not large and the lake will be treated again to control the milfoil spread in 2023
- Fragrant water lilies are dominant in the lake
- Curly leaf pondweed is a new threat to the lake. Suggest the Ballinger Invasives Committee convene to discuss because this is aggressive weed. A strategy to manage this invasive in the lake is needed.
- A display of invasive plant signage about water lilies for Lake Ballinger was presented to the Forum.

VI. Public Comment

Q. Warren McAndrews (President, Lake Ballinger Residents Association) inquired if there are any updates on the abandoned house on the south end of the lake.

A. Patrick Johnson (Stormwater Technician) responded that there are no current updates. The process is moving along. We're waiting for funding to demolish the house, it's been quiet but in a positive way, and I will follow up.

Mark Phillip (Former Councilmember) commented that he is impressed with the level of technical staff activities supporting this Forum, it's amazing and great! He further commented that really in a venture like this, the staff level is where things get done.

Kari Quaas (Community Engagement Manager) commented that the Snohomish Conservation District has just posted a position for Habitat Restoration Project Manager or Sr. Project Manager, so if the Forum is aware of anyone interested, please direct them to <https://snohomishcd.org/employment>

VII. Topics for next meeting:

- Fireworks over Lake Ballinger for all jurisdictions sponsorship
- MLT Park and viewing platform

VIII. Date and location of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Oct 18, 2022 at 2:00 pm, hopefully in Mountlake Terrace's new City Hall.

IX. Adjourn – 3:31p.m.