

**CITY OF BLACK DIAMOND
CITY COUNCIL
WORKSTUDY NOTES
November 20, 2008
Council Chamber, 25510 Lawson Street, Black Diamond, Washington**

Mayor Botts called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Botts, Councilmembers Hanson, Bowie, Boston, Olness and Mulvihill.

ABSENT:

Staff present: Gwendolyn Voelpel, City Administrator; Steve Pilcher, Community Development Director; Andy Williamson, Economic Development Director; Tom Guilfoil, Assistant City Attorney; Loren D. Combs, City Attorney and Brenda L. Streepy, City Clerk.

Guests present: Richard Robohm, Wetlands Specialist - Department of Ecology

Department of Ecology Sensitive Areas Presentation

Natural Resources/Parks Director Nix discussed three letters received from Ecology concerning sensitive areas comments. Mr. Nix added as requested by Councilmember Hanson he contacted Mr. Robohm from Ecology to come out and discuss with Council buffer sizes and how they are determined.

Mr. Robohm, Wetlands Specialist – Department of Ecology spoke regarding the responsibilities within the Department of Ecology and local agencies to include Best Available Science when updating a Sensitive Areas Ordinance. He noted the department has helped local agencies adopt regulations that adhere to local mandates.

Mr. Robohm explained the wetland rating system was developed in the early 1990’s, and was recently updated in 2004. The system has four categories (I to IV), which reflect the level of protection and management needed. It is also used to prescribe criteria for avoidance, buffer widths, mitigation ratio, it qualifies as “best available science”, and assess wetland functions in three main groups: 1. habitat, 2. water quality improvement, and 3. hydrologic functions.

Key Topics/Discussion Points

Management Options

- Analyzing wetlands and the landscape.

- Characterizing risk.
- Managing wetlands with plan and policies, nonregulatory tools and adaptive management.
- Regulatory tools, such as avoiding impacts, buffers and mitigation ratios.

Best Available Science and Buffers

- Scientific literature very consistent.
- Buffers perform many key functions and are critical to maintaining wetlands.
- Factors that should determine buffer widths: wetland type and function (category), intensity of impacts from land use and character of buffer (slope, soils, vegetation).
- Scientific literature reports ranges for different buffer functions:

Removing coarse sediment	10 – 50 ft.
Removing fine sediment	100 – 300 ft.
Removing Nitrogen or Phosphorous	30 – 200 ft.
Screening wildlife	50 – 150 ft.
Habitat for wetland-dependent spp.	100 – 1200 ft.
- “Within the range of BAS” is meaningful only when you ask, for what functions and what level of risk is acceptable?

Regulating Buffers

- Challenge for local governments is to choose an approach based on reliance of buffers vs. other means to protect functions, level of risk, and balancing predictability and flexibility.
- Alternative 1, buffers based only on rating. (one size fits all)
- Alternative 2, buffers based on rating and intensity of impacts.
- Alternative 3, buffers based on rating, intensity of impacts, and wetland functions or sensitivity. This option offers flexibility and predictability, includes criteria to increase, decrease and average buffers, represents moderate risk, and developed with input from guidance groups.

Councilmember Hanson asked Mr. Robohm on Parametrix adding a “core”. Mr. Robohm explained Parametrix is using both the rating system and landscaping analysis that Ecology has developed. Headwaters and core have been added with needed extra protection and would be an area with high habitat value. Efforts should be focused in these areas to protect the core.

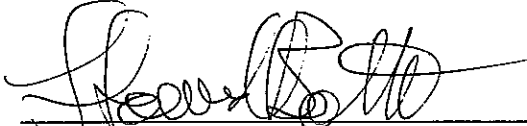
Councilmember Bowie asked Mr. Robohm if body of water and habitat were brought into the document from Parametrix. Mr. Robohm responded yes, and explained that this is a more sophisticated approach and would like to see more communities do this. Essentially you would score in rating system, based on water quality improvement, hydrology and habitat to figure out what the wetland rating would be and then use this to determine how to tailor the protection to the needs of the resource.

Also discussed were buffer averaging, administrative process for reducing buffers, can beavers artificially create a wetland, and lighting in wetlands.


ADJOURNMENT:

The workstudy ended at 6:57 p.m.

ATTEST:



Howard Botts, Mayor



Brenda L. Streepy, City Clerk