



DATE: September 10, 2008

TO: Vicki Orrico, Chair
Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Patti Wilma, Interim Land Use Director, 452-2724
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Development Services Department

SUBJECT: Shoreline Master Program Update Project

At the September 10 study session, staff will introduce Ian Stewart of EMC Research who will provide an overview of the results of our recently conducted opinion survey. The survey was conceived in an effort to better understand the views of Bellevue residents on a variety of issues having to do with updating Bellevue's Shoreline Master Program. The results of the survey should prove useful in providing the Commission a more precise understanding of public sentiment regarding shoreline issues. In addition, it will help the Commission to identify issues that they would like staff to explore in more depth in a formal focus group setting.

The balance of this memo summarizes current project status, discusses briefly some of the survey's key findings, and provides some key details of the upcoming shoreline boat tour scheduled for September 20th. The memo concludes by outlining the next steps in the planning process.

DIRECTION NEEDED

Staff requests direction from the Commission in two specific areas:

- We need a sense of the number of Commission members that may want to attend the scheduled shoreline boat tour to be held on September 20th; and
- Identification of issues or concerns needing further exploration in a formal focus group.

BACKGROUND

As a reminder, the SMP Update process is a three-year-long planning process consisting of six major phases with each phase building on those steps that went before. Of the six phases, two are procedural and four are substantive; the four substantive phases include:

Phase 1:	Jurisdictional determination and inventory	<i>(Winter 2007-Spring 2009)</i>
Phase 2:	Shoreline analysis and characterization	
Phase 3:	Shoreline environment designation, policy and regulation	<i>(Winter 2009- Summer 2009)</i>
Phase 4:	Cumulative impacts, restoration planning, revisiting phase 3	<i>(Summer 2009- Winter 2009)</i>

Phase 5 is the local adoption process and includes multiple study sessions before the Planning Commission and the City Council. Included in this phase is a public hearing before the Planning Commission as well as specific public outreach events. Completion of the SEPA process would also occur early in Phase 5.

Phase 6 is the state approval process and will occur during the spring and summer of 2010. Throughout the process, the City will be consulting with the Department of Ecology and making interim submittals for its review and approval. The dates listed in the table above represent the approximate due dates for finishing key phases.

CURRENT STATUS

Phase 1 is nearly complete and Phase 2 is underway. As previously reported, we have submitted a preliminary draft shoreline jurisdictional determination and public involvement plan to the Department of Ecology. The City’s project consultant has completed the draft shoreline inventory and has recently submitted the draft shoreline characterization¹ to the City for initial review. We expect this Phase 2 to be complete by December 2008.

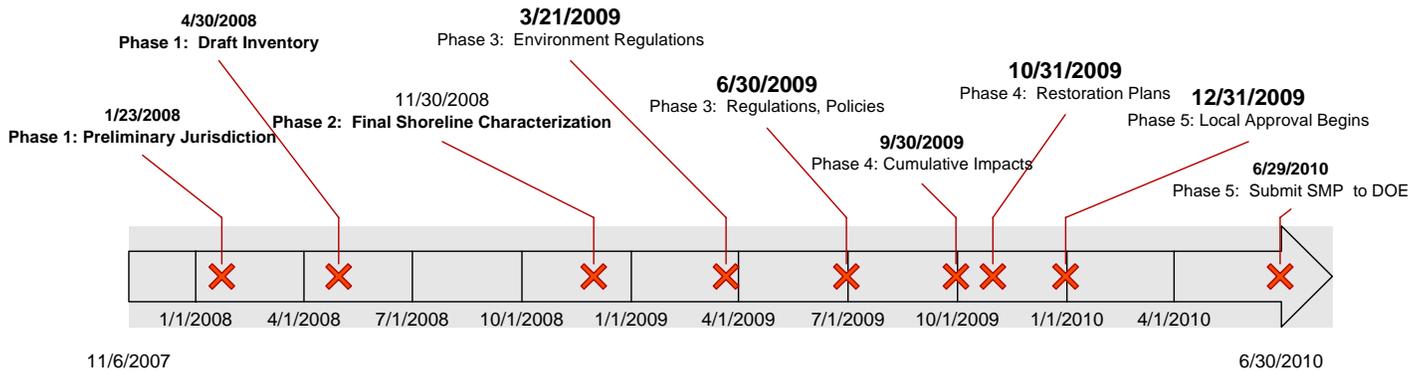
The underlying concept is that this information, in concert with community vision, and mediated by the three major goals of the Shoreline Management Act—the protection and restoration of the valuable and fragile natural resources; the fostering of those “reasonable and appropriate uses” that are dependent upon waterfront proximity; and the enhancement of public access or increased recreational opportunity—is used to designate shoreline zones or “environments” with specific planning and ecological objectives. For example, the designation “natural” is given to those areas where existing uses do not significantly interfere with natural systems, while the designation “urban” reflects conditions assumed to be more suitable for more intense development. Thus the shoreline “environment” becomes a short hand measure for suitability for varying uses and intensities of development. This step spawns specific shoreline policies and

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The general idea in the analysis phase is to create a comprehensive picture of the shoreline environment by working from the landscape or regional scale down to the reach scale, carefully summarizing the influences of climate, geology, topography, soils, hydrology, land cover type, and land use. The next step is to identify management issues of concern such as those ecological processes that no longer function as they once did due to impacts of urbanization or specific inputs of pollution.

regulations to support the environment designation and it is the point at which the Commission gets deeply involved with the Update.

The dates in bold face below represent those areas where Planning Commission involvement is critical.



PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

With the assistance of EMC Research, we conducted a statistically valid telephone survey of approximately 400 residents and 120 shoreline residents, yielding a margin of error of less than five and nine percent respectively. The project team added shoreline property owners as a separate pool in an effort to test differences in attitudes between these residents and the general population. Shoreline property owners comprise roughly seven percent of the sampling universe (voters) in Bellevue and possess different demographics; for example, they are generally wealthier and older. For both groups, the questions in the survey focused on respondents’ overall satisfaction with the City’s approach to shorelines, preferred uses of the shoreline, best restoration approaches, and regulations and incentives thought most likely to improve the shoreline environment. The rationale for the questions was based on the State’s Shoreline Guidelines and was informed by the Shoreline Management Act which requires the City to consider the three broad policies of encouraging water-dependent uses, protection of shoreline natural resources, and the promotion of public access.

The results of the survey should prove useful in providing the Planning Commission a more precise understanding of public sentiment regarding shoreline issues. This understanding is made more acute by the side-by-side comparison of attitudes of the two populations studied. This additional perspective will also aid staff and the consultant team in preparing appropriate policy options for the Planning Commission to consider. We believe that this information will allow the Commission to identify issues that are amenable to further exploration in a formal focus group setting.

Some of the key findings revealed in the study are as follows:

Overall Satisfaction

- The vast majority of respondents are satisfied with their access to shorelines in Bellevue. At the same time, a significant proportion (roughly 25%) have no opinion on shoreline access.

Majority Believe Bellevue Balances SMA Goals

- A strong majority (57%) believe Bellevue maintains a good balance between the three goals of the Shoreline Management Act, while an additional third (32%) think Bellevue has an unequal balance.

Majority Give the City Positive Ratings on Shoreline Issues

- A majority of respondents give the City positive ratings for their efforts on a variety of shoreline-related issues including providing public access (61% excellent/good), protecting the shoreline (57%), encouraging people to make the shoreline ecologically healthy (50%), and providing a mix of water oriented uses (50%). In each case, however, at least a quarter (25%) of respondents gave a negative answer (fair/poor).

Differing Views on Shoreline Property Owners

- Respondents citywide and shoreline owners have differing views of the job shoreline owners are doing to make the shoreline ecologically healthy. Only a third (33%) city wide rate this positively, while a strong majority (68%) of shoreline owners give this item (and their performance) a positive rating.

Respondents Support City Incentives for Shoreline Landowners

- An overwhelming majority (78%) say that the City should encourage shoreline landowners to change their docks, bulkheads, and lawns to improve habitat and water quality through incentives and regulations

Respondents Oppose Unlimited Dock Size

- A strong majority disagree (86%) that shoreline owners can have any size dock they want.

More Habitat for Fish and Wildlife Always Top Choice

- In a forced tradeoff between habitat, water dependent or oriented uses, and public access, more habitat for fish and wildlife is always the top choice, followed by public access, and finally more water oriented uses.

Strongest Support for These Restoration Options

- Providing information about environmentally sensitive dock construction (88% support),
- An incentive program for property owners to restore their shorelines (87%) and

- Shoreline purchase for restoration and preservation (77%)

Voters Support Funding Restoration

- A slim majority (53%) of Bellevue respondents agree that all residents should help fund restoration of shorelines on public and private property.

SHORELINE TOUR

In an effort to gain first-hand knowledge of the issues that will confront the Commission, staff has arranged an informational cruise of Bellevue's Lake Washington waterfront. The tour is scheduled to depart from Newport Shores Yacht Club at 1:00 pm on September 20. The public has been invited—the response has been overwhelming to date—as have members of the Council and Boards and Commissions. Key staff from the City will also attend as will representatives from the Department of Ecology and other key permitting agencies. The tour will be guided by staff from the Watershed Company and will focus on the requirements of the SMP Update and the existing conditions of Bellevue's shoreline. The varied nature of the Lake Washington shoreline lends itself well to discussions of land uses, public access, piers, bulkhead, storm water, invasive vegetation, setbacks, and other topics of major interest. Should a quorum of Commission choose to participate, this meeting will be noticed as a special City Council meeting. The tour will last three hours and return to the dock by 4:00 p.m. See Attachment for details.

NEXT STEPS

Following direction from the Planning Commission, staff will convene a focus group whose participants will be specifically chosen to help probe the results of the survey or to answer questions posed by the Commission to address perceived gaps in the survey. One useful outcome will be to identify how different groups talk about the issues, what language they use and what reasoning they employ. Staff anticipates the focus group will occur in October.

As part of the continuing public visioning process, the project team will conduct its first open houses in either later November or December to roll out the shoreline inventory and characterization work and solicit feedback from the community regarding environmental designations and areas of interest.

The project webpage <http://www.bellevuewa.gov/shoreline-master-plan.htm> will contain updated information as the project proceeds.

ATTACHED

1. Boat Tour Announcement

ALL ABOARD!



Join City of Bellevue Planning Commissioners and other City officials for a Boat Tour of the Lake Washington shoreline.

The boat tour is part of the City's Shoreline Master Program Update. The tour will be guided by staff from The Watershed Company and will focus on the requirements of the Update and the existing conditions of Bellevue's shorelines.



Saturday, September 20, 2008

Boarding the Argosy "Celebration" at 12:30 p.m.
Sailing Time is 1:00-4:00 p.m.
Newport Shores Yacht Club
81 Skagit Key - Bellevue



Space is limited. Please RSVP by September 10th :

Sharon Taylor
425-452-4392
staylor@bellevuewa.gov



For more information visit:
<http://www.bellevuewa.gov/shoreline-master-plan.htm>



Shoreline
Master Program
UPDATE



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