

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CONVERSATION
CHELAN COUNTY

SUMMARY

Chelan County Community Resilience Conversation | Meeting Summary

INTRODUCTION

Partners and stakeholders throughout Chelan County are exploring a collective, county-wide approach to community resilience planning. To support the process, two community resilience conversations have been held to date, one on January 31, 2019 and another on October 18, 2019 from 9 AM to 12 PM.

This document summarizes the dialogue and next steps from the October 18, 2019 conversation, held at Wenatchee's Confluence Technology Center. Chelan County hosted the meeting along with Chelan Public Utility District and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to discuss progress on resilience planning and implementation across the county and provide input on potential next steps for resilience planning at both the county and state level. WA DNR co-hosted the meeting to support county-wide resilience planning efforts and inform the agency's own resilience planning.

PURPOSE

The meeting purpose was two-fold:

- Discuss progress on resilience planning and implementation
- Provide input to inform upcoming next steps including a potential Chelan County community resilience plan project and WA DNR's agency-wide resilience planning

PARTICIPATION

Chelan County sent invitations to community members and organizations that attended a Resilience Workshop hosted by WA DNR, Chelan PUD, and Chelan County in January 2019. In addition, leaders from the Latinx community organizations, Parque Padrinos and CAFÉ, were invited to attend.

Twenty-nine people attended the meeting (not including the planning team; see Appendix for a list of participants and their affiliations). Local government staff and elected officials attended the workshop as well as staff from non-governmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust. Staff members from the congressional offices of Representative Kim Schrier, State Representative Keith Goehner, and Governor Jay Inslee also participated. In addition, private citizens from the community and fire chiefs involved with wildland fire adaptation work attended.

Participants were asked during the meeting whether there were groups or individuals absent from the meeting who should be involved in future conversations. In response, participants noted two non-profits that conduct aquatic restoration work (Cascade Columbia Regional Fishery Enhancement Board and Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board), small towns and communities, the Yakama Nation, and Latinx community members. DNR staff noted that a selection of tribal representatives and Latinx community members were interviewed in late summer and early fall for their input on DNR's approach to resilience planning.

METHODS

The meeting was structured into two parts. First, participants heard presentations about current Chelan County resilience planning efforts, and then provided feedback on next steps for a potential county-wide resilience planning project. Second, participants provided feedback to WA DNR about the agency's statewide resilience planning. The meeting format focused on generating input and ideas through individual reflection, work in small groups, and facilitated plenary conversations.

Consultants supporting DNR's agency-wide resilience planning process analyzed the day's input by transcribing post-it and flip chart content, which was already clustered into similar responses and thematic areas. These responses and thematic areas were further synthesized and distilled to generate the notes and key findings in this summary.

KEY FINDINGS – CHELAN COUNTY RESILIENCE PLANNING

The analysis generated several key findings, summarized below and detailed in the following sections.

- The four examples of current resilience planning and implementation across the county indicate that resilience planning is including consideration of climate impacts in various ways. Furthermore, these efforts suggest that **resilience planning is effective in Chelan County when it is in response to recent, local disasters or impacts, integrates similar planning efforts into a holistic approach, and is collaborative in nature.**
- **Resilience planning and implementation efforts face common challenges in Chelan County**, such as the difficulty in prioritizing action in a generally high-risk environment and the sense that success will be difficult to achieve—but must be pursued—given current and projected risks.
- The key perceived benefits or values of a county-wide resilience planning effort are **improved communication and coordination, and the opportunity to advance projects of mutual benefit.** Given the number of ongoing resilience efforts, a key next step in county-wide planning may be a coordination forum that brings together those engaged in resilience projects to learn from each other, strategize around county-level initiatives, and support efficient communications, coordination, and advocacy.
- Resilience is broad and encompasses many things. **A county-wide resilience planning effort will need to be clear in defining what resilience means**, or defining which aspects of resilience are the focus of the plan or forum.
- **Existing state coordination and local public education and outreach around resilience are working well, but are insufficient.** Additional resources, capacity, and effort are needed.

Presentations on Current Efforts

Four presenters summarized current efforts and recent successes in county resilience planning efforts. In addition, the UW Climate Impacts Group presented an overview of local climate resilience planning efforts around the state. Presentations lasted approximately five minutes and covered the following topics:

- Chelan PUD Climate Resilience Report (Tracy Yount and Chad Bowman, Chelan County PUD)
- Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (Jason Detamore, Chelan County)
- Chelan County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (Mike Cushman, Cascadia Conservation District)
- Icicle Peshastin Working Group (Mike Kaputa)
- Climate resilience planning across the state (Crystal Raymond, UW CIG)

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: CHELAN PUD CLIMATE RESILIENCE REPORT

Chelan PUD has assessed Lake Chelan operations, generation at Rocky Reach Dam, distribution load changes due to changes in ambient air temperature, and transmission wildfire risk to determine current levels of resilience and risk. In the future, they plan to assess reservoir management, power generation, hatchery operations, and water quality.

Chelan PUD has also completed several activities to improve the resilience of PUD systems and operations. These activities were driven by constituent requests:

- **Infrastructure hardening** to reduce wildfire risk includes painting poles with fire-resistant paint and replacing wooden poles with steel poles.
- An **infrastructure risk assessment** to identify and address high risk areas. Chelan, Cashmere, and Plain/Lake Wenatchee were identified as at high risk. In Cashmere, the PUD plans to replace electric infrastructure as part of the Godwin Bridge replacement. The Plain/Lake Wenatchee is the largest at-risk area identified in the assessment and comes with a high infrastructure risk that is difficult to address. The PUD is currently evaluating alternatives to address risks in this area and plans to select an alternative to pursue in spring 2020.

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: MULTI-JURISDICTION NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN (NHMP)

Chelan County's Office of Emergency Management develops and updates the County's NHMP every five years. The NHMP **addresses all natural hazard-related risks** to the county, provides an inventory of critical infrastructure at risk, and identifies steps to mitigate risks. In turn, projects are developed and can be eligible for funding if they are identified in the NHMP.

The most recent version of the NHMP is a county-wide hazard mitigation approach. It dedicates 15 pages to climate change, largely relying on NASA and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, and addresses wildland fire largely through reference to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) is currently reviewing the most recent NHMP.

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: CHELAN COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)

Like the NHMP, the CWPP has been recently updated. Cascadia Conservation District led a team of partners to gather community input and update the CWPP, which **integrated the following planning efforts** in the document:

- Local CWPPs
- Hazard mapping through the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) program (completed in 2017)
- Local wildfire mitigation plans, based on the National Cohesive Strategy for Wildfire

The CWPP identified the need for more engagement with communities, especially those without existing capacity such as that provided by the WA Fire-Adapted Communities Learning Network (WAFAC). The CWPP was last updated in 2007.

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: ICICLE PESHASTIN WORKING GROUP

The Chelan County Natural Resources Department shared the story of this complex integrated watershed management effort aiming to balance multiple in- and out-of-stream elements in the Icicle Creek Watershed. The working group has convened for the past seven years to develop a work plan to address low in-stream flows in August and September.

The working group would like to see improvements in flow in Icicle Creek to 60 cubic feet per second (cfs) minimum in drought years and 100 cfs minimum in non-drought years. The drought year is generally defined as a 1 in 10-year event, but work group members are still in discussions about what defines a drought year.

The current low flow in Icicle Creek is 15 cfs; increasing the cfs requires significant coordination and investment. Multiple projects, including an \$80 million capital improvement project, have been proposed to increase low flows in August and September, and provide water for out-of-stream uses such as agriculture.

To determine if these significant investments would be likely to achieve the flow increases under future scenarios of projected water availability (2050 and 2080), the Icicle Peshastin Working Group hired the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group (CIG). **CIG's evaluation concluded that certain project combinations can be successful at maintaining the in-stream flow goals under some future climate scenarios.**

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: RESILIENCE PLANNING ACROSS THE STATE

To provide context to discuss county-wide resilience planning, Crystal Raymond (UW CIG) provided an overview of resilience planning efforts across the state. CIG works statewide to support building climate resilience. Based on a recent inventory of jurisdictions, agencies, utilities, and tribes with some climate resilience planning in place, about 20% of the state is currently covered by some resilience planning:

- 18% of WA counties
- 55% of Tribes
- 22% of WA population in cities
- 3 public utilities
- 8 state agencies

CIG finds that jurisdictions plan for climate change for the following reasons:

- To fulfill a responsibility to protect the public.
- To demonstrate wise use of public funds.
- To make the "business case" for resilience spending.
- To reduce potential liability for not addressing a known risk.
- To protect bond ratings and investors.

Jurisdictions tend to pursue a stand-alone climate resilience plan for the following reasons:

- To identify a strategic approach to address climate change and address all climate risks in a single document.
- To efficiently and effectively consider the sequencing and coordination of climate-related actions, including avoiding contradictory actions.
- To provide a vehicle for public and stakeholder input and expressions of support.

Participants asked the following questions following CIG's presentation:

- **Question:** What about solutions that engage the people affected by climate change, such as behavior change?
 - **Response:** Community engagement is increasingly a part of climate resilience planning efforts that include actions for the community to support or pursue. When planning efforts are focused on internal jurisdictional infrastructure and operations, they are less likely to include public engagement.
- **Question:** Which county is the farthest along in climate resilience planning? What traits have made the effort successful?
 - **Response:** King County is the farthest along in Washington. They have dedicated staff and devoted significant time to build an internal awareness of climate risks, and to build public support for climate resilience over the last 20 years. Many climate resilience planning efforts begin in response to a major risk or disaster, such as the threat of coastal flooding, bluff erosion, and sea level rise in Grays Harbor or wildfire in Chelan County.
- **Question:** How do you integrate different plans?
 - **Response:** One option is to focus the resilience plan on organizing the various planning efforts, then use existing planning mechanisms (such as Hazard Mitigation Plans) to implement actions. Another option is to try to integrate the various “piecemeal” efforts across a jurisdiction into a single planning and implementation effort.

Discussion and Feedback on County-Wide Resilience Planning

Mike Kaputa, Chelan County, introduced the concept for a Chelan County resilience planning effort. He noted the county currently lacks an effective forum to connect the dots between the resilience efforts being done, which likely leads to inefficiencies. To address these inefficiencies, a coordinating forum or strategy to link existing efforts and support those engaged in resilience across the county may help.

Participants discussed the following questions, offering big ideas a county-wide resilience plan could address and big questions a county-wide resilience plan would need to answer:

- What benefit or value could a county-wide resilience plan provide for your jurisdiction, organization, or community?
- What are the biggest questions a plan would need to answer?

BIG IDEAS FOR A COUNTY-WIDE RESILIENCE PLAN

Participants identified communication, coordination, and the opportunity to advance projects of mutual benefit as key benefits or values of a county-wide resilience plan:

- Communication and coordination:
 - An **awareness of other efforts** would create opportunity for coordination, shared stewardship, collaborative communications, efficiency, and increased impact.
 - **Collaborative communications** and a **common voice** could support achieving agreement on priorities and help identify effective venues for public outreach and communications.
 - **External communications could be more efficient** if elected officials and their staff could review a county-wide resilience plan to identify priorities. Similarly, local funders could more easily identify how to engage in supporting the community.

- A **coordination forum** to share resilience ideas and strategize would support efficient communications, coordination, and advocacy. This could be done in addition to a county-wide resilience plan.
- Opportunity to advance projects of mutual benefit:
 - A process could be created to **identify where and how to focus** resilience efforts.
 - A **community protection line from wildfire** could be developed. It would need to connect to other needs, not just protecting transmission lines.
 - **Stormwater abatement ponds** could be developed to decrease stormwater risk and help address aging infrastructure. Memoranda of understanding could be used to support consistency with local efforts in preparing for wildfire and post-fire recovery.

BIG QUESTIONS A COUNTY-WIDE RESILIENCE PLAN WOULD NEED TO ANSWER

Facilitators asked participants to identify the big questions that a county-wide resilience plan or planning effort would need to answer. Participants and facilitators then clustered questions on post-it notes into themes. The six themes identified in the exercise are captured in the following table.

Theme	Question	Description
Impact	What is the impact of the plan or its activities?	A successful planning effort would need to serve as a tool to achieve tangible impacts, such as reducing wildfire risk before a fire (e.g., changes to code) and supporting communities in post-fire recovery.
Highest priorities	What are the highest priorities for resilience in the county?	A successful planning effort would need to identify and focus on the highest risks, considering what actions will provide the strongest safety net and the costs of projects (i.e., benefit-cost ratio).
Timing	When do resilience actions need to occur?	A successful planning effort must identify when actions are needed, and demonstrate that implementation will occur in the right timeframe.
Who pays	Who will pay for resilience?	A successful planning effort should clarify how funding occurs, and avoid the need to consider budget implications while decisions are made during fire response.
Responsibility	Who is responsible for resilience?	A successful planning effort needs to identify responsible entities, including a role for communities in the larger planning effort.
Coordination	What will coordination around resilience look like?	A successful planning effort would aid alignment around priorities, inform funding, and enable partners to be more proactive.

KEY FINDINGS – WA DNR RESILIENCE PLANNING

The final part of the meeting focused on providing feedback to WA DNR on the agency’s climate resilience plan, which will highlight actions the agency can take to ensure that DNR is prepared for the changes the state is already experiencing and can adapt to changes as they occur. The purpose of the plan is to advance resilience by highlighting DNR’s high-priority climate-related risks and responses, and fostering collaboration among DNR, communities, and partners in preparing for and adapting to impacts.

Meeting participants provided feedback on four thematic areas that DNR is considering including in the plan as potential statewide needs and opportunities:

- Provide consistent regional data, models, and forecasts
- Incentivize collaboration with funding
- Expand public education about resilience needs and opportunities
- Enhance coordination at the local, state, and federal levels

Each group answered several questions in providing this feedback:

- What is the relevance of this need or opportunity to your or your organization?
- What is currently working well for this need or area of opportunity?
- What more is needed to advance this opportunity?

PROVIDE CONSISTENT REGIONAL DATA, MODELS, AND FORECASTS

RELEVANCE

**SUPPORTS DECISION-MAKING.
RELIABLE RESOURCE.**

Working Well

- Data, models, and forecasts are peer-reviewed.

Needs and Opportunities

- Model outputs should include likely scenarios, not just worst-case scenario.
- Coordinate with local entities.
- Identify data needs.
- Build a library.
- Provide resources to local entities, including resources for ground-truthing information.

INCENTIVIZE COLLABORATION WITH FUNDING

RELEVANCE

**PIECEMEAL FUNDING IS INEFFECTIVE.
HELPS COORDINATE AND DRIVE ACTION.**

Working Well

- Community interest and action.
- Individual agency efforts such as DNR’s capacity grant or cross boundary grant.
- Meetings like this meeting, which are driven by recent events.
- Openness to listen and change.
- Shared Stewardship.

Needs and Opportunities

- More funding.
- Create less piecemeal and more holistic funding for local fire departments. Current funding leads to resource decisions during fire-fighting based on budget concerns.
- Diversity of community engagement; need engagement with Latinx communities and language appropriate materials.
- Address constraints and coordination among agencies. Coordinate action by funders like DNR, DFW, and Ecology when investing in areas such as chipping biomass and prescribed burning.
- Bring isolated, separate work together and consolidate into a working plan. It’s gotten better, but there’s more work to do.

EXPAND PUBLIC EDUCATION ABOUT RESILIENCE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

RELEVANCE

**TELLS LOCAL STORY.
SETS EXPECTATIONS.
STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS.**

Working Well

- Grassroots approach.
- Personal stories, because they are relatable and appeal to emotions.
- Current programs.
- Current networking and sharing.
- Lots of high quality materials currently available.

Needs and Opportunities

- More education on prescribed burns, and expectation management about prescribed burns.
- A state-wide campaign and travelling presentation for school districts, to provide an emotional connection. Get kids to bring parents to education sessions.

ENHANCE COORDINATION AT THE STATE, FEDERAL, AND LOCAL LEVELS

RELEVANCE

AFFECTS LOCAL ABILITY TO ACT. SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL CAPACITY.

Working Well

- The new forest health categorical exclusions in NEPA.
- DNR's leadership and other agencies addressing resilience.

Needs and Opportunities

- Need to better leverage local resources, large and small.
- More collective planning and coordination with all agencies.
- More funding is needed for multi-jurisdictional support.
- Funding options for groups and collaborative efforts need to be better focused and should allow for reduced government involvement.
- Agreements among local entities are working well, but better state agreement with local entities is still needed.
- More information and data can help with coordination, but the scale of available data is often not specific enough for local needs. Also, residents can lack interest in detailed information and may push back on the need for more data.
- Outreach and services are needed for small communities that do not have the opportunity and resources to participate.

CONCLUSION

The Chelan County Community Resilience Conversation was a continuation of the inaugural resilience conversation in January 2019 and brought together key partners and stakeholders in county-wide resilience planning and implementation. Through individual reflection, work in small groups, and facilitated plenary conversations, participants began to identify the key benefits of county-wide resilience planning, potential next steps to move county-wide planning forward, and needs and opportunities to advance WA DNR's agency-wide resilience planning.

A county resilience coordination forum could support improved communication and coordination, and provide an opportunity to advance projects of mutual benefit. Such a forum could also provide an avenue to articulate and advocate for the additional coordination and resources participants seek from state and federal levels, including DNR's agency-wide process. The successes and challenges faced by ongoing resilience efforts in Chelan County suggest a forum may be most successful if it is collaborative, integrates similar planning efforts into a holistic approach, is responsive to disasters, and enhances prioritization and action under high risk situations (i.e., declining in-stream flows and increased wildfire risk due to climate change and other stressors).

APPENDIX

List of meeting participants

In addition to the following list of meeting participants, the event facilitation team included:

- Dan Stonington, WA DNR
- Ryan Anderson, Washington Resource Conservation & Development Council
- P.J. Tillmann, Cascadia Consulting Group
- Crystal Raymond, University of Washington Climate Impacts Group

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Ben Alworth	Stemilt Growers
Blake Baldwin	Chelan County
Bob Bugert	Chelan County Commissioner, District #2
Brandt Cappell	WA State Representative Keith Goehner
Brian Brett	Chelan County Fire District #1
Carlene R. Anders	Okanogan County Long-term Recovery Group / City of Pateros, Mayor
Chad Bowman	Chelan PUD
Christine Morgan	Icicle Fund
Curt Soper	Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Doug England	Chelan County Commissioner, District #3
Frank Kuntz	City of Wenatchee, Mayor
Jason Detamore	Chelan County
Jim Passage	Lake Wenatchee Fire-Adapted Community
Josh Jorgensen	Mission Ridge
Kelli Scott	U.S. Representative Kim Schrier
Lilith Vespier	City of Leavenworth
Lloyd McGee	The Nature Conservancy
Mick Lamar	Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue
Mike Cushman	Cascadia Conservation District
Mike Kaputa	Chelan County
Ryan Rodruck	WA Department of Natural Resources
Salvador Salazar	Office of Governor Inslee
Sharon Waters	City of Leavenworth, Councilmember
Shiloh Burgess	Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce
Steve Wright	Chelan PUD
Todd Welker	WA Department of Natural Resources
Tracy Yount	Chelan PUD