



On-Site Septic Systems

by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, November 7, the Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Topics discussed were: (1) On-Site Septic Systems, (2) Elk Height Gravel Pit, and (3) Transportation Forum.

On-Site Septic Systems

Earlier this year the King County Board of Health floated the concept of a fee to be levied on on-site septic systems (OSS) to address potential OSS-caused pollution concerns. Many Rural Area citizens expressed concerns with imposition of such a fee to address potential pollution issues that weren't clear. The Area Council invited citizens' groups to discuss the issues.

Betsy Howe of the Citizens Opposed to OSS WA (COOMWA) discussed the organization she helped found to give septic system owners a voice. Several meetings were held this year with ever-increasing attendance of concerned citizens. Betsy stated the King County Board of Health heard such concerns and has, for now, backed off on any potential fee. She stated citizens should remain vigilant.

Glen Morgan of the Citizens' Alliance for Property Rights (CAPR) discussed work he and others have done in researching OSS-related issues. Part of this consisted of reviewing septic system complaints, where it was found there were no major system failures, only some pump failures. Their research in Thurston County found less than 0.2% septic systems failing. Glen mentioned the biggest problem seems to be combined sewer overflows which cause a good deal of pollution in local waterways and lakes. Consequently, he recommends the County focus on the oldest OSSs that could be more subject to failure.

Elk Height Gravel Pit

The recently proposed Elk Height gravel pit grading operation on Lk Francis Rd will import clean fill soil from outside excavation projects and provide excavated gravel to off-site construction projects. According to the Applicant during peak construction season up to 3,000 cu yd of fill will be placed daily, access is one commercial driveway, and operational life is up to 5 yrs.

The Applicant estimates 250 truck trips per day on Lk Francis Rd--a narrow, windy, hilly road where local residents already experience many truck trips. Nearly all proposed truck trips will funnel onto Cedar Grove Rd, which then will either go to SR-169 or Issaquah-Hobart Rd--two already traffic-congested corridors.

The King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT) conducted a Traffic Review and found “...no significant adverse impacts”: “...there are no King County intersections that meet King County Code 14.80, ‘Intersection Standards’ thresholds of 30-peak hour and 20% of the peak hour trips and operating at a level of service worse than “E”. Therefore, the project will not result in any significant adverse traffic impacts and there will be no off-site SEPA mitigation required for this project.” This finding concerns the Area Council and suggests the King County Code needs to be revisited to properly account for cumulative affects and traffic safety.

The KCDOT Materials Laboratory recommended: “...any permit approval should include a pavement study that analyzes mitigation measures for truck damage,” as it found Lk Francis Rd to be in varying degrees of disrepair. The part found in need of least repair is the section repaired last year due to Quality Aggregates’ (across from the proposed pit) continuous truck damage and flooding caused by erosion of its northern slope due to its operations (which led to closure of Maxwell Rd until repairs were later instituted). This finding concerns the Area Council and suggests the mitigation system needs to be revisited given KCDOT’s lack of funds to properly maintain the County’s 1,500 miles of roads and 181 bridges.

Transportation Forum

On October 18 the Area Council joined with the three other unincorporated area councils/associations in the King County Rural Area to host a Transportation Forum with the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and KCDOT to discuss regional growth management and resulting impacts on County roads.

At the Forum many issues were discussed ranging from jurisdictions exceeding their growth targets (as the Cities of Black Diamond and Covington are planning to do); how congested County road corridors (such as the Issaquah-Hobart Rd) could be addressed; and the how concept of *regional* transportation concurrency could be used to address cross-jurisdictional impacts (including urban commuters using many County roads without directly paying for their maintenance and repair).

The Area Council, along with its three Rural Area “sister” organizations, will maintain an open dialogue with PSRC, as it has been doing with KCDOT, on these issues.

Next Area Council Meeting

Monday, December 5, from 7:00 - 9:00 PM, at the Fire Station located at the SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection. All members of the Public are welcome.

Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides an opportunity to voice issues of concern to Area Council members and government officials in attendance.

Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District. Please visit: www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org.

***** NOTE: Four positions are open on the 16-member Area Council. If you live in the Tahoma School District outside the City of Maple Valley (see Service Area Map on our web site), you are invited to apply to become a member by sending a letter of interest to GMVUAC, P. O. Box 111, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or attend our next monthly meeting. *****