



## Reserve Silica

by Peter Rimbos, GMVUAC Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, March 3, 2025, the Area Council held its Regular Monthly Meeting at the Maple Valley Fire Station and via Zoom. Major topics discussed were: (1) Reserve Silica; (2) Critical Areas Update; and (3) the Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River Community Service Area Subarea Plan.

### Reserve Silica

Following the Area Council's February Monthly Meeting, at its request, a series of questions were sent to Reserve Silica's Operations Manager, Jeff Wright, on February 10, to address at this meeting. The following Reserve Silica representatives also were in attendance: CEO Marisa Floyd, COO Frank Melfi, Carla Brock (ASPECT Consulting—Hazardous Materials), and Doug Steding (Northwest Resource Law). The following discussion took place on the Area Council's questions:

Q1. KC DLS-Permitting told us a new Clearing & Grading "*Conditional-Operating Permit*" was issued covering August 2024 to January 2025. What "*conditions*" were placed on this permit?

**A1. The Clearing and Grading Permit is renewed annually (ongoing for over 50 years). Continue to operate under the 2014 *Interim Reclamation Plan*. After mining ended in 2007 the State Department of Natural Resources shifted reclamation responsibility to King County. The site is still under reclamation and a new Reclamation Plan was submitted to King County on 2/28/25, which includes fill volumes, areas to be filled, and estimated additional volume needed to complete reclamation. In 2015, it thought it only had year or two of reclamation left to do, but it still is finding more coal mines needing reclaiming. [NOTE: This statement surprised the Area Council and needs further checking.]**

Q2. Reserve Silica clearcut ~60-ac of mature Douglas-fir trees in the NE corner of the property in 2021/2022, without obtaining a *Forest Practices Act (FPA)* permit from the WA Department of Natural Resources.

**A2. It clearcut the acreage for "safety reasons." It determined the area was underlain by an old underground coal mine with many openings to the surface, which pose major safety risks, and determined it was necessary to clearcut this area to identify the risks and perform needed reclamation to address the safety issue. All our road building, clearcut, and dumping were approved by King County DLS-Permitting. [NOTE: Although Reserve Silica stated an FPA is not required, the Area Council believes an FPA is required, since they are not converting the land to a non-forest use.]**

Q3. As of last year, Reserve Silica had accepted ~3,300 truckloads of imported fill dumped on the clearcut land (the GMVUAC imputed this number from the WA Department of Ecology's February 16,

2024, determination of *No Further Action* report). KC DLS-Permitting's Ty Peterson told us Reserve Silica was to have submitted a proposal for dumping on the clearcut site by October 21, 2024.

**A3. Materials from the Ruston Superfund site were trucked to various places including Reserve Silica, which claimed it thought the truck loads received were all clean fill. It had ASPECT Consulting take many boring samples to evaluate for any contamination—no contamination was found. It stated all truck loads, both clean fill and inert wastes, are inspected, and it only accepts certain inert wastes under its 2012 Inert Waste permit. The State Department of Ecology issued a “No Further Action Required Decision” in February 2024.**

The discussion was cordial and informative. The Area Council will continue gathering information on the site and its operations, as it checks all responses above.

### **Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Update**

At the Area Council's February Monthly meeting Terry Lavender, Environmental Focal of the Joint Rural Team (nine organizations spread throughout King County's Rural Area coordinated by the Area Council), discussed the ongoing CAO Update. On December 5, 2024, the King County Executive submitted his revised [Best Available Science Review and Updates Report](http://gmvuac.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024-0408-BAS-Review-and-Updates-Report.pdf) (<http://gmvuac.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024-0408-BAS-Review-and-Updates-Report.pdf>) to the King County Council, accompanied by a [Frequently Asked Questions](http://gmvuac.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CAO-FAQ-120524-1.pdf) (<http://gmvuac.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CAO-FAQ-120524-1.pdf>) document. The King County Council has until the end of 2025 to approve a final Update that will become part of the King County Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Lavender has drafted a Comment Letter on the King County Executive's October 2024 report cited above that all Joint Rural Team organizations are currently reviewing. That draft letter was the subject of tonight's discussion. Some highlights of the draft letter follow:

- Offers a greater level of protection to Critical Areas in King County.
- Throughout, Best Available Science is clearly explained along with how it informs the regulations and protections.
- It is a huge task for citizens to know how to apply regulations and many spend significant money hiring consultants, surveyors, and scientists to help through the process. Methods to defray some of these costs should be considered to help ensure citizen compliance.
- Careful, consistent implementation through the permit/enforcement process is key, otherwise such good intentions will fail terribly. Successful implementation relies on good mapping, site visits when needed, code interpretation, expert consultation and enforcement when needed.
- Approximately 40% of permits applications over the last three years have had a Critical Area Condition. This assumes the Critical Areas were correctly identified and mapped. This CAO Update, required by the State Growth Management Act, and essential to protecting Critical Areas in King County, is dependent on improvements in the King County Department of Local Services—Permitting Division.
- Mapping is consistently noted as critical and many maps have been updated with plans to update more, but this work still will need more funding.
- It is good that extensive use of non-regulatory measures are mentioned including: new and improved mapping, monitoring, the Land Conservation Initiative, The Public Benefit Rating System, voluntary sale of properties, stormwater management, flood management planning, Best Management Practices, Farm and Forest Management Plans, restoration, incentives, and other strategies—all of which have multiple benefits and provide some flexibility, while still ensuring compliance.

- Concerns remain the promise of this Update will fall short without continued major reform in the Department of Local Services—Permitting Division. Careful application of code, landowner assistance, updated materials and maps, adequate staff, and reliable enforcement all are needed.

In its CAO Update King County has tried to balance the need for Critical Area protections with the needs of private property owners, recognizing there is no approach that will eliminate all risk to Critical areas when a property is developed. King County’s regulatory approach is to eliminate high risk, but recognize that moderate to low risk can be managed.

Following discussion the Area Council, after some tweaks, voted to approve the draft letter and forward its approval to the full Joint Rural Team for eventual submittal to the King County Council. At that time it will be posted to the Area Council’s website.

## Subarea Plan

Subarea Planners Susan McLain and Kaitlin Harris from the King County Department of Local Services (DLS) discussed the ongoing Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River (GMV/CR) Community Service Area (CSA) Subarea Plan. A *Preliminary Plan* is being drafted based on community input and is expected to be ready for review in August after which drafting of the full Plan will begin and last until January of next year.

To continue community engagement to develop the Subarea Plan the Department of Local Services is hosting a series of *Community Conversations* at the Hobart Community Church from 5:30-7:00PM with King County subject-matter experts on hand to provide information and answer questions:

- **February 19** - Equity/Vision & Principles [*WELL ATTENDED WITH GOOD DISCUSSIONS*]
- **March 5** - Environment/Parks, Open Space, & Cultural Resources
- **March 19** - Economic Development/Housing & Human Services
- **April 2** - Land Use & Zoning/Services & Utilities
- **April 16** - Transportation

Highlights from the February 19 *Community Conversation* included:

- **Strong Support** for preserving the area's rural character, open spaces, and natural environment. Many highlighted the importance of protecting forests, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Clarification on Access to Services.** Our original wording was unclear. The intent was to explore ways to help residents reach services in nearby cities, as expansion within the rural area is not an option.
- **Interest in Recreation and Infrastructure.** Parks, trails, and transportation connections were key topics, with specific mentions of boat launches and Off-Highway Vehicle parks.
- **Concerns About Development and Housing.** Residents want housing options that align with rural character while also ensuring property rights and diverse opportunities.
- **Cultural and Historical Preservation.** Many emphasized the importance of protecting tribal, historical, and archaeological sites as part of the community’s identity.

For more on the subarea planning process please see: [Subarea Planning](https://kingcounty.gov/so-so/dept/local-services/buildings-property/development-planning-regulations/subarea-plans) (https://kingcounty.gov/so-so/dept/local-services/buildings-property/development-planning-regulations/subarea-plans). For specifics on the **GMV/CR CSA Subarea Plan**, please see the Area Council's [GMV/CR CSA Subarea Plan](http://gmvuac.org/gmvcr-csa-subarea-plan/) (http://gmvuac.org/gmvcr-csa-subarea-plan/) webpage.

## Next Area Council Meeting

The next Area Council monthly meeting will be held Monday, April 7, 2025 from 7 - 9:30 PM at the Maple Valley Fire Station at 22225 SE 231st St (across from the KC Sheriff's Precinct).

Meetings are held on the *first* Monday of the month (except for Holidays, when they are held on the *second* Monday). All meeting announcements, agendas, and Zoom information are posted on the Area Council's [Website](http://www.gmvuac.org) (www.gmvuac.org) and local *NextDoor* platforms. You can also find us on our [FaceBook page](https://www.facebook.com/GMVUAC/) (https://www.facebook.com/GMVUAC/). Each meeting begins with an open Public Comment period where anyone can voice concerns, comments, etc.

## **Area Council Membership**

Your Area Council, founded in 1978, is one of the longest continuously active local councils. It serves as an all-volunteer, locally recognized advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District (TSD). The Area Council, in "*working to keep the Rural Area rural*," collaborates *regionally* with other King County Rural Area organizations through both the *Joint Rural Team* and its *Joint Transportation Initiative*.

The twelve-seat Area Council has four open seats. If you have an interest in joining, please send an e-mail to: [GMVUAC](mailto:info@gmvuac.org) (info@gmvuac.org) *or* attend (either in-person or virtually) a monthly meeting and express your interest. To be eligible to join the Area Council as a *Member* you need to live *within* the TSD.

Residents, even those not living *within* the TSD, are eligible to become *Associate Members* who can serve (including as Chair or Vice-Chair) on any Area Council Committee: *Environment, Growth Management, Transportation, Public Relations, or Train Show*. For information on each of these committees please see the Area Council's [Website](http://www.gmvuac.org) (www.gmvuac.org) and use the drop-down menu under *Committees*.

All Monthly Meeting Summary Articles can be found on our Home page in the *2025/2024 GMVUAC Monthly Meeting Articles* box or by using the drop-down menu under *Correspondence*.