Welcome/Meeting Overview
Margaret welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was focused on the natural environment designation.

Patty Charnas reported that the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners did adopt the Science Policy. The Shoreline Inventory and Characterization is scheduled to be considered by the Board at its first meeting in April.

Summary of Phone Calls
Margaret had conducted phone calls with Task Force members regarding the proposed shoreline environment designations that had been presented at the February meeting. In terms of general reactions to the Task Force process thus far, members said they were satisfied and pleased with the progress that had been made. There were some concerns about the amount of work that remains to be done, given that meetings are due to end in June. County staff are working on ways to streamline the work ahead.

Members were evenly split regarding the proposed environment designations. Half of those interviewed feel that the new proposed designations from the WAC/Department of Ecology make sense and that Kitsap County should adopt them. The other half are concerned that the Task Force not be asked to just “rubber stamp” the designations without sufficient discussion and input. The next four meetings of the Task Force are devoted solely to the topic of environment designations.
Presentation / Discussion: Natural Environment Designation

David and Kathlene presented the seven policies proposed under the 2003 WAC guidelines for the “natural” environment designation. These policies, along with the criteria for the designation, determine the uses and modifications that would be allowed under that designation. The “natural” label is the most stringent of all of the shoreline designations; these are areas of high ecological function, and the designation is generally applied where there has been little, if any, human activity or development.

As members reviewed the seven proposed policies, they were asked: Do these policies make sense for Kitsap County? Should we adopt them for our Shoreline Master Program?

A copy of the powerpoint presentation can be found at kitsapshoreline.org

Members had a number of questions and comments regarding the proposed policies. A few thought the new proposed policies made sense. Others, however, were concerned that they could “crack open the door” for new development. Under the proposed policies, for example, some residential, agriculture, and forestry uses are allowed as long as a Conditional Use Permit is obtained. Some members felt the conditional use permitting process was rigorous enough that natural areas would still be protected. Others expressed concern about even allowing the possibility of any currently-prohibited uses and modifications.

The Task Force discussed private property rights at some length. All members agreed that those property owners who currently have structures or other development on naturally-designated shoreline parcels should be “grandfathered in,” and that Kitsap County should demonstrate flexibility in dealing with these built facilities.

Some on the Task Force were adamant that private property rights should also be protected for new development. If someone has bought property they will now have to run through expensive hoops to build on it. I’m talking about people who already own property – for 50 or more years – and you are going to tell them their management practices are no longer acceptable to the County. Most of those activities have zero impact on marine and shoreline. You are taking practices that have been in place for a long time and saying now there’s a reason to change them.

But others on the group were equally adamant about strong shoreline protection: Our lifespan is nothing compared to the basic condition of the shoreline in Kitsap County. It hasn’t changed much in thousands of years. When those people are gone, what they have done to the land remains. They could change it forever. Think of things both ways. Think about the total impact that we can’t easily change. And, it’s not just the folks who have been here for 60 years, but what are we doing with policies for the future – for the people coming in? We need to think in the long-term perspective.

Another opinion from some on the group was that the wording in some of the new proposed policies was too vague; especially terms such as “substantial” and “relative.” These members felt those terms could be interpreted too loosely, leading to unpredictability in regulatory enforcement.
Another question had to do with the way in which the designations are determined. One member described walking in a beach area, for example, that appears completely natural except for a few houses. Are one or two houses going to condemn an area to a less-than-natural designation?

In addition to the discussion about the proposed policies, members offered up two ideas for further consideration:

- Only parcels under public ownership should be delineated as “natural.” Those under private ownership should be labeled as rural or urban conservancy.
- We should allow for “sub-designations” to allow for more flexibility for private property owners.

Because opinions were so widely varied at the meeting, Margaret said she would send out a “homework assignment” to poll members regarding their thoughts about the natural designation. These results, and County staff’s proposed modifications to the policies, will then be brought back to the Task Force for review in April.

**Public Comment**

- William Palmer: In general, I continue to be disturbed. I’ve watched Kitsap County and Ecology develop regulations for regulations sake. I don’t find that there’s any hard core analysis that says we have a problem. We’ve had an SMP in effect in Kitsap County for 37 years. If someone can point to me that under the existing program we lost a natural area then maybe we’ve got room to talk about different regulations or policies that might apply to natural area. I’m still looking for someone to tell me what problems exist or potentially exist because regulations in effect are not effective. Until then I’m going to oppose any new changes whatsoever – I will work hard to oppose them until you can tell me what is not working.
- Ron Ross submitted a letter to the Task Force detailing his issues and concerns with the SMP process.

**Tee Up for April Meeting**

The next meeting of the SMP Task Force will be on April 7. That meeting will focus on the urban and rural conservancy designations.