

May 2022 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Nancy Atwood, Barbara Menne, Chuck Jensen, Sue Lepore, Mary Forman, Linda Cohan, Ginny Lohr, Caranda Prater, Elly Claus-McGahan, Mike Speir (new member). This ZOOM meeting screen was enhanced with closed captioning.

CCL National Call video clip

Increasing the number of trees is an effective means to store carbon that also has bipartisan support. But the preservation and planting of trees isn't just a way to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It's also a way to foster environmental justice by improving the quality of life in urban areas where people of color are often marginalized. [American Forests](#) is led by **Jad Daley**, President and CEO, and **Joel Pannell**, Vice President of Urban Forestry. They discuss American Forests' work with tree cover in American cities, which is often determined by income and race, and the work their organization is doing to restore forest health across the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Watch: <https://vimeo.com/709907140>

Action Team Reports

Voter Outreach Effort, Mary Forman: We send letters and postcards in support of pro-environmental candidates and to urge citizens to vote in general. Any CCL Tacoma members who would like to dedicate some time to this crucial work in an encouraging social setting can meet **Friday, June 17** at the Forman's from 2-4 pm. [Contact Mary](#) for more details.

Tabling, Chuck Jensen: The [Tacoma Ocean Fest](#) will take place on **Sunday, June 12** from 10-5. It's a beautiful venue on the waterfront, **Foss Waterway Seaport, 705 Dock St.**, with all kinds of booths and entertainment. Contact [Chuck Jensen](#) if you can take a shift at the CCL booth. You don't need any experience to help!

Lobbying, Elly Claus-McGahan: There will be a meeting with **Derek Kilmer** on **Wednesday, June 15**, and possibly with **Senators Murray** and **Cantwell** soon. [Contact Elly](#) if you are interested in attending. The **June National CCL Conference** is **June 11-13**, with [virtual access](#) to the conference via **CCL Community**.

Speaker –Dana Coggon, Executive Director, Pierce Conservation District

The following is a general summary of **Dana Coggon's** excellent and informative presentation. I intend to include a **link** to her presentation slides but am currently having difficulty downloading them. I hope to add them in the future!

The [Pierce Conservation District](#) has been working to support healthy ecosystems for healthy communities for over 70 years. **Its mission:** "To equitably support community-driven solutions to our most pressing local environmental challenges."

Historically, **Conservation Districts** began during the Dust Bowl to conserve the soil and worked with farmers directly to capture and contain water in the land. Now few people live on farms so districts work with shorelines, forests, streams, urban areas, and general water quality. Conservation districts are subdivisions of state governments, and non-regulatory in nature. They can suggest to people what to do to be resource stewards but cannot enforce it. They work with landowners, public agencies, and citizen volunteers.

Pierce County is host home of the **Coastal Salish Peoples**, and the Puyallup area was once made up of beautiful prairies. Only 10 percent of this cultural and natural resource remains today. This is a good example of the fact that green space is one of the most important resources we have lost and is a prime equity issue facing marginalized communities.

Pierce CD has a fantastic team of 36 staff members who do lots of “boots on the ground” work in a variety of ways:

Farm planning and ag—teaching carbon sequestration in many ways. Historically, agriculture was an inequitable process of stolen lands and lack of respect for ecology. Our job now is to fix that. Mostly work with small family farms and try to support them vs. corporate ag. Have offered \$80K in assistance and help to design individualized conservation farm plans. Give kickbacks to farmers to encourage them to put solar on their properties which benefits them greatly and the solar displays even provide a little shade for their crops during worst heat.

Environmental education—our very well-informed team engages in a great deal of outreach and education—field trips, class visits, many things to inspire our youth including a Children’s Water Festival for 5th graders, [Envirothon](#) for high schoolers, and more.

[Harvest Pierce County](#)—currently 83 community gardens are in this program! (*Barbara Menne is a board member*) Everyone deserves access to fresh, healthy, and affordable produce. Volunteers work for food security through gardens and with related efforts like the Gleaning Project and Share the Harvest. An effort is well on its way to introduce fruit trees to the berms in urban areas.

Habitat restoration—Shorelines—for instance, at Fox island they are removing a bulkhead to protect marine life and a kelp bed there. **Riparian** areas—removing invasives and planting native shrubs and trees, for instance at South Prairie Creek--for salmon recovery. **Forest stewardship**—staff foresters visit and educate landowners to help support forest health. Reducing **urban tree deserts**-- over 800 trees have been planted with the “Branch Out” program. During the heat dome last year, the hottest areas were those of economic disparity, with no trees. Trees can help protect the lives of people in cities.

Water quality—Rain gardens in urban areas are a big push lately, to slow water runoff down and filter it on site. They work with churches, schools, other urban sites to introduce rain gardens, some of which produce food. [Depave program](#)-- As long as we have a bunch of pavement out there we’re going to have pollution from a lot of runoff going directly into our storm drain systems, so we want to slow that water down, clean it up and make sure that it’s clean when it flows into the Sound.

Climate resiliency ---That program is expanding, as we are seeing more flood frequency, wildfires, drought, and reduced snowpack resulting in harmful stream conditions for salmon. PCD is the first of its kind to start planting trees for [forest carbon credits](#) and using carbon sequestration as a way of continued resiliency. The plantings should pull about 4K tons of carbon from the air by the time they reach 25 years. That equates to 4K carbon credits available for purchase: one credit for each metric ton of carbon dioxide sequestered. These can be sold on the free market, can also be grouped with other nonprofits as a large block sale.

Our equity and inclusion statement-- people of color are disproportionately impacted by pollution, heat island effect, lack of green space, low access to fresh and healthy food and many other pressures that reduce their life expectancy and overall health. We honor our financial commitments and decisions working to ensure resources and programming are allocated **equitably**. We recognize the historical context to the land we are on and make decisions accordingly restoring the land alongside indigenous communities whenever and wherever possible.

Conservation --is about not just conserving what we currently have but treating things as if they are not a commodity and working with not just human but nonhuman communities as well. Access to healthy water and land is essential for healthy wildlife. Conservation of natural resources is a really complex issue, and the system is all interconnected like a web of issues: stormwater, disappearing farmland, pollution, equity, development, health and wellness, rapid population growth, climate change, endangered salmon, destruction of habitat, food deserts/food access. What we do is take a broad look at what is happening in our region, then create individualized management strategies for individual sites. We collaborate with city and county non-profits, communities and individuals.

My question to you, now that you know what we do, what will YOU do to increase the impact of what we do here where we all live? Volunteering opportunities abound: invasive species removal, planting, maintenance of plantings, community gardens, rain gardens, and events.

Q and A highlights:

Fruit trees in the berms--close to getting approval from city council. A concern about diseases and other problems, how to keep the trees healthy. Maybe add to gleanings programs, go to foodbank. (Invasive blackberries a cautionary tale here; they were actually designed by UW for foraging during the Depression!)

Tire leaching—and how it affects salmon. Rain gardens help purify runoff. There's some testing of that in Puyallup. Now the challenge is that it make toxic soils to deal with.

Culvert removal for salmon habitat -- PCD is heavily involved. A lot of state funding for CDs to remove culverts came through, even though the main bill failed to pass in the short session. S. Prairie Creek, which feeds into the Puyallup river, is one of their projects. Ag process had ditched the creeks. So the work was to open up the creek, remove a culvert by highway 7 and

re-meander the stream. PCD has actually been asked to act as a consultant with the DOT to take out the Deschutes dam in Olympia.

Farmers' views--were part of the reason the salmon habitat bill didn't pass. The required 200ft buffer on either side of streams is almost impossible for small scale farmers, eating up a large part of their land. They are already working as best as they can to improve the habitat, but the regulations were too rigid and made it too challenging.

We need supportive discussions on small shifts that can be done and need to be more helpful to the small family-owned farms. They don't get credit for their outstanding projects and the restoration that they do. Can we pay the farmers for loss of land? PCD does that. Purchased five farms in the S Prairie Creek district, now lease out part of the property. That way the most critical areas are saved but the farmers are paid for it rather than being a government land grab. Farmland trusts help with that.

More local food production vs. imports—Actually is an equity challenge, because it costs extra money to buy local and not everyone can afford that. Community gardens get food into the food deserts but many don't have the time or energy to garden either. Would richer people pay some offset to help others afford it?

Changing our diet would help too. We eat things that take a lot of land and money to grow: we should try things that indigenous people ate. Camas, other forms of flour, leafy greens vs breads, meat products like rabbits, flowers of brassicas. Multiple one-acre farms with diversity would help.

Invasives and biochar —An important idea is to turn invasives like Scotch broom into biochar. City of Tacoma has a biochar pilot project; it looks promising economically and they are going to pursue it.