

ShoreScore Update

April 2019



In this issue, we focus on Lake Sammamish and King County's Willowmoor Project

PROJECT STATUS

King County held a meeting in late February to update the project's Advisory Committee. The primary meeting focus involved the County consultants, who've been working on the first phase, called the 30% Design. In attendance, representing Lake Samm. property owners, were six members from Bellevue, Sammamish, and Redmond.

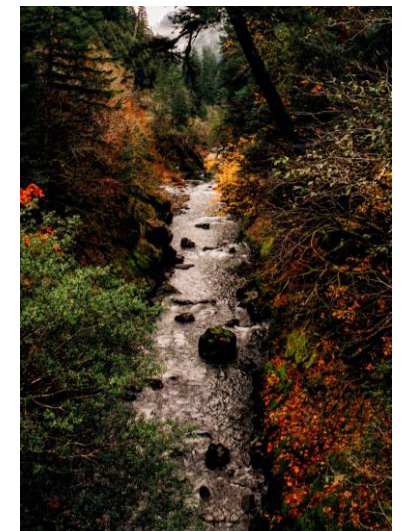
In summary, there are six essential questions being investigated in this phase of [Willowmoor](#):

- 1 - Are there Native American artifacts in the area?
- 2 - Is there a way to cool the river for salmon?
- 3 - What might future precipitation, drainage, and river flows look like?
- 4 - Are there options to manage this flow from the lake into the river flood channel?
- 5 - Will there be flooding on the lake or downstream?
- 6 - How do alternative configurations of a new salmon stream stand up to evaluation criteria?

Native American Artifacts - Given the possibility that Native Americans occupied this area at one time, remnants of their activity may exist here. If so, this would dictate changes to the project's proposal to create a new fish passage stream. Nothing was reported on this topic at the meeting.



Cooling the River - Three options are being considered to cool the river to a level safe for fish (primarily endangered Chinook salmon and Kokanee). The first option would take water from deep in Lake Sammamish and pump it into the new salmon stream. Option two would use deep groundwater in the area for cooling. And, the final option would create an underground refrigeration-like system using Mother Earth to cool river flow. To be brief, only the last option currently appears viable.



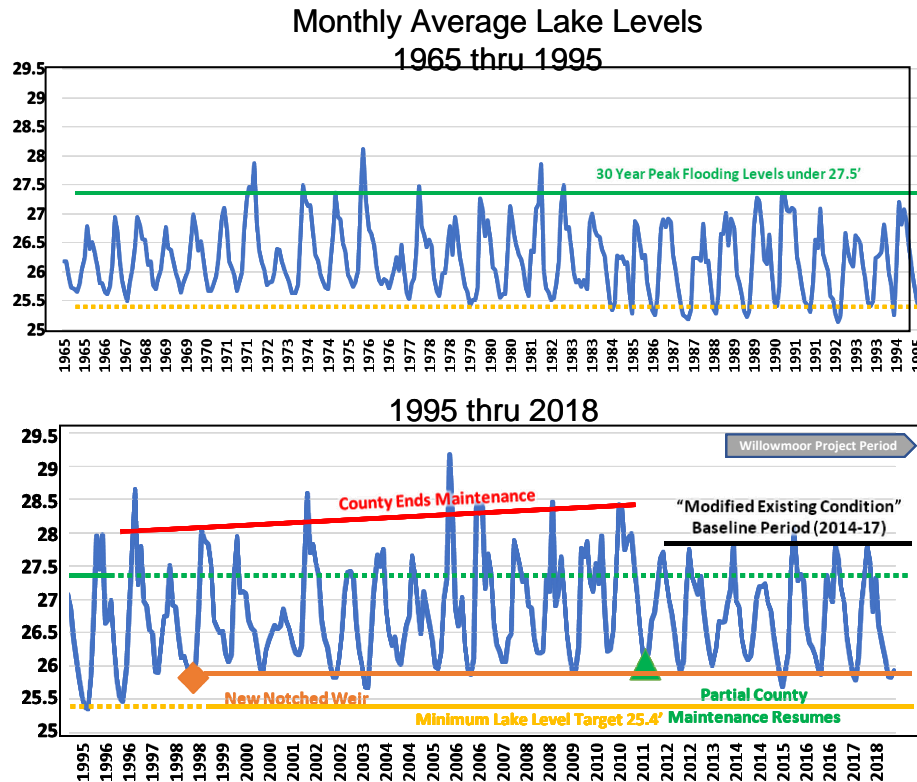
Future Drainage, Flows, and Floods - A majority of the February meeting was concentrated here. Efforts to determine these factors consist of: a) estimating the amount of inflow that will be generated from rain falling in the lake's drainage basin; b) turning inflow estimates into outflow (flow going down river); and c) since there can be more inflow from storms than can be handled downstream, estimates are made of lake and river water levels that would result. Bottom line - the consultants are still refining computer models used to determine this information. Your neighbors at the meeting raised several issues, however. More on this below.

Managing Flow - Lake residents previously had proposed a **Dynamic Weir** to help manage wide-ranging lake water levels - lowering levels in winter and before storms, and keeping it from going too low in summer. To our disappointment, this option was not discussed at the

February meeting, having been rejected earlier by staff and consultants. We see flaws in the County's analysis of this option and we will continue to press for consideration of weir improvements.

But, hasn't the County's renewed annual maintenance in the river at Marymoor been successful?

The quick answer is - it has not. County deferred maintenance resulted in winter water levels being raised by over a foot according to a 2004 study. With maintenance renewed in 2011, we're still, on average, more than a half a foot above water levels originally provided by the Corps of Engineers' flood control system. Here is a depiction of this history (prepared by shoreline resident Jim Mackey).



CONTROVERSIAL ITEMS -

1. Lake Water Levels Versus River Levels! In addition to the fact that maintenance has not returned historic lake levels, there is a persistence by the County to predict water levels down river at the weir at Marymoor Park; not on the lake. An analysis by resident Marty Nizlek shows a significant difference. As his analysis depicts, making decisions based on estimated water levels at the weir would fail to recognize the lake being considerably higher (4 to 6 inches in winter). Misinformed as to what levels would occur on the lake, an option might be selected which would exacerbate damages to our shoreline properties.

2. Missing Evaluation Criteria! At this time, we cannot report whether a particular alternative stands out. To our surprise, an entirely new set of evaluation criteria were introduced at the February meeting. All of the lake residents on the committee voiced concern with this - especially the fact that key measures of potential flood damage are now missing.

3. Wetlands Constraints! The revised Willowmoor evaluation criteria introduced at the meeting, to our surprise, now include wetlands constraints. Asked why, County staff stated "... (the project) 'impact area'

for chinook would likely include the Lake Sammamish nearshore, lake tributary mouths, and lake-fringe wetlands, all of which are used by juvenile chinook that outmigrate through Lake Sammamish."

What Does This Mean to Shoreline Property Owners?

Wetland constraints, in essence, would restrict lake levels from changing so as not to disturb or destroy them. Accompanied by the "no flooding downstream in Redmond and beyond" constraint, a Catch-22 would be created. The wetland constraints would dictate that water levels not be altered BUT downstream flooding constraints would dictate the lake store more water.

But, there's more. . . Should your shoreline be identified as a wetland (i.e., as having certain native plants or be necessary to protect threatened fisheries), you might face recently imposed buffer requirements and other constraints. Here's a link to a [recent Dept. of Ecology paper](#) outlining this.

Lake representatives reaction. As a result of attending the February project meeting, your neighbors on the Advisory Committee submitted [another appeal](#) to the County's Flood Control Board.

THANK YOU FOR FLOOD DAMAGE PHOTOS

Our appeal last fall asking you to supply photos of high water and flood damages to your shoreline improvements led to our documenting these. They were provided to the County. You can check the result online. ([click here](#))

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

WSSA would like to continue to represent lake shoreline property owners on Willowmoor and other shoreline issues. In the past, our efforts resulted in Bellevue adopting a more reasonable set of regulations for its Shoreline Master Program. In addition, when the Dept. of Ecology promoted increased wetland restrictions, WSSA's legal team's involvement led to an exemption. Now properties with less than 2500 sq. ft. of wetland no longer face the threat of being declared Critical Areas.

Your support made this possible.

So, what's next?

The key questions we must ask of Willowmoor, the County, and the Corps of Engineers include:

- a) Did the County's decades-long lack of maintenance of the Sammamish River Flood Control System alter the lake shorelines and damage properties?
- b) Will proposed changes by Willowmoor clearly return the flood protections originally provided us, or
- c) Would we lose those protections to new environmental regulations and requirements?

Help us keep these questions in front of local, state, and federal agencies.

Donate to WSSA today*

Postal Box 6773, Bellevue, 98008

Questions? - Contact us at: sensibleshorelines@gmail.com

* - Note: 501-(c)-(3) charitable status pending.