

Chehalis Basin / Grays Harbor Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

October 9, 2015

9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Lewis Conservation District Office - USDA Service Center
1554 Bishop Road
Chehalis, Washington

In attendance:

Ann Weckback, *Lewis County Public Works*
Amy Spoon, *WDFW*
Bob Amrine, *Lewis County Conservation District*
Brett DeMond *Streamworks*
Caitlin Guthrie, *Capitol Land Trust*
Charissa Waters, *Thurston County*
Jamie Glasgow, *Wild Fish Conservancy*
Jan Robinson, *Chehalis Land Trust*
Jane Atha, *WDFW*
Jason Gillie, *Chehalis Tribe DNR*

Jeni Maakad, *Grays Harbor Conservation District*
Kirsten Harma, *Lead Entity Coordinator*
Lonnie Crumley, *Chehalis Basin Fisheries Enhancement Taskforce*
Mark Swartout, *Thurston County Citizen*
Michelle Cramer, *WDFW*
Miles Batchelder, *WCSSP*
Nick Nash, *Lewis County Public Works*
Omroa Bhagwandin, *Onalaska Citizen*
Rich Osborne, *WCSSP*
Tom Kollasch, *WRIA 24 LE, PCD, GHCD*

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions.

Welcome Tom Kollasch! Tom is the new WRIA 24 Lead Entity Coordinator, also working for Pacific Conservation District and the Grays Harbor Conservation District. His main role will be as Lead Entity Coordinator.

There was a brief discussion of changing the meeting location to accommodate people who have to drive a long ways. Kirsten will look into the “home station” of everyone participating in HWG meetings and will see if a meeting location in Centralia or at the Chehalis Tribe might result in fewer total travel miles.

2. SRFB

a) Comments from SRFB Review Panel to Sponsors

Kirsten updated the group on the SRFB review panel comments and which of our Lead Entity's projects had been labeled "NMI" "POC" and "Conditioned." Two of the POCs have been withdrawn by the sponsors. The third POC will be addressed by Lewis Conservation District, and Bob Amrine doesn't think there will be any problems in addressing this. Bob let the group know that any cost changes will be updated in PRISM by the Monday or Tuesday before the deadline.

b) Final funding allocations

Miles Batchelder let the group know that the Region needs to decide on final funding allocations for the region. Currently in PRISM, there is about \$15,000 left in the Chehalis Lead Entity's allocation. There is one project in the region that is short on funding for this SRFB round: a project in Willapa Bay being put forward by the Pacific County Lead Entity. The general process at the regional level is that funding is moved around between Lead Entities to keep the money in the Region so it doesn't go back to the state. In the past, the Chehalis has been a net "gainer" of funds, and Pacific County Lead Entity has been a net "giver." Miles asked the group if they would be in favor of reallocating any remaining funds from the Chehalis to the Willapa project. All were in favor.

c) Next steps in SRFB process

The regional meeting to discuss SRFB projects is scheduled for Monday, Oct 26th. The Coast presents between 1:30 and 3:00. All sponsors with a POC project need to be present.

3. Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB)

a) Coordinated Pathways – Update by Miles Batchelder

Miles reminded the group of the FBRB's request to Regions to submit a list of priority culverts for replacement. The Board wants that list so that they can put a package together for a statewide legislative ask. There is currently no money available to remove culverts, but the state wants to know how much to ask for. The detailed request was included as an attachment along with this meeting's agenda.

The Region was asked to submit one priority watershed (for the whole coast region). WCSSP didn't do this, but instead identified four: one for each Lead Entity. Here, the entirety of WRIA 23 was put forward as the priority watershed.

The FBRB also encouraged regions to look another way to look at barrier removal priorities: “Coordinated pathways”. They asked the Region to consult with key partners, which is why Miles presented this topic today. The specific request for the “coordinated pathways” was a request to nominate culverts upstream or downstream of recently completed work (within last 5 years). Miles proposed the idea of suggesting that this pathway be used to address removal of barrier railroad culverts. Local groups have been having a hard time working with the railroads. Getting WDFW to work with the Railroad might lead to a more positive outcome for barrier removal. Others mentioned that just the nature of where railroads are built (near tributary mouths into the mainstem Chehalis and in wetlands), their impact on hydrology and fish passage is huge.

Action Item: Send Miles a list of barrier railroad culverts that you know about as soon as possible.

b) Lewis County Nominations

Ann Weckback reported that the counties around the state were also asked by the FBRB to nominate culverts for removal through the “coordinated pathways” approach. She presented the group with a list as well as maps of the selected culverts in Lewis County. Her team got their data from Lewis County Conservation District and DNR surveys. They looked for barriers that should be focused on based on being near barriers removed in last 15 years (not 5, because there aren’t that many). They came up with a list of 28 priority culverts. Ann asked the group to let her know if these were good choices or if there was something to add. The information distributed includes their “PI” (Priority Index) for Lewis County, and their priority number for the Upper Chehalis (based on report completed in 2003). The group discussed the need to know what fish are around the barrier, including both adults and juveniles.

Action Item: Send Ann information about additional culverts in Lewis County that you know about as soon as possible.

Miles informed the group that any additional additional culvert replacement ideas in the Chehalis can be submitted through the Region (WCSSP).

4. “Chehalis Basin Strategy” / Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

a) Summary of Sept 22nd and 30th meetings

Kirsten provided a brief summary of the two meetings, including the stated purpose of each meeting, topics covered, and take-aways. A meeting summary was distributed to interested parties at the meeting, and copies are available upon request.

b) Planning for next steps.

HWG members expressed concern that there is a lot going on and no one seems to know who is doing what. Mark expressed desire for more people to know about everything that is going on in order to communicate in a coordinated way with each other and with the public.

Bob Amrine mentioned that there may be funding soon to hire someone in Grays Harbor County and Lewis County to do public outreach. He had heard that the person hired to work in Grays Harbor County will work in Thurston County, as well. Bob wants to be a main contact for landowners to call when they want to know what's going on. In Grays Harbor, Mike Nordin is the one who might be the point person, or at least know what's going on.

Kirsten asked the HWG how they want to engage in this process going forward. She asked if the group would be interested in having Dave Price or another representative from that process come and meet with the HWG during a portion of each regularly scheduled meeting. Brett suggested that this group have more frequent meetings than the regularly scheduled monthly meetings.

Jamie mentioned that the HWG members have a lot to offer and are very willing to help, but that capacity funding would be needed for additional engagement. No one knew what mechanisms might be available to get this sort of funding. Miles suggested that either the Region or Lead Entity could see about getting capacity funding and then contracting with HWG participants to provide services. Jamie reminded the group that WRIA 13 and 14 have a good model of how to do that.

Kirsten let the group that there will be a meeting on Wednesday (Oct 14) with Dave Price and some consultants to discuss further HWG involvement in near-term restoration project selection. Participants who volunteered included Bob, Brett, Miranda (Bob suggested), Rich Osborne and Amy Spoon. Caitlin said she would be interested, but capacity funding would help for continued engagement. Jan said Janet had another meeting that day. Jamie wanted to know where and when the meeting would be held.

Additional engagement opportunities:

October 26th – “Blue Ribbon Team.” This is the proposed meeting where big names in science will discuss restoration science in the Chehalis. The only details that we have are that it will be on this date and held in Seattle.

November 23rd – All day meeting to discuss short term and long term planning (for the ASRP component of the Chehalis Strategy).

5. Washington Coast Restoration Initiative.

a) Capitol Land Trust's Request

Miles reminded the group about the WCRI process, which resulted in successful funding for projects throughout the coast region. The issue at hand is that Capital Land Trust had an acquisition project and a restoration project approved for funding through WCRI, but the original estimate of cost isn't the same as final price, so the Land Trust has asked to move \$100,000 from the restoration pot to the acquisition pot and then move forward with both projects. Because the legislature approved a given amount of funding for each project, the RCO wasn't comfortable making the decision to move that money around. The Regional WCSSP board wanted to make sure everyone involved in this process was aware of this request, and part of doing that is to ask the HWG for their opinion.

Miles asked Caitlin if the restoration objectives for the first project would be compromised if some of the funding were to be moved to the acquisition project. Caitlin responded that the acquisition property will also be restored. Caitlin added that the end result of the funding transfer is still completing restoration in the Black River watershed, with the same originally proposed restoration metrics being met.

Some other HWG members present also received WCRI funded. Miles asked if they, as project sponsors, thought that this sort of action is fair and makes sense. Tom mentioned that this situation will likely come up again – there just needs to be a way to allow for a process that allows for comment. Others mentioned that no one can find fault with this process. The bottom line is that project objectives will still be accomplished.

The HWG provided a formal approval of the request for shift in funds.

6. Items from September 11th meeting requiring follow-up

Kirsten asked the group if anyone had any further thoughts on agenda items pending further discussion from the previous meeting. These were:

- 1) *Should we follow-up on Miranda's offer of drafting up details of her idea for using USFWS funding and GIS and other analysis tools to identify potential priority project areas in the Chehalis Basin?*

Miles summarized this idea as “using some of the USFWS funding for a project that would help to access even bigger pots of money.” Unknown at this point is whether a project like this will be occurring during development of the ASRP. Brett mentioned that they might already be doing the historic photo analysis part of that work. A decision about Miranda's

offer was once again postponed until we know more about what will happen with ASRP. An option might be for Miranda to coordinate with the ASRP if they have similar objectives. In either case, the final product is likely to develop the Lead Entity in future project development.

2) *Do we want to propose a Pilot Watershed to WCSSP?*

Discussion

Tom Kollasch mentioned that their Lead Entity (WRIA 24) has recently gone through the exercise to identify a pilot watershed. The process started with the technical team going through Rich's maps. They looked for whole basins that are small "bite-sized" chunks that are feasible to complete multiple restoration projects on in 10 years. They ended up identifying 11 of those. Next, they looked at those 11 in detail and found reasons for some to be thrown out – has a hatchery, has too much development in lower, etc. They ended up with 3. Next they will ask Rich to provide more information about those three. They will make the final decision later in October. The Lead Entity will then look for funding for planning for the chosen basin. Miles mentioned that Trout Unlimited and Wild Salmon Center will use some of their internal resources to help develop plans for pilot watersheds. Those plans can then be a fundraising tool.

For the Chehalis, it might make sense to capture some of the funding coming into the basin to implement this process. Miles reiterated the importance of picking a basin with robust monitoring data (screw traps, etc). The better we can measure the effect of restoration, the more valuable this process will be. That's what makes the upper basin appealing – there is a lot of research happening there.

An additional factor to consider is that the SRFB wants to see this pilot watershed approach completed to implement the Region's strategic plan. Rich and Miles clarified that this interest doesn't mean that projects in the Chehalis need to be prioritized any differently. Getting projects in the pilot watershed developed is just "something to consider."

Rich asked the HWG to work towards making the decision soon. The Newaukum keeps coming up, but it might be too large. However, maybe something bigger can happen in the Chehalis since there are more resources available. Jane mentioned that this time last year, the HWG had chosen the Newaukum as the next sub-basin to focus on for its own strategy update. Ann mentioned that the south Fork Newaukum – may be highest "raise in value" since there hasn't been that much work done on it and there are lots of barriers.

Decision: Start with recommending the whole Newaukum as the pilot watershed. If it looks like it's too big, focus on a smaller section.

Next steps. Miles said the next step would be that the Region's technical group will recommend a process for each Lead Entity to move forward. The Region may provide support for things such as public meetings. Miles doesn't know what else will happen as part of that process. A good idea might be to invite members of the Citizen Advisory Committee to come be involved to provide their perspectives.

Rich recommended that the HWG make this pilot watershed discussion a regular agenda item.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Next HWG meeting

November 13, 2015