

Chehalis Basin / Grays Harbor Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

November 13, 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*
Bob Amrine, *Lewis County Conservation District*
Brett DeMond *Streamworks*
Caitlin Guthrie, *Capitol Land Trust*
Charissa Waters, *Thurston County*
David Price, *USFWS*
Dustin Bilhimer, *Ecology*
Garrett Dalan, *The Nature Conservancy*
Gavin Glore, *Lewis Conservation District*
Heather Saunders Benson, *Thurston Co.*
Jamie Glasgow, *Wild Fish Conservancy*

Janet Strong, *Chehalis Land Trust*
Jason Gillie, *Chehalis Tribe DNR*
Jeni Maakad, *Grays Harbor Conservation District*
Kirsten Harma, *Lead Entity Coordinator*
Michelle Cramer, *WDFW*
Miles Batchelder, *WCSSP*
Miranda Plumb, *USFWS*
Omroa Bhagwandin, *Onalaska Citizen*
Rich Osborne, *WCSSP*
Stacy Polkowske, *WDFW*
Tom Kollasch, *WRIA 24 LE, PCD, GHCD*

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions.

Gavin Glore, formally of Mason County Conservation District, will now be working as an engineer for the Lewis County Conservation District.

There was a brief discussion of changing the meeting location to accommodate people who have to drive a long ways. Kirsten has looked into the “home station” of everyone participating in HWG meetings and found that a Centralia meeting location would allow for the least total travel miles. She sent an e-mail to a contact at Centralia College but has not heard back.

2. Chehalis Basin Strategy/Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

a) Review and Finalize Call for Proposals

The group had been given a digital copy of this CFP and was asked to provide any substantive comments by the Tuesday prior to this meeting. During the meeting, an updated copy of the CFP that included changes in “Track Changes” as well as comments for discussion, was projected onto a screen for the group to review. Comments were discussed and changes made to the document as a result of the discussion.

A major change suggested was shortening the timeline for ranking. The argument in favour of this change was that sponsors will want to know they have been approved for funding as soon as possible in order to initiate permitting processes. The only section of the timeline that can be reasonably adjusted is the time between ranking and decision-making. The group decided to have the final HWG ranking meeting a week earlier than planned, on February 5, 2016. Successful applicants could be notified after that. Dave Price cautioned that it might take more time to review all the projects, so this deadline will be a target, but will not necessarily be met.

Items needing follow-up:

- * Regarding Army Corps of Engineers projects, someone mentioned that if you are going to be expecting a large number of permits needing processing you can hire a liaison to help speed up the process. Dave Price will check and see if there is a way to expedite the permitting process for approved projects.
- * Dave Price will find out if the nature of this funding source will mean that public access will be required for all acquisition properties
- * Dave Price will ask Larissa (Anchor QEA) if there is a SharePoint or similar tool available to review questions from sponsors as they come in.
- * Miranda would like to visit potential projects sites along with Michelle and Amy as proposal applications come in.
- * Kirsten will be “hub” for information about scheduling site visits between sponsor and Michelle, Amy, Miranda and other technical review team members.
- * The ranking criteria still needs to be developed. Miranda has materials about ranking that she will send to Kirsten to distribute to the subcommittee who will be working on developing ranking criteria.

b) Discussion of how to advertise the call

Was not discussed

c) Summary of October 23rd “Blue Ribbon Panel” meeting – Science Strategy related to the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan.

Kirsten provided a brief summary of the meeting. She distributed written summaries to people who were interested.

Dustin provided an update since the meeting: Tim Beechie and George Pess have put together a proposal for developing the Conceptual Model for the basin for a grant through NOAA.

The follow-up meeting to this meeting, which was originally scheduled for November 23rd, has been cancelled. They will be just discussing modeling that day instead. Rich will present the IP modeling data he has for the Chehalis at this meeting.

3. SRFB

a) Update on WRIA 22 & 23 Project Status's

Everything is going fine.

b) Council of Regions Update

The SRFB developed a Monitoring Review Group. They are making recommendation on how to move forward with monitoring components. They are bringing recommendations to SRFB in December. SRFB not expected to act until February. If people have any comments they can bring them to SRFB meeting in December. The Council of Regions endorses the recommendations of the monitoring group.

c) RMAP Discussion “Should RMAP be eligible for continued SRFB funding”?

Miles informed the group that the eligibility of RMAP projects to receive SRFB funds runs out this year. He doesn't know if SRFB will extend that eligibility or not. He heard rumors that they might not want to continue eligibility. He thinks this might be a mistake for the Coast since so much land is industrial forest land. He will make a recommendation for the Coast that the eligibility be continued.

Miles said that people could send a letter if they feel strongly that SRFB funds should continue to be used for RMAP projects.

A possible reason the review panel might decide to remove RMAP eligibility is regarding each timber company's priorities for removing culverts on the RMAP list. The general consensus was that the companies have a priority list based on their needs, not fish needs. Lonnie has done a good job of articulating the fish needs surrounding each culvert removal, but the timber companies in general have not. Bob Amrine stated that he would be in favor

of continuing to use SRFB funding for RMAP culvert removal if benefit to fish usage is present and articulated.

4. WCRI

a) Update

Miles reported that he spoke with the legislators who were involved in passing the WCRI funding about the request for reallocation of funds. The legislators' answer was that that funds be spent as originally proposed. They are not supportive of moving WCRI funds from one line item to another. This means that the Capitol Land Trust's request cannot be fulfilled. Moving funding between restoration and acquisition within a project (line item) would be ok. Despite this news, the objectives of the projects will not be compromised.

Garrett told the group that WCRI sponsors still need to upload their project information (preferably by early December) into PRISM so that RCO can issue contracts.

5. Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB)

a) Introducing Stacy Polkowske

Stacy is a WDFW biologist supervisor with the Habitat Program, Environmental Restoration and Fish Passage working on FBRB and culvert inventories. She will be directing the update of the WDFW culvert inventory in the Chehalis. She reported that a field crew will start the inventory on December 1 and will be working closely with the Conservation Districts over approximately the next 6 months. She asked the Habitat Work Group members for their input on how to prioritize their efforts, e.g., where to send the survey crew members.

Stacy will also be working on the watershed-track process for the FBRB in the Chehalis and the rest of the Washington Coast Region. The end result of the work will be for the WDFW FBRB staff to "bundle" packages of culverts to remove that will lead to significant habitat gain. Stacy says they hope to have these "bundles" ready for scoping by the end of 2015. The FBRB has not yet determined its eligibility and ranking criteria for the state. The ranking process should be complete by FBRB by August 2016, with the legislative ask for the next biennium after that (2017-2019). Their goal is to find good packages that demonstrate a strong potential for gain.

Stacy said the timing of the FBRB's work corresponds well with the Chehalis Strategy Near-Term project work. Sponsors can be strategic about which pot of funding they target for

which project. They should communicate with Stacy/FBRB about which projects they're putting forward for the "near-term" pot. The FBRB funds will be aimed at "filling the gaps" not covered by other sources.

Miles asked if the FBRB process could be used to get the state to engage the railroads about removing their culverts. Stacy said WDFW has been having discussions about that.

Stacy said they won't re-inventory industrial forest land culverts. They will start lower in the watershed.

b) Proposal from the Washington Coast Region to FBRB

WCSSP had requested that the FBRB accept one watershed from each of the 4 coast lead entities. The update from the FBRB is that they will take 4 nominated watersheds from the Washington Coast Region (previously they wanted just 1 for the entire region).

c) Updated Grays Harbor County list

Brett shared an updated proposed a list of culverts for the FBRB's "Coordinated Pathway" approach for Grays Harbor County. She asked the Region to submit these to the FBRB as part of its list. The list consists entirely of County-owned culverts. Bob suggested that the WDFW culvert survey crew focus its efforts on private culverts upstream and downstream of those on the County's list.

Brett distributed hard copy maps to the HWG members for review.

6. WCSSP Pilot Watershed/ Newaukum

General Discussion on Newaukum Subbasin

Since the Lead Entity chose the Newaukum for the WCSSP "pilot watershed," Stacy (WDFW) chose to focus on the Newaukum for the first round of WDFW culvert surveys. Stacy presented the IP maps her team had put together for the Newaukum and its tributaries, along with mapped culverts from the WDFW database. Stacy asked HWG members to send her any information on additional culverts.

Action Item: Send any information you have about culverts not in the WDFW database to (Stacy.Polkowske@dfw.wa.gov)

Other Habitat Work Group members mentioned other concurrent work being proposed for the Newaukum. The Newaukum is Lewis Conservation Districts' priority for a resurvey of

culverts. The Wild Fish Conservancy is also planning on re-doing its water typing in the Newaukum. The USFWS is also going to be working in the Newaukum on a lamprey assessment.

Regarding the WCSSP Pilot Watershed, the group decided to just consider the “whole Newaukum” at present, and then get down to reach scale later. Rich mentioned that the missions of all these efforts are similar: to look for bundles of projects that will significantly advance salmon recovery that can be completed in a relatively short amount of time.

Dustin mentioned that the Department of Ecology’s SW Region’s non-point source team is also looking for pilot areas to focus on. Because of all of this other work, Dustin is going to suggest that the focus of this non-point work also be the Newaukum. This effort would primarily be to work with farmers and identify areas in need of livestock fencing, riparian restoration, and other BMPs to reduce non-point pollution. The work may identify projects that can be funded through Ecology’s 319 grants or other funding sources. He mentioned that he would like to find a way to coordinate with these other efforts in the Newaukum.

The discussion then turned to how best go about contacting landowners. Since there are so many people from various groups represented on the HWG planning on calling and contacting landowners, several people suggested that the group draft a joint letter to waterfront property owners describing all the proposed work and listing who to contact if they want to participate. The goal of that letter would be to avoid overwhelming landowners, and even build support for the type of work that is planned, not just avoid opposition.

Members suggested that the Conservation District be the primary point of contact between the agencies and the landowners since they already have established relationships. Bob suggested that instead there might be value of a multi-agency effort to reach out to landowners, since although the CD’s have the relationships, they don’t have the regulatory authority to request action. Bob suggested a joint letter from the HWG since it includes groups with regulatory authority and those without it. Miranda and Jamie have sent out such letters in the past and will distribute them to the group as templates. Miles suggested that Bob still be the main person charged with drafting the letter to Newaukum land owners.

Action Items:

- Miranda and Jamie will send copies of letters they have sent to streamside landowners in the past (Kirsten will collect and distribute).
- Bob will review the letters and see if they will work for the Newaukum and change language as appropriate.
- All letter signatories will review and comment on the letter and then pass on a draft to their respective Boards, Commissioners, etc. for approval.

- Kirsten will get in touch with Marc Hayes and Keith at WDFW and ask for their advice on coordinating outreach to landowners.

7. **Other Business**

Miranda said that there was a workshop happening today (November 13): “Integrating climate change into culvert design”, being put on by WDFW.

8. **Next HWG meeting**

December 11, 2015