

Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

April 8, 2016

9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Chehalis Tribe Community Center – Library Classroom
461 Secena Road, Oakville, WA

In attendance:

Alice Rubin, RCO	JB McCrummen, Citizen
Ann Weckback, Lewis County	Jessica Helsley, WCSSP
Brett DeMond, Streamworks	Kirsten Harma, Lead Entity Coordinator
Bob Amrine, Lewis Conservation District	Lonnie Crumley, CBFETF
Cade Roler, WDFW	Mark Swartout, Citizen
Caitlin Guthrie, Capitol Land Trust	Miranda Plumb, USFWS
Charissa Waters, Thurston County	Rich Osborne, WCSSP
Darcey Hughes, Forterra	Sarah Gage, GSRO
Dustin Bilhimer, Ecology	Steve Hallstrom, Chehalis River Basin Land Trust
Jason Gillie, Chehalis Tribe	Tom Kollasch, Grays Harbor Conservation District

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions.

Everyone provided self-introductions.

2. Chehalis Basin Strategy/ Aquatic Species Restoration Plan/ Habitat Restoration and Protection

a) SubBasin Local Input Workshops

Dave Price from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife provided an overview on the various activities related to the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan. The proposed sub-basin workshops will be a way to engage local experts in looking at the data output from a model (EDT) that identify broad types of restoration on a reach/sub-basin scale and identifying site-specific opportunities. After the workshops, the local input will be incorporated back into the model. When it is developed, the NOAA model will also be used to validate the EDT results. Local experts will also be consulted again at that time.

The first workshop will be April 14th. It will look at a reach in the headwaters of the Chehalis below the proposed dam site. The other workshops will likely occur in May.

Q) Will you identify data gaps that we can then apply for grants to fill?

A) We hope so. There's a whole bunch of data that's missing from the basin. The data we're gathering now are pretty 'Young'. We should be able to identify data gaps.

Q) Since this funding is just for this biennium, how much time do you have to gather data to fill the gaps?

A) We are thinking large scale long-term. What we really need is data to fill big scale long-term gaps. We know the NOAA model won't be done until next summer (2017).

Q) Are you going to be able to tweak the model after the biennium?

A) Maybe. The model isn't expensive to tweak. The data collection is expensive.

-Rich commented: the modeling won't ever end, but we need to have a list of projects in front of us soon. That list can be maintained in Habitat Work Schedule.

-Mark would like to see the models maintained well into the future. His question is: who will house and maintain the database?

-Bob brought up the political context of this work. The Governor's decision will be Nov/Dec about the proposed dam. He's heard rumors that when that decision is made, the money flow may slow in a hurry. We need to show the legislatures we know what we're doing for habitat restoration so they understand that people really know what's going on in the Chehalis Basin and we know what can benefit the fish.

-Miranda promoted adoption of a fish habitat decision support tool. These can prioritize on-the-ground projects based on habitat gain and cost. This will show we know where the most gain can be for fish. The Tillamook-Nestucca uses this type of model. Brett cautioned that cost estimates are hard to get for conceptual projects. Miranda replied that the cost side is pretty rough, but it helps. Miranda has a presentation on the pros and cons of these tools.

Action Item: Miranda is available to give this presentation at a future HWG meeting.

b) Bank Erosion Strategy.

Dave presented progress on another part of the ASRP work: A chapter related to bank protection/erosion. The purpose is to guide people to help landowners address their problems by projects that slow bank erosion and also benefit fish. WDFW wants to produce something that people can deploy with minimal guidance. They plan to do demonstration projects around the basin. For a lot of stretches it will be hard to do a site-specific fix since there is a need to do a reach-scale analysis to come up with a solution. The demonstration projects won't be those that need a reach-scale assessment. The first demonstration project may be one that was already done 10 years ago to show case. They may implement another two or three. ASRP will have to describe where site-specific approaches are appropriate, and where they aren't.

Q) How do we know if a reach-scale study will be needed to address a specific problem or not?

A) We hope the strategy will identify where we can do site-specific work. We don't have all that worked out yet.

Q) *Are you going to work with the Conservation Districts?*

A) We plan to ask what CD's need from us.

-Comment: We need WDFW to send a consistent message to sponsors based on what's already been sent out through technical reviewer comments, etc. on SRFB, HRP, etc. Several people expressed concerns about sites they know of that need emergency actions. Dave replied that the strategy won't address need for "heroic action."

-Bob said that the Conservation Districts will need consistency in message that will work between watersheds. The CD's area covers multiple watersheds.

c) Integrating climate change model results into restoration design

Dave Price mentioned that WDFW is developing tools for culvert sizing and assessments relative to the impacts of climate change. The Chehalis is an ideal basin to start thinking about ways to address climate change. The tool doesn't apply to every situation, but where it does apply, it can be very helpful. WDFW is looking for projects that have not yet been designed -- they'd like to work with sponsors to employ the tool in design process.

Action Item: Sponsors: Call Dave Price and Jane Atha if you'd like to incorporate this tool into your next design project. Dave said their grant program will pay for any changes.

Jess added that WCSSP and WDFW are submitting a grant application to Wildlife Conservation Society for incorporating climate change projections into site-specific design for projects in the entire coast region. They plan to take projects that are going through the 2016 SRFB round and use the grant to pay for implementing those changes. They will have word about the funding decision in December 2016.

Action Item: Sponsors: Let Jess know if your project might be applicable for this work.

Alice said: Sponsors: Climate change is a "hot topic" with SRFB. If you work with WDFW to incorporate this into your design, it will be a good way to answer to the SRFB application question about how the project addresses climate change.

3. SRFB

a) 2016 Project Ranking

The group discussed the ranking system. A new system was developed for the HRP process, based on the Lead Entity ranking. The group discussed the differences between the

systems. Kirsten mentioned that the HRP system didn't include community benefits and we would have to work that back in if we adapt the new system.

Miranda as Vice Chair, solicited a vote of the members. All were in favor of the HRP system modified to include the community/volunteer component. The decision was contingent on there being enough time to notify the sponsors of the criteria beforehand, and that a trial run be done comparing a project run through the old system and new system.

b) Local Review Team confirmation

The local review team was confirmed. Volunteers included: Rich, Miranda, Jason, Cade (maybe), Mark, Jess, JB, Dustin, and Tom. Amy Spoon, not present, was also volunteered. Garrett Dalan had expressed interest earlier. Alice suggested adding a DNR person. Site visits are May 19th and 20th and the ranking meeting will be July 8th.

c) Presentations & Feedback to Sponsors

Kirsten provided an overview of the SRFB applications in PRISM to date. Most are fish passage projects and one is a habitat protection project.

Presentation: Taylors Creek South Bank Road Fish Barrier Correction Design-Permitting Project. Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force.

This project site is just upstream of the Taylor's Ferry project which was funded through HRP. The project site is the last barrier on South Bank Road. The plan to correct this barrier is part of an effort to finish up an entire sub-basin.

This is a "design-only" project. This project plan wasn't ready in time to be incorporated in CBFTF's design-only project proposal to HRP. Since those applications were due, Cade Roler provided technical assistance in preparing this project by doing a "Level B assessment." They determined the culvert is 33% passable. Lonnie mentioned that it's less than 30% passable in the winter for juveniles, during high winter flows it may be 50% impassible for juveniles. Adults could get through it any time. There are chum in the lower basin and this is potentially good off-channel sanctuary for chum. Habitat upstream is good for spawning and rearing.

Upstream there is another 30-60% passable barrier on Weyerhaeuser land, but that's an RMAP project that Weyerhaeuser will correct.

Q) *How far is this project from your HRP site?*

A) 300 feet

-Comment: The cost estimate is reasonable.

Presentation: Marwood Farm Barrier Removal. Lewis County Conservation District.

A fish seining project was done on this property in coordination with the rails to trails (Willapa Trail) work in 2013. Upstream they found 87 different species. There are a lot of fish using this tributary that is very close to the Chehalis main stem.

The problem to correct is a farm-field crossing that is plugged by woody debris. They want to design something to pass debris. Initial cost estimate is \$80,000. The site floods when the Chehalis River floods. There's not a lot of habitat (0.56 mile) but its good habitat.

Q) *Is there a riparian zone?*

A) There is not good riparian vegetation in the vicinity. The current landowners are restoration-friendly. An upstream landowner might enroll in CREP. Parks might purchase the farm and plan the whole area in trees.

-Alice mentioned that the review panel will ask about riparian planting. She suggested that the sponsor be prepared to answer that question and get a firm answer about the parks purchase before the site visit.

Presentation: Lost Creek Barrier Removal. Lewis County Conservation District.

This site was visited by FFFPP staff and they found it ineligible for FFFPP funding. The CD will likely apply for Miranda's funds, as well. Rate 67% passable. Opens up 2 miles of very good habitat. One of the upstream barriers is in the FFFPP database.

The problem to correct is a "punch-in". Logs were put in stream perpendicular to flow of water. Logs put in the water then cars drive over them. They sink in really deep. Creates a barrier for fish.

-Comment: There is a historic structure nearby. You'll likely have to pay a lot for cultural resources review so give yourself some budget for that. Alice mentioned that they might be required to submit a report about the structure, but it may not be deemed not significant.

Q) *This says the barrier downstream is rated as impassible – Is that on the map? Is it impassible?*

A) That's a velocity barrier. It would be good if that was replaced. Ann said they have a signed landowner form to replace it.

Q) *Was the wetland created by the impoundment?*

A) Cade thinks it's not. It's a pretty low gradient area.

-Alice mentioned that the sponsor should assume the log structure goes down fairly deep and build in enough funding to account for digging it out.

Presentation: Hoquiam Surge Plain 6 Acquisition/ Restoration. Forterra.

Darcey Hughes told the group that she would like some feedback on structuring the project.

The acquisition will add to 1,325 acres of protected land acquired over 8 years. The first five acquisitions were supported in part by the National Coastal Wetlands program. Forterra plans to partner with the Chehalis Land Trust on this proposed project. Forterra will acquire the property “in fee” will work with Chehalis River Basin Land Trust to develop restoration and stewardship plan. They hope to also partner with the Grays Harbor Conservation District. The upland is owned by Green Diamond. They will need to re-segment the parcels and acquire just the riparian parcels. That will likely cost a lot. Developing the stewardship plan will likely also be expensive. They’re currently thinking the SRFB ask will be a planning project.

Darcey’s questions for the group:

Q) *How can we plug in to WCRI? Can it be a match to SRFB? Should we just do acquisition and planning for this phase of SRFB? If so, then can WCRI be match?*

A) Alice said: For SRFB, keep stewardship plan separate from restoration plan. WCRI can match SRFB. She recommends do acquisition and design and then have WCRI for a restoration project. Once you get WCRI funding, RCO can combine everything into one project. But you still need match for the acquisition piece.

-Dustin suggested applying to Ecology’s Integrated Financial Assistance for the restoration piece. It wouldn’t be applicable for acquisition, though. Alice said the sponsor would need to clearly demonstrate how knotweed removal will address a specific water quality issue (e.g., sediment).

The group began a discussion on knotweed. Knotweed is a bigger issue than just this site. Would be good to see watershed-level program. Grays Harbor Conservation District may be interested sponsoring such a program. Is there any program like that in the basin? Steve said that Grays Harbor may have a special program. They’re trying to bring in some biological controls. That work might not be in the Hoquiam, though. You’ve got to start eradicating knotweed upstream or it’s a lost cause. Forterra has in-house expertise about knotweed given a successful program in the Cedar River watershed.

Questions from the group to Darcey:

Q) *Are there any levees you want to remove? Any other components to the restoration piece?*

A) Not now, but we will look at adding project components beyond just knotweed

Q) *Is Green Diamond considering a discounted sale? That could be used as match.*

A) Jordan has been in contact with Green Diamond (Darcey doesn’t know answer)

Q) *What happens if you don’t acquire this – Nothing, because you can’t harvest it?*

A) Idea is that we’re adding to this section of river that is already protected. There are also some development sites along the river. Could prevent more development along the river.

Q) So this acquisition includes some of the developable properties? If so, you should note that in your application.

A) Yes. And we'd propose engaging those neighboring in the restoration.

-Comment: If you go after WCRI, there needs to be strong jobs component.

-Comment: Rich mentioned that the ESRP funding is going to be coming to the coast. This project might fit within that.

Q) How much knotweed is upstream?

A) Darcey doesn't know.

-Comment: Your proposed budget item for knotweed removal isn't enough.

4. Communication & Outreach

a) Contract for Paul Dunn - update

Kirsten distributed the first article Paul Dunn has written – about Jarred Figlar Barnes. It has been submitted to the Chronicle and is pending publication.

b) Rose Foundation Applications - update

This agenda item wasn't covered.

5. Other Business and Announcements

Newaukum Watershed Assessment and Restoration Subcommittee meeting to be held Wednesday, April 13th 10-12.

Next HWG meeting: June 17th 2016 --