

Chehalis Basin / Grays Harbor Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

June 12, 2015

9:30 am – 12:30 pm

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

In attendance:

Alice Rubin, RCO
Ann Weckback, Lewis County
Amy Spoon, WDFW
Bob Amrine, Lewis County Conservation District (briefly)
Chanele Holbrook, Heernet
Dustin Bilhimer, WA Dept of Ecology
Janet Strong, Chehalis River Basin Land Trust

Kirsten Harma, Lead Entity Coordinator
Laurence Reeves, Capitol Land Trust
Lonnie Crumley, Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force and Streamworks
Mark Swartout, Thurston County Citizen
Miranda Plumb, USFWS
Omroa Bhagwandin,

Meeting Summary

1. **Welcome and Introductions.**
Everyone provided self-introductions
2. **Updates and Announcements**
 1. **Highlights of 2015 Salmon Recovery Conference**

Participants noted their reactions to the conference, principally that there was a lot of good information presented and it was a worthwhile experience.

3. **2015 SRFB Process**
 1. **Comments and suggestions for Project Sponsors**

Each project sponsor asked questions of the review panel:

Lonnie Crumley:

-Wanted clarity on the RCO Reviewer comment about the utility pipe on the Oakhurst project site. No one present knew where this might be.

Chanele Holbrook:

Chanele had many questions for the group regarding the Wien's Farm project. The review panel liked the idea of protecting the side channel tributary, but that would be a smaller scale project than what she originally proposed. Her concern for the mainstem was that low flows would slowly eat away at the bank and destabilize it further. The group discussed various things to tie to the bank to slow bank erosion. Alice suggested adding in more for a design budget. Chanele was concerned a Design-only project would be a waste of time. Alice suggested that it could be a Design-Build.

For the Scatter Creek project, winter flows are the problem. The RCO reviewers want any project here to work with natural processes, since the natural processes seem to currently be fine for fish. Chanele stated that the problem is that the landowners are not happy with flooding on their property, so have been taking actions like further ditching the stream, and removing beaver and their dams. The group discussed various alternative funding sources for the project, such as CREP, Conservation Districts, Centennial Funds and EQIP (but it doesn't fund NGO work). Miranda Plumb mentioned that she knew of a Master's student working on beaver relocation, who might be able to provide ideas. Chanele's time constraint on finding a solution is that the landowners will give her one year to find a solution. Alice said that a Design-Only project might be good if it resulted in a model that could show the impacts of a potential solution and how it would benefit everyone. She asked if the landowner might participate in an easement, which could have language saying the landowner had to put in larger buffers.

Laurence Reeves:

Laurence said his project ranked well for 319 funding, which might reduce the ask for SRFB funding by \$12,000. Advice from the review team was to not reduce the ask from SRFB until we know more about the State funding. Laurence mentioned that he also applied for a USFWS grant to deal with the Oregon Spotted Frog, but it looks like they won't get funded through this. Miranda asked if WDFW had found frogs on the property. Laurence knew that they had found frogs on the property, but it's a 700-acre property, so he's not sure if the frogs were found in the exact project site. The issue is that the frogs need warm water February to April, but fish need cold water at that same time.

Janet Strong:

Janet learned more about the Wishkah project the day before this meeting. There will now be a Memorandum of Understanding in place between Forterra, the Wildfish Conservancy, and Chehalis Land Trust. Forterra will be the sponsor to start, then Chehalis Land Trust will take the title after 2 years. She now knows that the restoration will involve more than planting. They will remove an old tide gate to open up the remnant slough. The changes will lead to providing shade and microhabitats and erosion control.

Bob Amrine.

Lewis County Conservation District will continue to improve the Bunker Road application until the August final application deadline (to RCO).

2. Completed applications due June 26th

4. Website Subcommittee update

- 1. Presentation of draft vision for site**
- 2. Solicitation of comments**

There was no time for this agenda item

5. Review and signing of Lead Entity bylaws

There was no time for this agenda item

6. Looking Ahead to SRFB round 2016

- 1. How do we find priority projects?**
- 2. Conceptual Projects – where is this at?**
- 3. Annual update of the Strategy? – where is this at?**

There was no time for this agenda item

7. Update on Flood Authority process

Kirsten informed the group that she had invited Jim Kramer to come give an update to the group in either August or September. Meeting participants said that September would be the preferred month.

Dustin mentioned that there will be a meeting between Ecology, WDFW, and Jim Kramer. He thinks Ecology and WDFW may be open to having the HWG to be involved in these conversations, as well. He said Ecology's perspective is that this is not mitigation money. They will be funded to conduct a Programmatic EIS, similar to the process in the Yakima basin.

Mark Swartout mentioned what happened the last biennium, which was a lot of people scrambling to get projects proposed, and there weren't a lot of good studies going into this. He supported the idea of Ecology being the lead on the EIS, so that they could look at other non-capital alternatives to address flooding. The connection to the HWG could be to at least get them to see the list of projects before projects are selected, so that they can comment on them.

Kirsten suggested that HWG members prepare answers to two questions before the meeting with Jim Kramer:

- *What do you want to learn from them?
- *What do you want them to learn from us?

Omrah proposed that participants in that conversation not say whether they are for or against the dam, with the idea that we just want to be included in the conversation.

8. Other Business

There was no time to discuss other business

9. Next HWG meeting

- 1. – Technical Committee Only – July 10th**
- 2. Everyone else – what is your availability for the regularly scheduled August meeting?**