

Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

June 17, 2016

9:30 am – 12:30 pm

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

In attendance:

Alice Rubin, RCO	Kathleen Berger, <i>Thurston Conservation District</i>
Brett DeMond, <i>Streamworks</i>	Kirsten Harma, <i>Lead Entity Coordinator</i>
Cade Roler, WDFW	Kim Smith, <i>Grays Harbor Conservation District</i>
Caitlin Guthrie, <i>Capitol Land Trust</i>	Lonnie Crumley, <i>CBFETF</i>
Dustin Bilhimer, <i>Ecology</i>	Mark Swartout, <i>Citizen</i>
Frank Gordon, <i>Grays Harbor</i>	Omroa Bhagwandan, <i>Citizen</i>
Commissioner	Rich Osborne, <i>WCSSP</i>
Garrett Dalan, <i>The Nature Conservancy</i>	Steve Hallstrom, <i>Chehalis River Basin Land Trust</i>
JB McCrummen, <i>Citizen</i>	Tom Clingman, <i>Ecology</i>
Jessica Helsley, <i>WCSSP</i>	

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions.

Everyone provided self-introductions. Kirsten provided an overview of the background and purpose of the Lead Entity and its citizens' committee.

Caitlin Guthrie mentioned that she will be leaving her position at Capitol Land Trust and she will now be working with the Nation-wide program, Conservation Fund on their conservation loan program, offering low-interest rate loans to acquisitions that aren't able to meet those funds right away. Caitlin's replacement will attend HWG meetings.

2. Review of minutes from April 2016

No one had any comments on the minutes

3. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)

a) 2016 Site Visits

b) Reviewer feedback to sponsors to improve applications

16-1709 Frase Creek Barrier Removal and Replacement

The reviewers liked the project. This may come off the list if funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

16-1803 Van Ornum Creek Barrier Removal

Local review team members wanted the sponsor to get information about the status of the upstream barriers, and find out if the site is eligible for CREP.

Marwood

This project is on a list for acquisition through the WWRP (parks) program. There won't be information on how well that project ranks through that grant program until August, and we won't know if funding is approved until June 2017. Thus, the sponsor is keeping this project for review by the SRFB. The group discussed how else the property could be managed for restoration if it becomes park property.

Taylor

Garrett mentioned another biologist who went out to the site and noted that the stream has good habitat. Reviewers liked the project.

16-1757 Hoquiam Surge Plain VI Acquisition-Design

No comments in addition to those provided in the state review panels' comments.

16-1756 M Fork Hoquiam Tidal Habitat Restoration Design

Dustin suggested that the sponsor talk to Rick Miraz in Ecology's shoreline program and ask for Ecology's stance on draining a road-impounded wetland. It would be valuable to get his input during the design process. The review team said they wouldn't support putting in a structure to maintain flows that would require maintenance. The only option would be to remove the grade and allow the wetland to become tidally influenced.

c) Next steps in project review

Project ranking July 8, Final applications into PRISM August 12th.

4. Chehalis Basin Strategy / Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (10:20)

a) Summary of past two months – Kirsten

Kirsten provided a summary of the five sub-basin workshops that Anchor and WDFW hosted to validate and ground truth their EDT model and to identify "starter reaches".

b) Participant Feedback from “Sub-Basin Workshops” – Discussion

Participants were glad that they were involved in those discussions. Someone mentioned that a drawback is that people working on aquatic projects and those on flood projects are not talking to each other.

c) Upcoming work and role for Lead Entity – Discussion

An “outgrowth” of the sub-basin meetings was a plan for identifying Starter-Reaches. Kirsten handed out a paper with a proposed process document, which was recently drafted by Jim Kramer for review by the parties who will be involved in identifying starter-reaches. This is being requested because legislators are accustomed to being able to look at project lists for funding approval. There isn’t time to run a full project request round, but they would like to see the types of projects that could be funded, and the team developing the next budget request wants to know how much those will cost. The Habitat Work Group was asked to comment on the process document.

Comments on Starter-Reach draft:

- What is a reach? What is the scale of the starter reach?
- It’s hard to have a “hard” criteria such as “1 mile or more” – be more flexible with this
- Doing projects on “public ownership” might be a good place to start because it would be a low-hanging fruit.
- There is no “generic reach”
- Include reach analysis in project development
- Work on aquatic restoration projects in areas around the identified bank erosion starter reaches
- Maybe categorize the generic “starter” reaches to include different types of projects, such as barriers, erosion, wood, etc.
- Need to prepare projects in the right sequences. There needs to be an upstream-downstream approach to sequencing the projects.
- Need to consider the end goal of these early actions and their benefits

Participants wondered if this will be the only “near term” project path in the next biennium, or if there will be a “normal” project request round again. Mr. Clingman thinks there will be multiple types of near-term projects in addition to these “Starter reaches.”

The group agreed that it should be a priority to come up with good project ideas now that will address currently identified limiting factors in case there isn’t another round of funding (HRP-like grant cycle).

Action Item: Send comments on the Conceptual Project form to Kim and/or Kirsten

Action Item: Send comments on the Starter Reach document to Kirsten

5. Office of the Chehalis Basin (11:00)

**a) Overview of Ecology's plans for the Office of the Chehalis Basin – Tom
Clingman, Department of Ecology**

Mr. Clingman said the Office would provide some clarity about “who owns the Strategy.” Ecology will provide a “permanent home” for the Chehalis Strategy. The Office will be like the current Office of the Columbia, in that Ecology will step out of being a regulator, and step in to being a problem solver. It will also emulate the Columbia office in that it will be directed by a multi-stakeholder Board. Ecology will submit the entire budget request for implementing the Chehalis Strategy starting in the 2017-2019 biennium. The Governor's Work Group and agencies will develop the more specific steps needed for a work plan. The office will become effective July 2017. The next steps of Strategy itself will result from the PEIS that Ecology is currently developing. It will be amended to include new scientific information as that becomes available.

The new Office will have a new Board, drawing from representatives of the Flood Authority, the Quinault Indian Nation and Chehalis Tribe. The Board will oversee implementation of the Strategy. The Flood Authority will continue as its own body and will continue to work on small projects for flood hazard reduction. The Governor's Work Group will not continue to exist. The new Board will include some members of the Governor's Work Group, but it will not continue as a body. Mr. Clingman expects the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity will still be a key partner in developing habitat restoration lists.

Clingman described the overall goal of the Strategy: take money that would have to be spent to deal with catastrophic flood and aquatic species over the next 100 years, and capture that money and spend it in the near term and reduce the overall impact on the communities. This should generate support for “game changing” actions in the Chehalis. Mr. Clingman hopes this Office will become more like Floodplains by Design and fund projects that address both flooding and aquatic habitat.

Q) Are ASRP and flood reduction linked?

A) Habitat work is not mitigation for creation of a potential dam. But if funding for flood damage reduction goes away, funding for habitat work will go away. These are linked in that if either falters, the other goes away.

Q) Isn't the Quinault's plan identifying restoration projects?

A) No, they're looking at a very specific task to identify storage in the floodplain. That does restore functions, which goes a long way towards restoring habitat. The places they want to store water might not be the best place to restore habitat. ASRP has applications outside the “Office of the Chehalis”

Q) Who will staff the new office?

A) The Board will be staffed, as they will be an active organization. There will be a handful of new core staff, and then there will be staff that are partially funding for projects as is occurring currently. For examples, WDFW's staff will likely receive funding through this same budget request.

Q) Will Ecology take over management of grants from RCO?

A) Agencies will likely do different parts of the project, e.g., WDFW and RCO will continue current roles.

b) Habitat Work Group member feedback and discussion on desired future involvement – Discussion

Members expressed interest in EDT being maintained into the future and kept accurate and up to date. They would also like a way to get users to input data as it is gathered.

Q) Could watershed planning, specifically groundwater modeling, be pulled in to the next phase of the Chehalis Strategy? Could there be a role for the Chehalis Basin Partnership?

A) Dustin is seeing if groundwater modeling can get into the budget proposal for the next biennium. Mr. Clingman will come talk to the Chehalis Basin Partnership to talk specifically about their involvement.

6. Newaukum Subcommittee Update (11:40)

a) Update on FBRB Priorities – Cade Roler

The FBRB wants more information on the “watershed pathways” process to barrier removal. Cade reminded the group that a subcommittee of this group met to prioritize barrier packages within the Newaukum: Middle Fork Newaukum and Gheer Creek. Cade wants to know where we want money to go first within those priority subwatersheds. Most of the projects are on Lewis County land.

Action Item: Kirsten will schedule a Newaukum subcommittee meeting and send out the materials Cade passed around at this meeting as background documents for that meeting.

Regarding the statewide process, there were 244 project requests throughout the state that weren't part of the “watershed pathway.” Cade ranked those and came up with a list of 30 for more intensive review by sending staff out in the field. Those will be presented at the next FBRB meeting. The first round of this was to gauge interest and ability to do projects throughout the state. The FBRB may put out another call for nominations at the end of the summer or in early fall 2016.

b) Other updates on Newaukum work – Group

None. There will need to be another update of the Newaukum work through a subcommittee meeting.

7. Other Business & Announcements (12:00)

a) PCSRF Announcement

NOAA's PCSRF award to capacity of salmon recovery in Washington will be \$800,000 less than last year. This will take effect July 1st 2016. These funding cuts will be discussed at the upcoming Salmon Recovery Funding Board meeting. The current proposed option is for equal cuts to all lead entities and regions throughout the state. One of the options that has been put forward is consolidation of Lead Entities. Jess Helsley will be present at the SRFB meeting and will advocate for creative approaches to dealing with these cuts, but not including merging Lead Entities or loss of jobs for current coast Lead Entity coordinators.

Comments:

-The Chehalis is the second largest watershed in the state and should be kept as its own Lead Entity.

-The next phase of the *Chehalis Strategy* should contribute funding to have this body continue to function as it has been.

Next HWG meeting: Friday, August 12th 2016