**Chehalis Basin Lead Entity**

**Habitat Work Group Meeting**

**July 14, 2017
9:30 am – 12:30 pm**

Chehalis Tribe Community Center Gathering Room
Oakville, Washington

**In attendance**:

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| Ann Weckback, *Lewis County* *Public Works*Bob Amrine, *Lewis County CD* Brett Demond, *Citizen*Colleen Suter, *Chehalis Tribe DNR*Eric Erler, *Consultant*Greg Green, *Ducks Unlimited*Jason Gillie, *Chehalis Tribe DNR*Jan Strong, *Chehalis Land Trust*Jess Helsley, *Coast Salmon Partnership* | Kirsten Harma, *Lead Entity Coordinator*Mara Healy, *Thurston CD*Maria Hunter, *WDFW Habitat Program*Mark Swartout, *Citizen, Thurston County*Omroa Bhagwandi, *Citizen, Lewis County*Rich Osborne, *Coast Salmon Partnership*Steve Hallstrom, *Citizen, Grays Harbor Co*Thom Woodruff, *Capitol Land Trust*Tom Kollasch, *Grays Harbor CD* |

**Meeting Summary**

1. **Welcome and Introductions.**

Everyone provided self-introductions.
2. **Review of minutes from June 2017**

Tom moved to approve the minutes, Mark seconded. All in favor.

1. **Subcommittee Updates**
	1. Bylaw SubCommittee
		1. Resolution with Grays Harbor County

Kirsten has been working with the lawyer for Grays Harbor County on drafting a resolution that establishes the Habitat Work Group as the citizens committee for the purposes of the SRFB process. Thom Woodruff had two suggested changes to the resolution, and one word choice correction. Kirsten noted that the group can’t make further comments on the resolution since they currently have no legal standing. For the record, he suggested that the document include a definition of what the Habitat Work Group is and what its membership is. Kirsten noted that the resolution establishes membership as current membership, and the bylaw subcommittee will next be working on providing guidance about membership for the bylaw update. Thom’s concern that the suggested membership of “environmental groups” does not include land trusts, can be addressed during the bylaw update. “Natural resource group” was suggested alternate language.

Action: Rich, Brett, Mark and Steve agreed to be on the subcommittee that discusses membership.

* + 1. Next steps

Kirsten will meet with the Commissioners to discuss the draft resolution on July 24th .

* 1. Culvert Subcommittee

Cade Roler of WDFW is working on possible options for a new formula to prioritize culverts for correction. He met with the culvert subcommittee to discuss options. Right now there are no ideal options to address riparian condition. He will likely reconvene the subcommittee again in August.

* 1. Newaukum Subcommittee – update

Scott Collyard of Ecology has developed a QAPP for water quality monitoring in the Newaukum. Colleen Suter and Bob Amrine both reviewed the plan. Bob mentioned that the plan will be beneficial as an additional resource to help guide and monitor restoration efforts in the Newaukum.

1. Chehalis Basin Acquisition Tools and Strategies
	1. Overview and discussion -- led by Eric Erler

Eric Erler is the former Executive Director of Capitol Land Trust and has worked extensively on land protection in collaboration with state agencies and multi-stakeholder partnerships – including work for many years within the Chehalis Basin. He provided an overview of tools and strategies that can be used in acquisition, ideas for ranking acquisition projects, and ideas for a strategy for acquisition in the Chehalis Basin.

One of the primary benefits of acquisitions is that they can be the most economically efficient way to meet goals. Tools include outright acquisition, conservation easements, purchase/transfer of development rights, deed covenants and restrictions. Conservation Easements are voluntary agreements between a conservation organization or government agency and a willing landowner. The restrictions remain in place even if ownership is sold or transferred. One of the benefits of Conservation Easements is that they allow for flexibility in meeting the interests of the landowner, and another is that they may be appealing to landowners because of potential tax-benefits. Their benefit to conservation is that the landowner is a stewardship partner and will look out for the land. Conservation easements can be for a specific term or in perpetuity. However, protection goals and potential tax benefits are typically associated with easements that encumber land in perpetuity. Conservation easements may only be amended for the purpose of strengthening conservation benefits. They cannot be weakened if future owners view them as too onerous.

When reviewing the merit of an acquisition proposal, it is essential to determine that the proposal furthers existing conservation goals. Assess if the acquisition protects essential habitat. Next look and see if it maximizes financial investment such as through leveraging other funding and building on prior investments. Also consider how realistic the management goals for the property are. In the Lead Entity process, it’s worthwhile to consider the acquisition relative to local values such as keeping agriculture on the land. To address the question – ‘is outright acquisition the best way to meet conservation goals?’, consider landowner sensitivities and other values for the land (for instance, sometimes farmers want to keep farming but also recognize the importance of protecting their life-long investment by conserving all or part of the property). Regarding a larger acquisition strategy for the Chehalis, consider that conservation success depends on relationships and protection must be voluntary. Importantly, all stakeholders are needed to contribute to a successful acquisition strategy. Working together, we can achieve success on a greater scale.

For more information, contact Eric at: ericerler@centurylink.net

* 1. Discussion of draft letter to ASRP Steering Committee and next steps

There was not time to get to this agenda topic.

1. ASRP & Chehalis Strategy (10:45)

	1. HWG Input on Draft Goals

The ASRP Steering Committee is currently defining the ASRP goals. Kirsten walked the group through an exercise to provide input on the draft goals. She demonstrated the existing Lead Entity goals to start the discussion. The Lead Entity goals place special emphasis on the Grays Harbor estuary, which isn’t currently highlighted in the ASRP goals. The Lead Entity goals also make special mention of wild fish. Work group members suggested keeping the ASRP goals high level with no specific need to address wild fish. Work group members recommended not including language about focusing on any particular sub-basin. Keep the whole watershed in the plan, and focus on sub-basins as needed to achieve the goals of the plan. Tom Kollasch commented on the language about protecting intact habitat: there may be instances where we need to protect degraded habitat as an intermediary step to achieve longer-term goals. The group also agreed to recommend leaving out the language “in-perpetuity”. CREP is a valuable tool and doesn’t fit in the “in perpetuity” category.

Action Item: Habitat Work Group members are encouraged to send additional thoughts on the goals to Maria.

* 1. Other ASRP Updates & Discussion

There wasn’t time for additional updates

* 1. Office of Chehalis / Chehalis Board – report on July 7th meeting

Bob Amrine attended this meeting. The only action item, a request for more funds to work on the ASRP, was not taken because the board was waiting to hear about carry-over funds.

1. Salmon Recovery Funding Board
	1. Scope Change Request – Forterra - Wishkah Gardens Acquisition - #15-1109
		1. Presentation

Darcey Hughes presented additional information about this scope change proposal. Jordan Rash had visited the site and identified restoration opportunities such as ivy, knotweed, and some rip-rap. Additional opportunities could be to plant conifer and add large woody debris. She stated that the value of the project is to keep the conversation open with the land owner and start conservation on this part of the Wishkah. The Quinault have agreed to provide match and stewardship funds. Forterra intended to remove “restoration planning” from the scope of work, and just move forward with a purchase of 36 acres.

Work group members recommended keeping stewardship funds in the project. Getting funding to do restoration in the future probably will be less successful as this site will rank lower compared to other types of projects. They recommend that Forterra redo the budget and the scope to include restoration.

* + 1. *Decision*: Whether or not to recommend the scope change

Voting HWG members present agreed to postpone the vote until the August meeting. They would like to see the restoration component incorporated into the proposal. In August, HWG members need to have reviewed all materials and come prepared to vote.

* 1. Draft ranked list – 2017 SRFB applications

The review team was unable to finalize the ranked list prior to this meeting, so the draft list was not presented. The list will be sent out for review prior to the August 11th meeting.

Next HWG meeting: August 11th 2017