

Chehalis Basin / Grays Harbor Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

August 14, 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*
Amy Spoon, *WDFW*
Bailey Fern, *Youth Worker- Chehalis Tribe*
Bob Amrine, *Lewis County Conservation District*
Chanele Holbrook, *Heernet*
Charissa Waters, *Thurston County Planning*
Dustin Bilhimer, *WA Dept of Ecology*
Janet Strong, *Chehalis River Basin Land Trust*
Jason Gillie, *Chehalis Tribe*

Kirsten Harma, *Lead Entity Coordinator*
Lonnie Crumley, *Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force and Streamworks*
Miles Batchelder, *WCSSP*
Miranda Plumb, *USFWS*
Omroa Bhagwandin, *Citizen*
Rich Osborne, *WCSSP*
Guests: Marc Hayes and Keith Douville, *WDFW*

Meeting Summary

- 1. Welcome and Introductions.**
Everyone provided self-introductions
- 2. Lead Entity Bylaws**

Kirsten introduced the topic of the Lead Entity Bylaws. It is the responsibility of the Lead Entity citizen's committee to maintain and update these bylaws and the responsibility of the Lead Entity Coordinator to report updates to the RCO. Since the Bylaws have not been updated since they were written in 2011, Kirsten felt it was time for a review.

First up for discussion was the list of Habitat Work Group members. Many of the individuals on the list have changed jobs or are no longer active in the committee. Members present decided that membership should be by seat rather than individual. It will be up to the agency to appoint someone to fill that role. Citizen members can be voted on at any meeting. Members present then went through the list to see if each individual named was still involved, and then asked if there were others seats that needed to be added. The outcome

of this conversation, an updated list, is included at the end of this document. Kirsten will need to contact three citizen members listed, Jim Hill, Rob Schanz and Bruce Treichler, to see if they still want to be involved.

Next in this discussion was the requirement that officers serve a one-year term. The group decided to hold an election of officers at the September HWG meeting. Bob Amrine and Miranda Plumb both expressed interest in holding the Chair and Vice-Chair seats, respectively.

3. 2015 SRFB Grant Round Update

1. Washington Coast Restoration Initiative

Miles provided a summary of the 2015 Washington Coast Restoration Initiative.

This year: The initiative passed the legislative session, and will be bringing several million dollars into the Chehalis Basin. One thing Miles mentioned is that in future years, the Initiative might be able to provide funding for projects that are larger than what can be funded by the SRFB. He said that RCO now administers these funds and there will be a separate application for this pot of funding in PRISM. Management within PRISM will allow metrics from habitat restoration, jobs created, and outreach to be captured. The PRISM system is just about ready. The RCO recognizes that sponsors are missing this summer's window for doing work, and there may be an opportunity to re-appropriate funds for use beyond this biennium. The RCO may change their policies to account for the summer work window when setting up timelines for these projects in future years.

Future years: The intent is to make this an annual program, like PSAR is for the Puget Sound. Unlike PSAR, WCRI is not specifically salmon-focused. Miles said the WCRI coalition would like to see ranking of projects happen in future years. There is no ranking process currently in place. The last list of projects was generated at a local level, but there hasn't been a technical review. Miles said WCSSP isn't suited to do that by themselves because of its salmon focus, but they are suited geographically since the WCSSP geographic area corresponds with WCRI. They intend to play whatever role the initiative coalition wants them to. Miles said the SRFB doesn't want to drive selection, and will only provide recommendations, not requirements for how the projects are developed and selected. The advantage of the Coalition coming up with its own technical review process would be that it could generate a ranked project list which it could then present to the Legislators, which would mean that at least the highest quality projects would be funded if there is a funding shortfall. Miles suggested that the Habitat Work Group be involved in vetting projects that relate to salmon recovery in WRIA 22 and 23. The HWG could suggest which projects they want to see on the list. Rich's idea is that the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) could do first review of the coastal projects. There are other possible projects that are unrelated to

salmon recovery that will have to be vetted using other means (the main example being prairie projects).

Janet asked about the job creation component of this initiative. Miles said he thinks it is very important and may be the reason the initiative finally got funded. Janet said this would be good because it could allow sponsors to do work that wouldn't necessarily be related to excellent habitat.

The next round of requests will be coming up for the supplemental budget. That means that there will be a call for projects by September.

Rich mentioned that WCRI projects will likely go into HWS.

Miles will pass out an op-ed that will come out soon in the Seattle Times

2. Presentation of Ranked List

Kirsten read the list of projects ranked by the Technical Review Committee. Miles updated the group on the Regional process. We still don't know what the other coastal Lead Entities will be doing. He said that Willapa is short \$27,000 and may ask other Lead Entities for funds for their only project (Stringer Creek). Water quality or other sources of funding might also support Willapa's project.

4. Converging Needs for Project Identification and Prioritization

Kirsten introduced the fact that there are many near-term and immediate needs for identifying and selecting salmon recovery projects in the Chehalis Basin. The Chehalis Basin Strategy has been guiding the work of the Habitat Work Group to date, and has been what all projects that receive SRFB funding need to reference.

The WCRI initiative, as described above, represents another emerging need for selecting and ranking salmon recovery projects in the Chehalis. Another need for selecting priority projects is the "Pilot Project" initiative from WCSSP. Rich Osborne described this need and approach.

WCSSP's "Business Plan" calls for each Lead Entity in the Coast region to select a subwatershed for implementing a new kind of restoration and monitoring methodology.

- They would like to start one "pilot project" in a subbasin of the Chehalis that includes an implementation component and a research component
- They want to implement a restoration project in a subwatershed that needs work, where the work is likely to be successful, and then conduct monitoring afterwards to quantify that

success.

- They will then review what they learned from that project, and the monitoring results, and determine how that can shape design of future projects.
- Although just one subwatershed will be the subject of this restoration and research at first, the goal is to try out a model that might work in other parts of our watershed.
- There is no funding available to implement the restoration and research. The funding would have to come from other sources.
- They also hope that once the success is demonstrated, this can pull in more funding

Miles added that when this process started, the National Marine Fisheries Service said they would fund this work up to 10 years at \$100,000 per year. That offer is essentially still out there even though the person that made that offer has left the Service. WCSSP will ask if this offer still stands.

Rich suggested that the pilot project take place where some of the other work in the Chehalis is taking place to make the most efficient use of resources. Working somewhere with monitoring is very important. Dustin mentioned that the monitoring Ecology is doing with the flood funding may help select the subwatershed. They are looking at putting a station at the mouth of the Newaukum, but that could maybe be moved around in that watershed. Miles mentioned that the Tribe's monitoring data could also be useful. Any place where monitoring of fish use is taking place will be important because ultimately the goal is to track fish response.

Chanele expressed concern about selecting just one pilot project given that the upper watershed is different from the lower watershed. Rich responded that since there are two WRIA's, the HWG could select two subwatersheds for the pilot project. Miles mentioned that since the results of the study aspect of this work will be examined coast-wide, what happens here is just a piece of a much bigger project. In summary, the site doesn't have to be representative of the whole Chehalis Basin. Rich would actually recommend just doing one at this point and see how it goes.

WCSSP has been discussing the Newaukum as a possible pilot because of opportunity to improve habitat with a small amount of work. Bob mentioned that the problem there is not a lot of holes for fish. If the pilot project is done in the Newaukum, getting landowner buy-in would be critical. Miles mentioned that education would be a critical component of work in this basin. Rich said another approach would be to pick a subwatershed where the landowners wouldn't interfere, and then demonstrate how well it works. But that might be harder to find. Miranda mentioned the landowner education workshop that the Lewis Conservation District is doing, that could be used as a way to reach landowner in the Newaukum. Bob said there are a few landowners in that system that are already interested. He has more positive contacts with landowners in the main stem.

WDFW Fish Barrier Removal Board

The Fish Barrier Removal Board was created to expedite the correction of fish barriers state-wide, in part driven by the culvert case. The Coast Region was approached by the WDFW Fish Barrier Removal Board and asked which subwatershed in each of the coastal WRIA's they should focus on for barrier removal. Miles said the Coast Region submitted the "whole Upper Chehalis" for WRIA 22 and 23 as their choice to do the fish barrier removals. The rationale was that the flood funding is focused here, and to get the WDFW to get all the barriers they can get at all at the same time, all these agencies working together in the same time and same place could have huge benefit.

Bob mentioned that the Lewis Conservation District is going to get some of the flood money to update their culvert assessment. They will then keep updating those. He said something to consider is that culverts aren't used by adult Spring Chinook. He said that information needs to get to the politicians. Kelly Verd is going to create a database and they'll find someone else to start assessing culverts. Miranda has contacts for crews that assess culverts.

A final note on the Fish Barrier Removal Board process is that there is no funding yet to actually remove the barriers. The Board has to create the list to create priorities and then they will ask for funding to do the work.

Flood process participation

Kirsten updated the group on what she knows about the flood funding that relates to "aquatic species prioritization" in the Chehalis. She summarized a meeting between Jim Kramer, Mark Swartout, Miles, Bob Amrine, and herself. In summary, there is no process yet on how to prioritize use of the funding directed towards aquatic species restoration. The WDFW is going to take lead on developing the process. The focus will likely be technical. The group is supposed to decide what work to be done, where to do it, and then how to do it. Coordination with the Chehalis Tribe and Quinault Nation will be needed to inform the process.

Converging Needs for Salmon Recovery Projects

Kirsten presented a diagram on salmon recovery prioritization and converging needs for projects. The diagram was useful to participants for understanding the issues.

Rich said, ideally you have prioritized basins with prioritized projects and just start ticking through them. We don't have this in the Chehalis. He said IP modeling is one way to do that.

The Culvert Removal Board is using IP modeling. But he thinks what they're thinking of using won't be that accurate because they are just taking the model that has been used in Oregon. Rich's group had updated the model for the Washington Coast for some species and some runs. It looks more accurate now. They are in the process of trying to ground truth. It would allow someone to find areas that would be very good habitat based on geological factors. Miranda asked if that map could be overlaid with SalmonScape or another layer about fish use, and then used to find areas with potential, but without fish. The answer was yes. They are groundtruthing the model right now, and finding at least moderate habitat where the model says there is going to be habitat. The information is available in NetMap. NetMap houses other layers and you can import other layers. It would be useful to get other layers added, such as water temperature.

(A side note on PRISM: Rich mentioned that PRISM and HWS can interface. Now if you put a project in PRISM it will update HWS, but there are challenges that result in updates not happening quite right. They are trying to get it so that everything you put in PRISM will automatically update in HWS. But GSRO just said updates won't be done until next biennium. All groups on coast would like to see this as a priority, done sooner. Pressure from this group helping that happen by December would be helpful. Contact Brian Abbott.)

Finding Projects – Doing all of the project work that all of these processes are hoping for will take getting the word out to sponsors. Janet wanted to know how potential sponsors are supposed to know what's available for funding, and what will have a high priority. Janet mentioned that one way to reduce confusion might be to create a summary of the kinds of projects each of those funding sources/prioritization processes are looking for, and what the timelines are. Maybe if the sponsors knew that they could incorporate more things that would make it more valuable as a project, or even develop different kinds of projects.

Others mentioned that a "menu" for sponsors could be good. Combining everything into one "RFP" could also be useful. Perhaps the HWG could take the role of sifting through conceptual projects and then see which one should go to which pile (for funding).

Chanele reminded the group that realistically, we can only tackle projects that have willing landowners. So far we have been successful with this approach. But the upcoming need for so many different kinds of projects with funding coming through different streams may help shift us to doing more work on prioritization.

Ann Weckback mentioned the need for anyone wanting to do work to put large wood in the Mainstem Chehalis or the Newaukum to get a permit from DNR. Miles said that because of this, getting a DNR person on the flood-related aquatic prioritization working group would be valuable.

5. Looking Ahead to SRFB round 2016

This topic was not discussed specifically, but needs to be thought of in the context of all of the other things happening in the basin, as described above.

6. Website Presentation

Not done.

7. ***“Off-Channel Habitats: Their importance to the aquatic biota in the Chehalis Floodplain”*** Presentation by Marc Hayes, PhD, Senior Research Scientist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Power-Point presentation on this topic is attached.

Key points:

- They have done 3 off-channel habitat studies, but are still early in the process and the findings are preliminary
- They have been looking at species presence/absence – not abundance
- The Chehalis Basin has some of the richest off-channel habitats on the Pacific Coast
- 97% of the Chehalis Floodplain is in private ownership
- Keith, on the WDFW team, had a great success rate for getting permissions from private landowners to do this research on their land.
- The WDFW research team would like to see a way to integrate access requests (for this and other studies), to reduce the confusion to landowners
- Eventually, their goal is to be able to link patterns of species use to inundation modeling. They want to know how many off-channel habitats are lost during inundation, and what would happen if flows were to decrease seasonally.
- Their findings thus far are that inundation changes would cause the greatest changes to off-channel habitat on the river segments close to the proposed dam site.

8. Other Business

No time remained for other business

9. Next HWG meeting

1. September 11, 2015

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**Attachment:**

**Habitat Work Group – Update to Member List**

| <b>Entity Represented</b>                  | <b>Habitat Work Group Member (as of 8/14/15)</b> | <b>Comments</b>                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lewis County Conservation District         | Bob Amrine                                       |                                                                                                               |
| Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife | Amy Spoon                                        | Replaced Bob Burkle, who was on the 2011 list                                                                 |
| Quinault Indian Nation                     | Caprise Fasano                                   | Replaced Chris Conklin, who was on the 2011 list                                                              |
| Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force        | Lonnie Crumley                                   |                                                                                                               |
| Washington Department of Natural Resources |                                                  | Roberta Davenport was on 2011 list, no longer available. Joe Arnett will be contacted as possible replacement |
| The Nature Conservancy                     |                                                  | Eric Delvin will be coming to the Sept HWG meeting and tell us who the TNC rep will be                        |
| The Wild Fish Conservancy                  |                                                  | Jamie Glasgow will be coming to the Sept HWG meeting and tell us who the WFC rep will be                      |
| Mason County Conservation District         | Gavin Glore                                      |                                                                                                               |
| Heernet Foundation                         | Chanele Holbrook                                 |                                                                                                               |
| ESD 113                                    | Kathy Jacobson                                   |                                                                                                               |
| City of Centralia                          |                                                  | Unfilled. Kirsten will ask Kahle Jennings (listed in 2011 bylaws) if he still wants to hold this seat.        |
| NW Indian Fisheries Commission             |                                                  | Unfilled. Bruce Jones was on 2011 list                                                                        |
| US Forest Service                          |                                                  | Unfilled. Bob Metzger was on 2011 list                                                                        |
| US Fish and Wildlife Service               | Miranda Plumb                                    |                                                                                                               |
| Chehalis River Council                     | Rob Schanz                                       | Kirsten will contact to see if he still wants to be involved.                                                 |
| Chehalis Basin Partnership                 |                                                  | Unfilled. Kirsten will ask if anyone else wants to hold seat                                                  |
| Chehalis River Basin Land Trust            | Janet Strong                                     |                                                                                                               |



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|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| US Army Corps of Engineers                      |                 | Unfilled. Kristen Haefer (sp?) was suggested as an option                                                                          |
| Citizen at Large                                | Jim Hill        | Kirsten will contact to see if he still wants to be involved.                                                                      |
| Citizen at Large                                | Bruce Treichler | Kirsten will contact to see if he still wants to be involved.                                                                      |
| Lewis County                                    | Ann Weckback    |                                                                                                                                    |
| Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation | Jason Gillie    | Replaced alternate Larry Durham on the 2011 list                                                                                   |
|                                                 |                 |                                                                                                                                    |
| Department of Ecology                           | Dustin Bilhimer | <b>Added</b> August 14, 2015                                                                                                       |
| Grays Harbor Conservation District              |                 | <b>Added.</b> Mike Nordin will be contacted and asked if he would like to fill this seat, or appoint someone else.                 |
| Citizen at Large                                | Omrah           | <b>Added</b> August 14, 2015                                                                                                       |
| Thurston County                                 |                 | <b>Added</b> August 14, 2015 <i>*For discussion - should this be anyone at Thurston County, or Thurston Conservation District?</i> |