

Chehalis Basin / Grays Harbor Lead Entity

Habitat Work Group Meeting

September 11, 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*
Bob Amrine, *Lewis County Conservation District*
Brett DeMond *Streamworks*
Caprise Fasano, *Quinault*
Dustin Bilhimer, *WA Dept of Ecology*
Eric Delvin, *Nature Conservancy*
Jamie Glasgow, *Wild Fish Conservancy*

Jeni Maakad, *Grays Harbor Conservation District*
Kirsten Harma, *Lead Entity Coordinator*
Lonnie Crumley, *Chehalis Basin Fisheries Enhancement Taskforce*
Mark Swartout, *Citizen*
Miranda Plumb, *USFWS*
Omroa Bhagwandin, *Citizen*
Rich Osborne, *WCSSP*

Meeting Summary

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

During the last HWG meeting, the 2011 Bylaws were reviewed and suggested updates to the member list were drafted. Since that time, Kirsten has been in correspondence with people on the original member list and asked them if they would still like to participate, and if they would vote favorably for the updated list. She was also in correspondence with new members who want to join. The revised member list was presented for discussion.

- a) Review renewed Member list.**

b) Vote on any additional Members

- * Brett DeMond – Citizen
- * Mark Swartout - Citizen
- * Jeni Maakad – Grays Harbor Conservation District (added contingent on approval by the Conservation District)
- * Charissa Waters, Thurston County
- * Thurston Conservation District (seat – no current representative)
- * The Nature Conservancy – Eric Delvin announced that he will have to step off the HWG because his work plan has changed. The Coastal Conservation Coordinator will take on the responsibility of serving on the Habitat Work Group. This person will be hired in the next month.

A new list was drafted with these additions.

Motion: “To approve the membership list of the Habitat Work Group” All in favor.

c) Vote on Executive

Motion: “To elect Bob Amrine as Chair and Miranda Plumb as Vice Chair.” All in favor.

3. Review of Needs for Prioritization and Project Identification -- and Funding Sources

Kirsten presented a Power Point slide showing the different salmon recovery processes happening in the Chehalis, or proposed to happen in the next couple of years.

Participants suggested additional “funding sources” to include in the diagram:

- WCRI aspires to be a continuing funding source for a geographic area that includes the Chehalis Basin.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service – they have a source of funding specific to the Chehalis Basin (CFRP)
- Rose Foundation (Lonnie has heard that funding won’t be available again until 2017)
- Floodplains by Design (a question discussed is whether this funding would apply to large scale ecosystem restoration or floodplain protection projects. Eric mentioned that TNC staff have mentioned that the Chehalis would be an appropriate place to implement that program. The Quinault got funding through this program that they could not have gotten through other sources.)
- The Fish Barrier Removal Board work may or may not be funding barrier removals

The group identified that the underlying need for moving forward with taking advantage of

any of these funding sources is a list of priority projects. The HWG does not even have a prioritized list of projects that it can work through every SRFB round.

Several sponsors present at the meeting asserted that they don't have time or funding to go out and find projects. Thus, sponsor time and funding are limiting factors to creating a project list. Prior to project development, a gap is a prioritization plan that points more clearly to a way to develop projects.

There is an opportunity for this group to bring that message up to higher levels through conversations with people involved with the WRCI, FBRB and ASRP, etc.

4. "Chehalis Basin Strategy" (flood-related)- Update

Bob Amrine told the group about two meetings coming up in the next few weeks related to the Strategy. One on September 22nd and one on September 30th. Kirsten will send out the agendas once she receives them from the consultants organizing the meetings.

Kirsten provided a summary of the meeting between Dave Price and some members of the Habitat Work Group on August 28th. She reported that Mr. Price wants comments on the "Principles document" that would guide the aquatic restoration planning process. He hopes to have that document completed by September 30th.

Discussion

Next was a discussion on updating "our" plan (Chehalis Basin Salmon Habitat Restoration and Preservation Strategy). Coming up with a list of projects right now is basically just random. There isn't a prioritized list of projects to choose from each year. The concept behind updating the plan by subwatershed (e.g., starting with the Humptulips and working our way upriver on every sub-basin) was that it would identify priorities for each subwatershed which could guide project development.

Miranda brought up an idea she'd learned about that might work for prioritizing restoration efforts. A group in the Lower Columbia used aerial photos from the 1870s and compared them to current land use to determine habitat restoration potential. She thought this might be a way to help find projects in the Chehalis. Their method could be used to prioritize habitat areas needing restoring, and then IP modeling could identify areas for fish usability. Miranda sees this as a GIS project that USFWS could do in house. Lonnie suggested that the GIS person at Grays Harbor County might also be available to do this type of work. WCSSP also has a person who might be able to do it. Whether any of these people have extra time to do extra work is unknown. Miranda estimated that it could take 9 months to do the work. She is willing to write up a draft idea and send it to the rest of the HWG.

Miranda's suggestion of a potential funding source would be to use the Fish and Wildlife Service funding currently available for the Chehalis. Doing that work would benefit every sponsor since it would cover the whole Chehalis. It would also take away from every sponsor since that funding wouldn't be available for doing other projects.

A concern was expressed that the GIS project might not lead to developing any prioritization before these other processes (e.g. flood, culverts) overrun that. Unknown still is how to do all this and not duplicate efforts. The restoration prioritization planning products this group has been discussing fall in line with what seems to be identified as something the "Chehalis Strategy/ASRP" will be working on. The HWG needs to figure out what these other groups are going to do so that we can see if there are other gaps that need to be filled. Hopefully the meetings on September 22nd and 30th will provide some much-needed information.

Discussion on Dave Price's "Principles Document" for the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan:

Input provided by the group included:

- Ask them to refer to this Lead Entity's Salmon Recovery strategy. Or maybe, rather than pointing them to a specific plan, say: "existing models, data, plans, and strategies."
- Support ecosystem approach to salmon recovery in the third bullet. Everyone present supported the principle of improving ecosystem processes as opposed to a single species approach.
- Encourage them to follow their guiding principles! (e.g., ask them to clarify how these "guiding principles" will actually be put to use.)
- Include the word "protection" in third bullet. This is critical to consider in this watershed that does not have Endangered salmonid species, and still has valuable habitat that needs protection.
- Add "wild" to second bullet
- Address harvest / fishing practices (identify need for H-integration – harvest, habitat, hatchery). Do this by adding a separate bullet point at the end.
- Ask for clarification on the second to last bullet. The group was unclear about what is meant here. They see landowner involvement and willingness to have salmon recovery projects on their lands as a critical component in the restoration plan.

5. Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership – Pilot Watershed Restoration

Rich Osborne gave a presentation on “Intrinsic Potential” (IP) model’s utility as a tool for restoration site selection in the Chehalis.

“IP” means “Intrinsic Potential”. The modeling identifies high quality habitat based on geomorphology. It derives ratios based on floodplain width, channel width and channel gradient. The next step is to match that output with what is in the literature about what gradient/width combinations each salmonid specie and life stage prefers. The product is a “habitat suitability curve.” The research focus thus far has been juvenile rearing habitat.

Rich has been taking the model outputs to people who know where the fish are to determine whether the model results are accurate or not. He presented a set of maps to the Chehalis Lead Entity. He would like to see people mark known fish use areas on the maps.

The second part of Rich’s presentation was WCSSP’s interest in getting each Lead Entity to select a priority watershed to target restoration efforts. The idea is to find one watershed that could be completely restored within five years.

Q) How can IP be used?

A) You can find places that could be high quality habitat. Importantly, IP *doesn’t* show where the fish are.

Q) What model is WDFW using for their aquatic species restoration planning?

A) EDT.

Discussion: EDT is useful because it’s publically available, but needs to be housed at a commonly accessible location. It would be valuable if updated regularly.

Q) Does the HWG want to support the idea of prioritizing project implementation in one subwatershed?

Discussion on pros and cons of choosing one watershed to focus restoration efforts:

- Regardless of where we want to do projects, we still need landowner willingness. For subwatershed selection, finding a place with low landowner diversity might be important.
- Pro: Working on just one subwatershed shows a coordinated effort, which might be more attractive to funders (WCRI, Floodplains by design, etc.) than a “shotgun” approach. That doesn’t mean we have to target all resource into that subwatershed, though.
- Cons – Would this take resources away from projects in other sub-basins?
- Pros – Could achieve restoration a lot faster.

-Pro- This approach has been successful elsewhere. Miranda mentioned that a Tillamook group (Oregon) has used an effective method. They have a model which developed a prioritized project list. She said it has been successful for them because they have a clear step-by-step process they can point to when they ask for funding.

Q) If so, which watershed?

Discussion:

-Which size? HUC 12? HUC 6?

-Focused work has already taken place by the HWG -- in the Humptulips. It might make sense to keep building on that work and focus on the Humptulips.

-The Humptulips has the advantage of cooperative timber company in the upper watershed.

-Con: it doesn't drain directly into the Chehalis.

-Con: it's not in upper watershed where other groups are focusing right now. Shouldn't there be an alignment between what we want to accomplish and where other interests are working?

-Depends on what you're looking at -- Species? Limiting factors?

-What about the Newaukum? There aren't as many barriers left there as there are in other drainages.

-What about the Black River, Paradise Valley, or South Fork? Bob Amrine thinks there would be landowner support in the South Fork.

-Shouldn't the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan be looking at where a priority watershed should be? They should probably do prioritization of subwatersheds within the basin because the basin is so huge. Even if there are 500 projects, they might not accomplish restoration goals because the efforts would be spread out over such a large area. Or if they choose one, would the HWG want to choose another to focus on?

6. Lead Entity Capacity Needs

Kirsten shared the request from the Washington Salmon Coalition to each Lead Entity to provide a list of their capacity needs. She asked the HWG members what they think our capacity needs are.

Rich reminded the group that since WCSSP has say over distribution of SRFB project funds, the Chehalis Lead Entity gets twice the project funds as other Lead Entities in the Washington Coast Region. Yet still we have the same amount of capacity funding (outside of WCSSP's decision-making authority). This is inconsistent-- the Chehalis has twice the amount of WRIAs, and more projects to support, but less capacity.

Rich mentioned a capacity need presented at WCSSP level: a project engineer to create shovel-ready projects out of the highest projects on anyone's list. This could be an ask at the regional level or Lead Entity level.

Jamie mentioned that Puget Sound lead entities have capacity funding (through PSAR) to support sponsors work on project development. It takes the form of small contracts through the Lead Entity/fiscal sponsor. If we were to get funding like this, we could help support sponsors and other members of the HWG for their time working on strategy updates, creating work plans, and any other work outside of regular meetings. This would likely increase the quantity and quality of projects.

Mark suggested asking for a base capacity funding of \$60,000 per WRIA (we have 2).

7. SRFB: Process Update

October 2nd we'll know which projects have been rated as Projects of Concern.
October 26th is when the region and lead entity present their final list to SRFB.

8. Other Business

Eric Delvin provided an update on the WCRI process. He said that RCO now allows indirect costs to be included. This will be good for Tribal sponsors. TNC is not supporting having a WCRI ask "off-cycle" during the current Biennium. They recommend using the current time to show project successes and to thank the legislators who supported the bill. Management of this program in the future has still not been determined. It will likely have criteria and a ranking process. Who will manage this has not been determined. The HWG will need to plug into that process, but how has not yet been determined.

9. Next HWG meeting

- a) **October 9, 2015**

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