

Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group

MINUTES

Monday, September 9, 2019

~ 9:30 am – 12:30 pm ~

Chehalis Tribe Community Center

Gathering Room - 461 Secena Road, Oakville, WA

Ann Weckback, <i>Lewis Co.</i>	Kelly Verd, <i>Lewis CD</i>
Alissa Ferrell, <i>RCO</i>	Mara Zimmerman, <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i>
Bob Amrine, <i>Lewis CD</i>	Mara Healy, <i>Thurston CD</i>
Caprice Fasano, <i>Quinault Indian Nation</i>	Mark Gray, <i>CRBLT</i>
Claire Williamson, <i>WDFW</i>	Miranda Plumb, <i>USDFW</i>
Garrett Dalan, <i>The Nature Conservancy</i>	Ned Pittman, <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i>
Emilie McCain, <i>WDFW</i>	Paula Holroyde, <i>League of Women Voters</i>
Greg Green, <i>Ducks Unlimited.</i>	Rick Rouse, <i>Port of Chehalis</i>
Jonathan Bradshaw, <i>HWG Minutes</i>	Rickie Marion, <i>Chehalis Tribe</i>
Karin Strelieff, <i>Thurston CD</i>	Thom Woodruff, <i>Capitol Land Trust</i>
Kirsten Harma, <i>Lead Entity Coordinator</i>	Tom Kollasch, <i>Grays Harbor CD</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions, Updates

Everyone provided self-introductions. Of note: Thom Woodruff reported that Phase II of the Holm Farm/Bloom's Ditch project has been fully funded through the Thurston County Conservation Futures program.

2. Organizational Business

1. Review minutes from August, 2019

Two amendments were requested to the previous month's notes:

-Bob Amrine noted that while it was recorded that there was a motion to approve the changes to the CSB's bylaws, it was not recorded that the motion was voted on and passed.

-Thom Woodruff noted that the minutes inaccurately recorded him mentioning Oregon Spotted Frog as rationale for including "listed species" as a metric for the CLT's landowner willingness assessment. This comment wouldn't have been made, as SRFB funding doesn't consider any non-fish species. In considering what may have been misheard and recorded as such, he noted that the assessment's "listed species" criteria took into consideration fish species that are listed in nearby regions. The thought is that preserving species that are listed in nearby regions merits a higher score.

August's notes have been amended to reflect these corrections.

With those changes made, Thom Woodruff moved to approve, Rick Rouse seconded. The motion was passed.

2. Subcommittees

i. Culvert

Neither Cade nor Chris were in attendance for this month's meeting, but a subcommittee meeting is coming up on September 19th.

ii. Newaukum

The subcommittee met to specifically discuss the Fish Barrier Removal Board watershed pathway recommendations. The group went over a number of options for the next barrier correction projects it will support going forward. There's concern that culvert projects on private land can be harder to get funded. How much of a factor should this be when considering projects to support? There is desire for Newaukum meetings to be more regularly scheduled. The next meeting will happen in October.

3. Chehalis Lead Entity Strategy Chapter Review – volunteers?

Mara Healy plans to present on the Skookumchuck, Thom Woodruff will present on the Black River. Bob A. and Tom K. will both be choosing sub-basins in their districts to present on. More volunteers will be needed going forward to present on the rest of the Chehalis Basin Strategy as it currently stands: anyone interested in doing so should contact Kirsten.

3. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)

1. 2019 Project List status

Alissa Ferrell gave a run down: Ranked lists are in. Regional submittals were due Friday September 6th. The Review Panel will be meeting mid-September. By Sept 26, project comment forms will be available. Comments will need to be addressed by October 10th. Any projects that may need to go to Regional Meetings will be determined by October 16th--those meetings will take place Oct. 22nd-24th. Final comment forms will be due Oct 30th, and final ranked lists will be due Nov. 6th.

Mara Zimmerman discussed the CSP's review of the lists of the four lead entities. They reviewed these lists in August: funding amount matched asked-for amount only the Willapa Bay LE. For the other 3, asks were for more money than was fundable. CSP suggested those three Entities move forward with these lists--including the underfunded projects--and work with the sponsors of the underfunded projects to see if partial funding is acceptable. If any unallocated funding among the four LEs is left on the table, that funding will go back to the CSP and its use will be determined at that point.

2. Next steps in 2019 SRFB Grant Round

****Call for Proposals will happen in October****

Alissa walked through next year's LEAN grant round: A call for picking site dates will go out Oct. 25. Site visits will take place in two rounds between Jan. and April, and applications will be due two weeks before site visits. Lead entities will provide feedback by March 24th. Final funding applications are due by June 29 and this is the end of the process for "cleared" projects.

3. SRFB Meeting – September 10-11 – Overview of Topics

The Sept. 10th/11th SRFB meeting is coming up. Among other agenda items, the SRFB will be looking at hiring a consultant to update the State Salmon Strategy. Further items include: LEAN changes, director's report, 2020 calendar.

Alissa walked through a proposal on the table to adjust the SRFB grant round process in order to provide a project list to the legislature in advance of RCO submitting its budget requests. This change would be bringing the SRFB process in line with other RCO programs, but more to the point, it would provide the opportunity to lay out specific, tangible reasons for funding, with the idea that it would provide justification to the legislature for increased funding. Currently, RCO determines their SRFB funding ask through estimations based on projects in the Habitat Work Schedule (HWS). If there were specific projects for which funding could be requested, it would be a clearer way to request higher levels of funding.

Currently, the SRFB grant process has taken a step in this direction by developing “forecast project lists”—LEs are asked to tag planned HWS-listed projects as such. This provides a list of sorts that legislators could work with, but a more intentionally-developed list is under consideration by RCO.

In addition to this first already-in-development change, there are two further options in consideration that would involve some fundamental changes to the SRFB grant process:

- i. Move to a biennial grant round in 2020. LEs develop a list of 3 years’ worth of projects, the first two years of which the SRFB would approve biennially.
- ii. Move to a biennial grant round in 2021. LEs develop 2-years’ worth of projects, and the SRFB would approve those for the 2023 legislative session, and continue to do so biennially.

DISCUSSION:

It is clear that there are a lot of challenging practicalities. Is this level of challenge worth the potential benefit of higher funding asks?

Q: If we give out a planned project forecast list, how much would we be held to that? In that case, would we stay with an annual grant round while allowing the legislature to see the need?

A: Yes, that’s the idea.

Q: What if sending this list up to the legislature just provides an unnecessary, extra layer of scrutiny?

A: Yes there are a lot of concerns about this. It’s possible that this proposed change fails to understand the nuances of how our process works—the fact that every other RCO program provides these lists ahead of time may make it seem like this should be default. In general, it may just be that the grassroots-nature of the LE process just doesn’t lend itself to being able to have a meaningful list before funding is requested. This is clearly an effort to do what can best be done to provide more funding, but it just may not be possible for it to be done well this way.

Comment: Let’s have this conversation with the Board (SRFB) to make the ramifications clear: there’s not a decision made yet, but we need something that is going to work well.

Q: Regarding the forecast projects list: is this change going to be added to Manual 18? It would be helpful to have this clearly laid out so that LEs can have a clear idea of what they’re being asked to take on.

Q: Is the forecast project list more or less what we’ve been doing in cleaning up of the HWS list?

A: More or less, yes: the Chehalis LE may be in a better position to move forward on this than others.

4. ASRP

ASRP Phase I Plan Rollout—Presentation on Plan Content

Emilie McKain presented on the upcoming fall release of the ASRP Phase 1 document. The presentation can be made available upon request if it can’t be found on the Lead Entity website. Some brief highlights:

The ASRP document will be rolled out in three phases. The upcoming phase 1 document (to be released

mid-November) will provide a discussion of levels of project implementation under consideration (some combination of protection; restoration; and enhancement/increase of habitat) and an outline of what that implementation would look like on the ground for each of the 10 ecological regions identified in the basin. This first phase's document will lay out an outline for the plan, and phase 2 will involve the fleshing out of that which was laid out in phase 1. Phase 2 (to be completed winter of 2020) will incorporate feedback received from all fronts regarding phase 1, including public forums held after the publication. A third "final" document--it is noted that it will be a living document--will be this document's completion, set for publication in 2023.

DISCUSSION:

Q: Is the culvert subcommittee's work incorporated in the ASRP?

A: That is the intention. We're looking at both their work as well as the EDT. This marriage will happen in phase 2, because the EDT modelling has taken longer than expected. But using all of that information together is absolutely the plan. We hope to have a public prioritization list for the upcoming grant round, but that is yet to be seen.

Q: How are geographic priorities set?

A: Geospatial units, subbasins.

Q: How are those prioritized?

A: SRT sat down with a lot of info and modeling results, field knowledge. Then each member set priorities, which were brought together and combined in a group discussion to work out a shared priority list.

Q: Last grant round, ASRP only funded barriers. What do the project type priorities look like now?

A: It will be much broader--we're open to a wide range of projects. Now that we have our plan more fleshed out, we can use it to determine which kinds of projects to take on. For larger projects, we'd encourage phasing. Design only is a good option. The RFP will come out in mid-November.

Q: What is a capacity project type?

A: This is under development with a Steering Committee team: but this is, generally speaking, funding to increase a group/entity's capacity. E.g., funding for staff to develop projects.

Q: Capacity is huge for conservation districts. My biggest concern: if we hire someone on a grant, how can we provide security beyond that grant to those employees to prevent turnover? This is a significant challenge.

A: Yes, that challenge is heard. This funding program is in its infancy. Hopefully some of that long term assurance comes as the ASRP matures. Going forward, this kind of concern will be worked with. Maybe following short-term funding to build a conceptual project, the annual nature of the grant round will provide opportunity for consistent, continued funding.

Q: Is there also consideration for collaborative capacity building? Can we fund collaborative work?

A: Yes, if sponsors want to get together to co-develop a project that requires both groups strengths, then that would be great.

Comment: Acquisition is really important. If protection is such a priority, we need acquisition. Can we have a definition what protection is for the ASRP? There is also concern regarding the time-sensitive nature of acquisitions and the conflict therein with the nature of a grant round timeframe. (Waiver of retroactivity for the facilitation of acquisitions is a helpful tool here.) Water rights, fee simple, easements, all are acquisitions and are important parts of the toolkit.

Q: Will we get to see documentation of the internal review of the ASRP by the Steering committee and

the SRT? Will we see those comments incorporated into the public document in Nov?

A: Yes.

5. Early Action Reach Updates (CDs)

i. LCD: (Bob Amrine)

We're waiting to move forward until we can get those LO agreements finalized. The restoration area has been downsized a bit, as well, to meet Steering Committee request to reduce construction costs for these reaches.

ii. GHCD: (Tom Kollasch)

The CD will be meeting with LOs in the coming week or two, to meet with Forterra and discuss the details concerning easements.

We're ensuring we have any necessary easements lined up, so that we can have everything arranged to execute designs and permits in order to be ready for upcoming funding opportunities. We're balancing the need to do this in a timely manner with being sensitive to the needs and concerns of LOs.

iii. TCD: (Mara Healey)

Skookumchuck is going smoothly. We're planning on getting the Capitol Land Trust out next week to get initial work done with LOs. They're really excited and on-board!

Discussion re: developing dedicated LO Agreement forms for the ASRP. There is the desire to have these ironed out and specific to the ASRP, as the RCO forms are general enough to use for ASRP projects, but too general to stick with. The RCO forms are providing a foundation in the interim, but there is certainly the need to be developing toward something more tailored and clear.

Q: At that point, will those LO agreements be available to project sponsors so they may go over them with potential LOs?

A: Yes. That LO form will be available, which will likely need to be modified to suit the particular sponsors involved.

6. Other Business

1. Review of Upcoming Funding Programs & Timeline (2019-2020)

Kirsten walked the group through a multiple funding source availability calendar. WCRRI dates were added. Anyone interested in this resource may contact Kirsten.

2. Thom Woodruff gave a small presentation on a couple CLT projects:

He provided an update on the Holm Farm acquisition. There has been some shifting of ownership lines to meet conservation priorities: giving up some upland forest in order to incorporate more riparian area around Bloom's Ditch.

Secondly, he presented the current state of the CLT's LO willingness survey project. Of all of the parcels surveyed, only ten scored the full 28 points. Most of those landowners were sent letters. 100 of the surveyed parcels scored 26, and some top-scorers in that category were also sent letters. So far, 3 LOs have gotten back to him, and he's been in active discussion with one of them. He is looking at what the process would look like to bring these kind of acquisitions forward for funding.

Comments included:

Bring the 3 properties of interest back to the Oct HWF meeting, broken down for relevant habitat characteristics and SRFB interests;

To get an idea of which properties are most cost-effective, do a much cheaper market analysis for the properties involved, and then determine which properties are worth investing in for appraisals;

Very few Lewis Co. parcels ranked well. Is this because there are few large LOs? Because buying 8 5-acre parcels, for example, would be fantastic re: preventing over-development. Tom Kollasch is willing to look over the parcels on the Satsop River to see which might be a priority given his on the ground knowledge of that basin.

7. Closing