

**Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group
November 7, 2022 -- Minutes**

In person: Chehalis Tribe Community Center & Zoom

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

Ann Weckback, <i>Lewis County Public Works</i> Alex Gustafson, <i>Trout Unlimited</i> Ben Amidon, <i>Chehalis Tribe</i> Brad, <i>Thurston County Planning</i> Brett DeMond, <i>Streamworks</i> Caprice Fasano, <i>Quinault Indian Nation</i> Chanele Holbrook, <i>Citizen</i> David Marcell, <i>Pacific/Grays Harbor C.D.</i> Drew Mealar, <i>ASRP Implementation</i> Grace Adams, <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i> Greg Green, <i>Ducks Unlimited</i> Jamie Glasgow, <i>Wild Fish Conservancy</i> Jan Robinson, <i>Chehalis River Basin Land T.</i> Jan Strong, <i>Audubon Society</i>	Hannah Coe, <i>Ecology, Water Quality</i> Karen Adams, <i>WDFW Region 5</i> Kathy Jacobson, <i>Outreach Coordinator</i> Kelly Verd, <i>Lewis Conservation District</i> Kendall Barrameda, <i>RCO</i> Key McMurray, <i>Grays Harbor Citizen</i> Kirsten Harma, <i>Lead Entity Coordinator</i> Lee First, <i>Twin Harbors Water Keeper</i> Mara Healy, <i>Thurston Conservation District</i> Mara Zimmerman, <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i> Miranda Plumb, <i>US Fish and Wildlife Service</i> Ned Pittman, <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i> Sarah Watkins, <i>Grays Harbor Citizen</i> Sasha Medlen, <i>RCO</i>
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1. Welcome, Breakout Rooms, Introductions

2. Minutes Approval

Sarah motioned to approve October minutes, and Alex seconded. The motion passed.

3. Show and Tell!

Alex shared photos and stories from her safari in Africa

4. Organizational Business

a. Washington Salmon Coalition

Kirsten shared updates on what she learned from the in-person meeting of the Washington Salmon Coalition.

RCO has asked that an increase in capacity funding for Lead Entities (program management) be included in the Governor’s budget (4.5 million statewide)

We will know the Governor’s budget in mid-December – depends on the revenue forecast for 2023!

Capital budget for funding SRFB is unlikely to be higher than last year (though RCO is requesting more)

Joint letter put out by the Washington Salmon Coalition (KH screen share). Indicates support for the increased SRFB ask (\$82 million statewide), as well as support for the other related

programs we count on as match

b. Outreach Updates

The Grays Harbor Stream Team has a new Coordinator – Alexander Birk. The Return of the Salmon event at Shaffer State Park was cancelled due to flooding and high waters. Kathy assisted with a successful outreach activity the day before with Friends of Lake Sylvia. The event brought 85 people including students and parent volunteers down to the Satsop river. They learned about fish from Curt Holt, and learned how to assess benthic macroinvertebrates and river health. This was a really positive experience. A shout out to Curt Holt and Washington State Parks for their support.

Discussion about the online magazine “the Emergence.” Kathy recommends this as a source of good news on environmental issues. Kathy’s 2023 outreach will include an element of hope. There will be a training – contact Kathy for more information.

c. Field Trip Planning

The Wild Thyme Farm field trip was postponed due to low RSVPs. It will probably be best after a Habitat Work Group meeting when we are all present in the Oakville Area only.

Participants of the completed-projects tour last week shared their stories and expressed appreciation.

5. Infrastructure Bill Funding Opportunities

SRFB will get an extra \$6 million statewide through the PCSRF funding program. This will likely go to projects that are unfunded but have already been through SRFB local and technical review. Mara is tracking this and will let us know when decisions have been made.

“America the Beautiful” application results are in. The program received a request 12 times the total amount available. RCO’s request for Lead Entity capacity was not awarded. The next ATBC cycle will open in early spring 2023.

DOT culvert program has an open RFP. This is open to States, Tribe and Local government. Jess from Wild Salmon Center who tracks these federal funding opportunities says that the DOT Culvert AOP program is a bit challenging because it does not allow “flow through” to other applicants (that aren’t also eligible applicants on their own). Jess says that we may be seeing additional federal funding coming through the Inflation Reduction Act via NOAA. Pending!

Upcoming – There will be specific NOAA grant for “underserved communities” that is for helping organizations fill capacity! Good for 3-5 years. Provides more certainty to organizations that are adverse to bringing on new staff with project grants only. Our basin sponsors should consider this as a way to provide more security for bringing on new staff. Keep it on your radar.

Miranda: Re: USFWS’s National Fish Passage Program that is the annual program that they’ve had since 1999 is still running. Interested parties should contact Miranda and applications are received throughout the year. More IJJA/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds are coming that is an extension of the National Fish Passage Program in this fiscal year, 2023. This program

received \$200 million over 5 years. She's been told a NOFO is coming soon. She will send press release when this comes out. There will likely be a letter of intent required. After that, you submit your proposal if you get the ok. If you know of anyone interested in the funds this year please have them contact Miranda. She does know that there will most likely be a minimum project funding of \$100,000 and the max will be \$2,000,000. This funding source has a broad range of eligible sponsor types.

Office of the Chehalis Basin staff and consultants are discussing possibly writing a federal grant application to the USFWS program for culverts that are located in priority areas for the ASRP and that are high on the prioritized list. They have discussed a possible "flow through" arrangement to project sponsors. Miranda may have details on whether or not this can be used as flow through. Celina will need to provide details as to whether OCB will fully sponsor the proposal, just help sponsors write grants, or just provide other types of administrative support.

Is anyone planning additional grant applications to Federal funding sources?

Lewis County will apply for funds from the DOT AOP for Van Ornum. The County will resubmit the Lucas Creek projects for the AOP grant. The County has other good fish passage projects that are also maintenance concerns. They will submit projects that don't have willing landowners to this program as it doesn't seem like this RFP requires landowner willingness. Road closures and right of way concerns lead to landowner opposition.

Trout Unlimited may submit a proposal to the USFWS program.

Brett said the Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force will be applying to the culvert AOP program for 6 projects. They would like to present some of the projects to the Habitat Work Group at our next meeting. This will give an opportunity for HWG to provide a letter of support. This opportunity would be available to other interested sponsors, as well.

6. Chehalis Basin Lead Entity – Focus and Strategy

Kirsten presented a PowerPoint to generate a discussion around the Lead Entity's focus and strategy when it comes to soliciting and selecting projects for SRFB funding. She asked the group what it feels its strengths are, and then how we can use those strengths to focus our time and energy. The context of the need to revisit our purpose is the number and strength of large funding sources interested in salmon recovery in the Chehalis Basin. Let's be proactive in developing a plan to use our SRFB funding. What can we do that is unique and provides the greatest benefit to salmon?

Discussion:

Q) What are our strengths?

A) Collaboration and supporting one another; Communication and education; networking;

If we took the approach of focusing on funding projects in the pilot watershed, which is currently the Newaukum, the understanding would be that we would later develop other focused watershed plans in other basins. Mara noted that the planning process should only take about a year and would result in a project list. The Newaukum had a learning curve and just took time to get up to speed, but it should be easier from now on.

Comment: There are benefits to focus in the Newaukum. One of those being that with the ranking criteria as it is, projects in that system don't compete well.

Q) Would this be an official strategy update? A change to prioritization? Concerns about geographic fairness.

A) It is time to update our Lead Entity Strategy. This discussion could lead to focus for the strategy, without actually going in and updating priorities identified in the strategy (Tier 1 concerns, etc.). This conversation opens up the conversation about focusing on specific geographic areas.

There was discussion around needing the WDFW to update the barrier prioritization list and the FBRB to work better with us.

Ned advocated for the pilot watershed approach. This approach is lacking in salmon recovery for 23 years, in general. Let's do more of this in different parts of the watershed. We could work on the Humptulips or Wynoochee next, which already have a sort of pilot watershed approach starting. We could work through these areas as a group of stakeholders, rather than turning the work over to consultants.

Caprice asked how the new approach would affect project ranking criteria. Updating the ranking criteria would be needed. She suggested that we look at "bins" requesting different types of proposals. The ranking criteria could differ between bins. We could consider reserving funds for certain types of projects.

Kirsten will send out the presentation slides and requested that folks think about this, with more discussion to come at the December meeting.

7. Presentation: Intensively Monitored Watersheds: Research Findings and Management Implications. Bob Bilby and Amelia Johnson

Intensively Monitored Watersheds (IMWs) – established in the early 2000s to develop a better understanding of the contribution habitat restoration could make to salmon recovery. There are several IMW's across Pacific Northwest – most in Washington. Their purpose is to concentrate restoration in relatively small watersheds to see if researchers can detect a statistically significant fish and habitat response. Researchers will look at recovery at populations scales. 20 years of data collection has occurred. Results still coming in

Amelia and Bob, along with other scientists, completed a synthesis project to summarize and share results. This research team gathered information on preliminary results from different IMW teams around the state. 13 IMWs responded. Report came out May 2022.

Results:

Steelhead, Chinook and Coho were the focus species. Treatment types examined include large wood in channel to improve instream habitat; connection with floodplain habitat; and longitudinal reconnection (barrier correction). Lots of data came in from Western WA IMW – so they have confidence in the results.

Habitat response: Lots of positive response to floodplain or estuarine lateral connectivity restoration. Longitudinal connectivity positive response.

Inconsistent results from wood placement. Why? Maybe habitat quality declining too fast from historic land use – restoration not possible to offset those declines. Found a lot more annual variability than they thought they would – hard to detect impacts from restoration treatments.

Could be that restoration actions were undertaken correctly. Need to do more analysis on this question.

Fish Response: Not many beneficial responses of adult abundance to treatments. 44% of cases = no change! This is disappointing given that we think we understand factors limiting fish production.

Correction of barriers – always led to positive fish response! This is consistently effective! Also removal of dikes and levees to reconnect floodplain. Fish response to wood placement – highly variable! Muted by out-of-basin factors. All scientists felt that fish response dictated by factors beyond control.

Conclusions: Note that 12 IMWs are still collecting data, so data is not final. Don't know final response to application of treatments. Need to continue monitoring response.

What we learned: We still don't know how wood influences watershed characteristics. Researchers found other benefits associated with their treatments (think about full range of benefits generated by habitat restoration – wildlife, water quality, etc.)

Conclusions regarding coordination and implementation: IMWs didn't have good adaptive management protocols. Researchers need to talk more about how to translate their results to other areas. Recommended Actions: for funders and policy-makers: "Build restoration plans at watershed scales and within a context of all potential impacts on salmon viability." Don't ignore other things that limit salmon!

Will be an IMW Workshop spring 2023! This will include a comprehensive share-out with the restoration community.

Discussion:

Q) What are some of the positives? Where did you see fish and habitat response?

A) Distribution and diversity improvements – saw lots! Reconnection projects consistently led to benefits. A few wood treatments led to positive response. One example was increased parr to smolt survival. Wood – doesn't always work – and it could be because we're not doing it right..! Reconnecting habitat, tidal flats, etc. Seemed to be immediate and universally positive. Worth it to take time to remove barriers.

Q) Were invasive species included?

A) Not really

Q) Are there any other comparable studies? How do the results from this study compare to other studies? Esp. re: large wood structures.

A) Nothing has been done quite like this. There have been long-term ecological research on forests. Our study didn't compare our results to outside systems. There was another reach scale study of wood addition that looked at fish response. That came to same conclusions as this one – variable response. There were projects that had positive response, but a lot have reported no response. Roni et. al. looked for different responses on 10 or 20 reaches. Only found an increase in wood abundance, but not change in pool frequency or summer parr frequency. That was a fairly large dataset.

Q) Are there efforts like IMW but that are looking at watershed specific impacts of harvest and hatcheries on production potential of specific watersheds? If not, how do we make this happen?

A) It's harder to do comparable experiments with harvest and hatchery. Not a lot of appetite to do that. It's easy to imagine an experiment that looks empirically at this. In the Elwah, it does seem like the fact that they have restricted harvest is allowing fish to respond to the restoration treatment (dam removal). Pess felt that the fact that they restricted harvest was important for summer steelhead. On another creek, we're seeing response to removal of gillnetting on a small stream. At some point we might look at the relationship between adult abundance and smolt. Oregon Coast Coho is an example, too, removed hatcheries and changed forest practices in the study area. Could be some useful findings there.

The report can be found online: <https://www.pnamp.org/document/15207>

8. Chehalis Mainstem Porter to Monte – View from the River

Lee First presented on her observations from the river. She asked if anyone has measured how much of the river has hardened shorelines. No one was aware of a comprehensive overview. Lee might be interested in doing that documentation. The group discussed the age of the concrete placement. Ned shared that shoreline armoring was legal before 1990. Others thought that the rules might have been put in place in the late 1970s. Lee also has observed areas with cattle accessing the river without fencing, a new dump site with appliances. She has submitted tracking reports to Ecology.

9. Associated Program Updates

a. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

The project sponsor RFQ is still out – it will close November 21st.

b. Coast Salmon Partnership

The Implementation Committee will meet November 17th.

c. Fish Barrier Removal Board

No updates.

d. Chehalis Basin Partnership

No updates.

The group decided that the next two meetings – December and January, will be best held via Zoom only due to inclement weather and winter respiratory diseases.

Adjourned.