

Habitat Work Group, Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

MINUTES

December 4, 2023

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

**Chehalis Tribe Community Center: Library Classroom ~ 461 Secena Road, Oakville, WA
And Zoom**

<p>Alex Bradberry - <i>CSP Outreach</i> Alex Gustafson - <i>Trout Unlimited</i> Ann Weckback - <i>Lewis County Public Works</i> Anthony Waldrop - <i>Grays Harbor Con Dist.</i> Bob Russell - <i>Lewis County Citizen</i> Ben Cross – <i>US Fish and Wildlife Service</i> Brett DeMond - <i>CBFTF Streamworks</i> Chris Volmert - <i>Lewis Conservation District</i> Cindy Wilson - <i>Thurston Co Citizen</i> Devin DeBono - <i>Lewis County Public Works</i> Drew Mealor - <i>ASRP Implementation Mgr</i> Farley Youckton - <i>Chehalis Tribe Water Qual</i> Greg Green - <i>Ducks Unlimited</i> Grace Adams - <i>Coast Salmon Foundation</i> Jacob Murray - <i>Mason Conservation District</i></p>	<p>Jennifer Lewis - <i>ASRP Restoration Coordinator</i> Jessica Inwood - <i>Western Rivers Conservancy</i> John Stepanek - <i>Grays Harbor Cons Dist</i> Jonathan Bradshaw - <i>HWG Minutes</i> Karen Adams - <i>WDFW Habitat Biologist</i> Kathy Jacobson - <i>LE Outreach</i> Key McMurray - <i>Pacific County LE</i> Kim Figlar-Barnes - <i>WDFW Fish Biologist</i> Kirsten Harma - <i>LE Coordinator</i> Mara Zimmerman - <i>Coast Salmon Part/Fdn</i> Martin McCallum - <i>Thurston County Citizen</i> Mack Hunter - <i>Grays Harbor Conserv. Dist.</i> Megan Tuttle - <i>WDFW Habitat Biologist</i> Ned Pittman - <i>Coast Salmon Part/Fdn</i></p>
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1. Welcome & Introductions

2. Minutes

With no one voicing objections, Key McMurray approved the minutes from November.

3. Organizational Business

a. Outreach Updates

Kathy Jacobson shared that her Habitat Biologist article featuring Caprice Fasano was picked up by the Daily World, on Nov 29th. She shared a hard copy with the group, and reached out to the group for a biologist to feature next. Several participants nominated Karen Adams and Karen accepted.

Kathy also shared that she'll be focusing on River Table presentations for schools throughout the Newaukum River basin, and shared a two-page fact sheet she will also be making available to those students, customized for the Newaukum in particular.

Further, Kathy shared that she, Kurt Holt, and Angela, the Ranger at Schafer State Park, met following the Return of the Salmon event to discuss further opportunities for outreach events. In the coming month, Kathy will be updating the Lead Entity website.

Kirsten Harma shared photos from the “Happy Fish” campaign, including photos of the Wildcat Creek culvert restoration work crew, the Hoquiam Dam site, and a Lewis Stream Team and Chehalis River Basin Land Trust planting event.

Alex Bradberry shared Happy Fish photos of the 10,000 Years Institute crew removing invasive plants on the Hoh river, the CSP climate workshop, the Coldwater Connection Campaign at the Wisen Creek culvert, and the Grays Harbor Stream Team.

Bob Russell shared that the Lewis County Stream Team did an event at his property with the WSU Extension Forester on November 18th. He also shared that the Chronicle published an article featuring Stillman Creek, and encouraged the group continue to engage with this outreach outlet. Bob also shared that he and Kirsten will be presenting at the upcoming Chehalis City Council meeting on the developing Coal Creek project.

b. Thurston County Citizen Seat – Martin McCallum

Kirsten then led the group in a discussion considering the nomination of Martin McCallum as the HWG’s Thurston County representative. The current representative, Cindy Wilson, is not able to regularly attend the meeting in this capacity.

Martin is a retired policy advisor with the State of Washington, on the Nisqually River Council, a Thurston Stream Team volunteer, a Kennedy Creek Salmon Trail docent, and stewards a Capitol Land Trust parcel on the Skookumchuck. He has been getting to know the Chehalis watershed by keeping track of the ASRP, following involvement a few years ago at the ASRP event at Centralia College. He is also involved with Chehalis River Alliance and is becoming more and more familiar with the Chehalis watershed and its creeks and tributaries.

Action: Bob Russell moved that the group approve Martin McCallum as the HWG’s Thurston County citizen representative, which Megan Tuttle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Cloquallum PWR

John Stepanek shared an update on the development of the Cloquallum Workgroup core-team meeting last week. John will be facilitating the workgroup over the next 8 months to year. The group is looking to recruit more members to the work group for the first meeting in January.

Kirsten then shared an overview of the context of the development of the Cloquallum PWR, which came together as a restoration effort modeled after the Newaukum Pilot Watershed work.

4. Salmon Day on the Hill – Request for Participants

Kirsten shared that the upcoming Salmon Day on the Hill will be on January 31st. She asked that individuals who are not paid by state or federal government reach out to participate by attending and advocating to the legislature for coast-specific needs. Contact Kirsten if you are interested.

5. Salmon Recovery Funding Board – updates

a. 2024 –Grant Round Updates

Kirsten shared a schedule for the upcoming 2024 grant round.

The call for SRFB proposals will go out Dec 9th, with conceptual project forms being received from Dec through February. During that time, preapplication meetings will be held as well. On January 8th, the Local Review team will begin to be assembled, and then finalized on February

5th. The conceptual project review form will be due Feb 23rd with the complete applications due March 2nd. Site visits will take place approximately April 9 - 12, and ranking will take place in May. Final, complete applications will be due June 24th.

Kirsten also shared that the RCO is putting in a request to the supplemental session for a \$20 million large-cap grant round. We need to put together a structure for managing this funding if it does come to fruition. The request for proposals will seek projects from \$1 - \$5 million. The available funding amount will be known in March, and projects will be ranked statewide in July. The Coast Salmon Partnership region will submit four projects, but it is yet to be determined whether that will be four from the region or one from each entity.

Kirsten then shared an update on the riparian-focused SRFB funding, stating that in the coming week, the subcommittee of the SRFB Technical Review team committee will be meeting to determine the structure for the grant round.

Q: What qualifies as a riparian project?

A: Acquisition, assessment, plantings. Site potential tree height is the goal for riparian buffer metrics, but there will be negotiable carve-outs to make buffers practical on a case-by-case basis.

b. Planned and conceptual project ideas

i. Van Ornum Creek at Bunker Creek Rd

Ann Weckback of Lewis County Public Works presented a proposed project for the construction of the replacement of a 4-foot diameter, 33% passable culvert on Van Ornum Creek at Bunker Creek Road. The county is presenting the project for SRFB funding, as well as requesting a letter of support for its grant proposal to the Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB) (today). Kirsten noted that the group's support for the FBRB application does not effect funding decisions regarding SRFB.

Replacement of this barrier would address three Mill Creek subbasin Tier 1 concerns, and two Tier 2 concerns, as well as restore immediate access to 0.14 miles of coho and winter steelhead habitat, and improve seasonal access to 3.41 miles of habitat for coho and 3.11 miles of habitat for winter steelhead. There is a potential for up to 4.73 miles of gain once upstream barriers are addressed.

This barrier would be replaced by a geosynthetic-reinforced soil-integrated bridge system with a 40' deck. About 265 feet of channel will be graded with the integration of a low-flow notch.

The project is requesting \$1,504,407 from the FBRB, and \$265,495 from SRFB.

Q: Regarding steelhead, I don't have record of SH use here. Do you have record of this?

A: Both the WDFW evaluation and the Lewis Conservation District stream survey list Steelhead in that stream. It's unknown whether they verified juvenile or adult use.

Action: Anthony Waldrop moved that the HWG provide a letter of support for the Van Ornum Creek passage correction project for use in the Fish Barrier Removal Board application, which Bob Russell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Humptulips Acquisition

Jessica Inwood, Washington State project manager for Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC), presented a project to the group that seeks to acquire a parcel on the Humptulips River. WRC is

based in Portland, and works to buy properties for conservation with the purpose of transferring them to long term stewards. Currently, she is reaching out to the group to share information and receive feedback on a property on a three-mile section of the Humptulips which WRC is looking to acquire. Jessica shared a map of the 771 acre parcel, which is just NE of Copalis Crossing, with Deep Creek running through it and into the Humptulips. WRC is currently in contract to purchase the property, with the appraisal anticipated at the end of January. The property is expected to be priced at approximately \$2 million.

Q: Is there any intention to harvest at all on this property?

A: We wouldn't as the short-term owner, but that could be a possibility for the future owners, regarding thinning for conservation interests.

Q: How did this property come to WRC's attention?

A: Generally, we monitor real estate listings. I was at the Land Trust Alliance rally in Portland, and a photographer for listing the property reached out to me directly.

Q: What kind of conservation easements do you require when you transfer land?

A: We generally don't, as we transfer it usually to public or tribal entities. If there is a need to do so we will, in the rare case that there is a transfer to private ownership.

Q: Regarding future land use, it is worth considering the inclusion of public access with whoever the long-term owner is?

A: Sure, that is a part of conversation as we consider these.

6. WCRRI Grant Round Details

Mara shared an update on the upcoming Washington Coastal Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WCRRI) grant round and sought involvement. She also shared background of WCRRI, briefly summarized here:

WCRRI is an initiative funded through the state capital budget, and jointly administered by RCO and the WCRRI steering committee. Its focus is to protect and restore a wide range of ecosystems throughout the Washington coastal region, while also promoting the resilience of its communities. Since 2015, WCRRI has been a source of funding for much more expensive projects than have been otherwise available to most regions on the coast. Begun as a grassroots initiative, it is now a formalized process supported by the Coast Salmon Partnership. WCRRI has a two-year grant cycle, with a maximum project request of \$2 million. There is neither a request minimum, nor a match requirement. Projects are reviewed and scored by the Technical Review Team.

Mara also shared that though it is not typical, this year the RCO has supported WCRRI in bringing to the 2024 supplemental legislative session a list of projects which did not receive funding from the 2023 legislative budget.

Mara then reached out to the group for involvement in WCRRI including project sponsorship, participation on the Technical Review Team, sharing stories of WCRRI-funded projects, and advocacy to elected officials on behalf of WCRRI; particularly for the project list being brought to the 2024 supplemental session. In January, WCRRI will be formally asking for letters of support from entities throughout the region.

7. Fish Barrier Removal Board

a. Project presentation and request for letter of support : Point Hill Creek

Devin DeBono of Lewis County Public Works shared a presentation requesting a letter of support for a fish passage design project on Point Hill Creek at Wildwood Road. The project would address three Tier 1 concerns and two Tier 2 concerns for the SF Chehalis subbasin by replacing a 40" round cast concrete culvert which is undersized and 0% passable due to slope. Addressing this Priority 2 barrier would restore 0.52 miles of steelhead and coho habitat by installing a fish-passable structure.

The project is requesting \$357,294 from the FBRB, with \$63,052 in matching funds from the county.

Q: Do you know what the sustained gradient is on the upper portion of the creek?

A: Not right now.

Q: Why this one? It seems relatively short.

A: This is the LO that has responded. We've sent out requests to other area landowners, but they were adamantly opposed.

Comment: Hopefully seeing this project happen near those hesitant LOs can encourage future participation.

Q: Will the county be providing funding?

A: Yes, the ask is over 350K, and so the county will be providing match.

Megan Tuttle moved that the HWG provide a letter of support for the Point Hill Creek passage design project, which Anthony Waldrop seconded. The motion passed without comment.

8. Streamflow Restoration Grant Round

The Department of Ecology's streamflow restoration grant round is opening in January, from Jan 2 to February 29th. Any projects seeking funding through this grant are recommended to seek a letter of support from the Chehalis Basin Partnership.

9. Federal Funding Workshop

Anthony Waldrop, Cindy Malay (OCB) and Kirsten Harma have been putting together a federal workshop to coordinate the time-intensive process of management and application of such federal grants. The group is putting together a workshop on January 30th for stakeholders to consider future projects and compile information that will help bundle those projects around specific concerns. The group will host Jay Krienitz as a speaker, who coordinated a bundle of successfully funded North Whidbey Island projects.

Kirsten asked for input on what members of the group would like to see, noting that this would be a good opportunity to involve their board members. She also noted that the OCB will provide resources for active collaboration in the workshop.

Q: Have you asked for participation from federal contacts?

A: Connecting federal funding to projects will be a future focus, but this one is specifically focused on identifying projects themselves. We want to start by developing projects, and then seek the funding that is appropriate for the projects we have.

10. Associated Programs Updates

a. Coast Salmon Partnership

Ned Pittman shared that the climate workshop was well attended, and that products from the climate framework will be available in early 2024.

Ned also reminded the group that the WCRRI RFP will be coming out on Jan 22nd. That same day, he will be seeking RFQs from anyone who would like to participate on the Technical Review Team.

b. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

Drew Mealor shared that the RIT meeting is coming up in December on the 14th in person at the Port of Grays Harbor office up at the Satsop Towers. He noted that there will be snacks and hot beverages, and that the steering committee will also be in attendance. Sponsors with active project development grants will also give updates on their outreach.

Drew also shared that right now, 7-10 projects are in the approval pipeline, and their total equals about half of the biennium's funding.

Further, Drew shared that the ASRP's new webmap is available, and provided a link:

<https://gis.ecology.wa.gov/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=88b5b1cfe9d0482c936f6664e931ed7e>

Anthony Waldrop added that the ASRP symposium is coming up in April, which will likely take place at Centralia College.

11. Closing – (12:00)