

Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group

February 1, 2021

Zoom Meeting

~ 9:30 am – 12:30 pm ~

<p>Alexa Brown – <i>Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force, Grays Harbor Stream Team</i> Ann Weckback - <i>Lewis Co. Public Works</i> Anthony Waldrop - <i>Grays Harbor Conserv. Dist.</i> Ben Amidon - <i>Chehalis Tribe</i> Bob Amrine - <i>Lewis Conserv. Dist.</i> Brandon Carman - <i>Recreation & Conservation Office</i> Cade Roler - <i>WDFW</i> Caprice Fasano - <i>Quinault Indian Nation</i> Chanelle Holbrook - <i>Citizen</i> Chris Dwight - <i>WDFW</i> Cindy Wilson - <i>Citizen</i> Claire Williamson - <i>WDFW</i> Elena Fernandez - <i>Thurston Co. Public Works</i> Garrett Dalan - <i>The Nature Conservancy</i> Greg Green - <i>Ducks Unlimited</i> Hope Rieden - <i>Chehalis Tribe DFW</i> Jim Hill - <i>Lewis Co. Citizen</i></p>	<p>Jonathan Bradshaw - <i>Citizen, Minutes</i> Karin Strelloff - <i>Thurston Conserv. Dist</i> Kathy Jacobson - <i>Lead Entity Education Coordinator</i> Kelly Verd - <i>Lewis Conserv. Dist.</i> Key McMurry - <i>Grays Harbor Citizen</i> Kirsten Harma - <i>Lead Entity Coordinator</i> Mara Zimmerman - <i>Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn</i> Megan Tuttle - <i>WDFW</i> Miranda Plumb - <i>USFWS</i> Ned Pittman - <i>Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn</i> Paula Holroyde - <i>Thurston Co. LWV</i> Rickie Marion - <i>Chehalis Tribe Water Qual.</i> Sasha Porter - <i>Thurston Conserv. Dist.</i> Steve Hagerty - <i>Mason Conserv. Dist.</i> Thom Woodruff - <i>Capitol Land Trust</i> Tom Kollasch - <i>Grays Harbor Conserv. Dist.</i></p>
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1. **Welcome, Introductions**
2. **Networking Time in Breakout Rooms**
3. **Minutes Approval – December & January**

Key McMurry moved to approve the minutes for December and January, which Thom Woodruff seconded. The motion was passed without comment.

4. **Organizational Business**

1. **Project Successes/Updates**

Key McMurray had success in engaging with Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray to discuss pushing for PCSRF (Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund) funds to be increased back to their previous funding level. Cantwell and Representative Kilmer have been strong proponents for this fund. Recently, Cantwell's staffers reached out to Key to let her know that they will be requesting more funding.

Meeting schedules are becoming very full: the group decided it'd prefer to start at 9 rather than extend the closing time to 12:30. This will take effect next meeting, and we'll go from there.

2. **Lead Entity Strategy Update – 2021**

Briefly, Kirsten and Cade are finishing up reviewing the edits of the Strategy's culvert chapter; this will be done in the coming week, and should be updated for the current grant round. The Strategy is being updated through the year: provisionally before the ranking of the current grant round, with the hopes of a fuller, 'final draft' update - including climate change considerations - by the close of this year.

3. Subcommittee Updates

i. Culverts + Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB) Updates

Cade provided an update for both the Culvert Subcommittee and the FBRB: He and Chris have been working on getting the culvert prioritization model updated. There have been around 1000 changes of culvert passability, and an additional 100 or so passage sites added to the culvert layer as a result of QA/QC.

Regarding the FBRB, the governor has allocated funding for the program in the coming budget. The board requested approx. \$65 million for 87 projects across the state. Funding levels should be clear by April.

The FBRB is putting together a grant workshop for their next grant round, which will probably take place in October 2021. WDFW will be present to provide technical insight, and RCO to offer input on the funding side. The round will be starting Nov 2021: get projects together now, and reach out to Cade with any questions. Similar to last round, submissions will be open from Nov to Jan, but the process will be condensed down to one application. Rather than submitting a draft followed by a final application, applications will be submitted once, and there will be an opportunity to work with Cade and the review committee to wordsmith and polish that application as needed.

The legislature tasked the FBRB with developing a statewide strategy for replacing fish passage barriers. This is a pretty monumental effort, and the Board is working to get a plan together. They should have a clearer vision by March 1st, 2021.

Also worth noting is that the State asked the FBRB to prioritize Chinook passage in interest of resident killer whale populations. This will not disqualify non-Chinook projects; it will simply provide a small boost to prioritize Chinook projects. Relatedly, WDFW is also putting together a list of barriers whose removals would particularly benefit killer whale prey species, and they would like input from the lead entity on this list. They hope to develop it into a living list of managed by WDFW that can serve as a tool for project sponsors to support any relevant projects, and for the region to prioritize such projects.

It was noted that passage data in the Chehalis has been pretty well-vetted by regional WDFW work, and that it is more relevant for the other area LEs to weigh in on this list. That said, Kirsten will send out the list to the group, and any feedback would be appreciated.

4. Newaukum Subcommittee

Ned shared that a new meeting will need to be scheduled. The group hopes to fine tune the wood model based on local knowledge, and collaborate with WDFW, notably on fish data from Region 6. The group then opted to set up a meeting to accomplish this work and also provide a chance for Cade to discuss with the group how they would like to move forward with the Newaukum Pilot Watershed with regard to FBRB's Watershed Pathways.

Following, the group considered whether the SRFB local review process should continue to assign a bonus point to projects that occur within the Newaukum pilot watershed, as they have for several years. On the one hand, this method is a pretty slight and unobtrusive means of encouraging more projects in our pilot watershed. That said, it is also noted that funds could be more effectively used by judging projects evenly, based solely on their restoration merits. It may be that we'd be more prudent in using our funding if we simply put our funding into those projects that provide the most habitat benefit for the money.

Mara Zimmerman shared that there is still not a defined plan on implementing the Newaukum Pilot Watershed effort. If an actionable Pilot Watershed plan with discrete goals and projects that met those goals were in place, those projects could be prioritized. Without this clarity, the generalized approach lacks a coherence that helps assure prudent use of funding. Kirsten noted that the additional ranking point for the Newaukum area was put in place in the absence of such a plan, and has remained the only way to support a focus on the pilot watershed.

In conclusion, a path to a Newaukum Pilot Watershed is in development. In anticipation of that development, the local review team will *not* assign a bonus point in the upcoming round, with the hopes that a more coherent pilot water strategy is forthcoming.

i. Outreach updates

Kathy has put together an info sheet addressing the public about the benefits of LWD (Large Woody Debris). She's shared the document, and would appreciate feedback. An info sheet on BDAs (Beaver Dam Analogues) is forthcoming, as well.

She has also put together a summary of a larger document addressing the importance of and strategies for communicating consistently and effectively to our community about climate change concerns. She shared her summary, and will send it out to the group as well. In a similar vein, Kathy will be developing a document addressing strategies for effective communication with the public about salmon conservation concerns. She contacted the authors of the climate change document she adapted, and they gave their blessing to her using their framing - additionally, they offered to review Kathy's document.

In the vein of the Watershed Heroes stories that Kathy has been developing, she will be developing similar profile pieces on local salmon-involved scientists. She wants to connect the public to the faces behind the why's and how's of local salmon conservation.

Further, Kathy noted she is under contract to serve as a resource for any SRFB project sponsors who would like input on how to effectively integrate outreach/education with their projects. She will reach out to each sponsor individually.

5. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (10:45)

1. SRFB Updates

SRFB funding levels for the coming grant round is still being determined, and clarity will likely come in June. We're hopeful we'll have more than what we had last round, but this is in limbo.

Kirsten noted that the statewide SRFB is looking to instate an upcoming "targeted investment program" that will direct funding toward a goal of the Board's choice, such as orca conservation, the delisting of species, concerns in Hood Canal, an emergency response fund, etc. In this

case, some of the upcoming influx of funding may not necessarily be evenly distributed among Lead Entities. There's some uncertainty regarding the timing of this change (i.e., whether any funding increase for the coming biennium will be applied to the coming grant round vs. the following).

Sponsor surveys have come back in regarding last grant round. Some input was as follows:

- Character limits were frustrating to sponsors, which RCO has addressed in part.
- Opening PRISM earlier would be helpful. If this isn't implemented, applications can always be started as a Word document, and transferred to PRISM when it is open.
- The fluctuating details of the past few grant rounds has been taxing.
- The loss of tracked changes as a result of working in PRISM was also of concern.

Brandon noted that two weeks ago, RCO held a SRFB workshop, which was recorded. Reach out to Brandon if you'd like to see this.

Also noteworthy is that Kaleen Cottingham, RCO director, is retiring. Candidates are currently being considered, and a new director should be announced in the coming few months.

2. Local Review Team

The 2021 Review Team is assembled. The group would still like to have a couple more members with engineering and acquisition expertise. Reach out if you know a good fit for this.

3. 2021 Chehalis Lead Entity Grant Round

The conceptual date for submission of conceptual projects was January 27th.

We have 16 diverse projects, which is something to celebrate. However, it also means we need to think about review team capacity and funding realities.

To that end, the group could:

1. Carry out a prescreening for fit-to-strategy to winnow down less-fit projects and help sponsors avoid unnecessary work;
2. Work with sponsors to seek anyone willing to pull their projects voluntarily; or
3. Go forward as it is, knowing many will not get funded, but also knowing that the process is helpful for future applications.

Kirsten noted that at first glance at the list, Option 1 would not be likely to eliminate any projects.

After some discussion, it was decided to move forward with the list as is. This will provide a strong list alternate projects, which is valuable. In addition to that, it is meaningfully helpful for sponsors to workshop their projects and receive the feedback in the process. That said, leaving the option open for voluntary withdrawal of projects would be wise.

4. Cost Increase Request – Tree Fever, Thom Woodruff

Thom Woodruff presented a cost-increase request for a 2020 SRFB-funded project. The Tree Fever conservation easement would prevent subdivision, in particular, on 136 acres of forested land on the WF Satsop. It has 6000' of river front, and 1700' of a fish-bearing stream bisecting property. The funded project was estimated to cost \$335,000, but for a number of reasons, the appraisal came back at \$400,000. Thom is requesting a \$65,000 cost increase for the project.

This request would come from the statewide cost-increase fund, which has around \$500,000

available.

DISCUSSION:

Q: Is there high development pressure?

A: Yes: everything south and adjacent to this property is 5 acre parcels already. It's the only non subdivided timberland in the area.

Q: Would this lack of cost increase kill the process?

A: Can't know. It's all open negotiations: but he's still at the table.

Q: How do we avoid this in the future?

A: It's hard to estimate a CE. Maybe more local research, conversations with local actors to get a feel for real estate situation of the community. Also, overestimating is a simple way to address that. Though I thought I was!

Q: Entire parcel is under easement?

A: Yes. Max 3 houses total, for a total of 5k sq. feet. Never subdivided. The property is a working forest, but there is a buffer around the unnamed stream and the WF Satsop. Yes, the entire 336 acres owned by this entity will be encumbered and subject to a perpetual conservation easement.

Q: Was this done as a yellow book appraisal?

A: Yes. Done to Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (yellow book)

Q: CE: do they take into consideration in the purchase price the timber harvest profits?

A: The timber is not cruised for its merchantable value and the market value does not adjust for future revenue or market conditions. No conservation easement will take into consideration future revenue – whether it is an agricultural property and the crop is hay or grains, or livestock or dairy products; or it is a development property and the homes may be worth \$300,00, or \$3 million; or a forested property, which could all go up on smoke with a lightning strike or careless smoker/campfire.

Q: Is there a timeline with the landowner?

A: Not currently, but there is never certainty until the deal is squared away. There's always the possibility that an untimely death could make this not a possibility at all.

Tom Kollasch makes a motion that Key McMurray seconds: the motion is for the SRFB to support this increase, and recommend the approval of up to the needed \$65,000. This approval, however, would be contingent on the sponsor demonstrating they have fully explored the opportunity for timely additional funding from ASRP, which provided the vast majority of the project's original cost.

The motion passes without objection.

The group also noted interest in a future conversation discussing the details of conservation easements.

5. Conceptual Project Presentations

i. Kelly Verd, Lewis Conservation District

1. MF Newaukum Trib @ Alpha Fish Passage Construction

Kelly presented a tier-1 barrier culvert replacement project. The current double-culvert is 67% passable. The LOs just need access over this crossing for recreation, and so the new crossing would be able to be a more basic, laminated wood structure. The full presentation of this project is available by request.

DISCUSSION:

Q: Could we reroute the road to have one crossing instead of two?

A: We've considered that, but there is a property line that makes that difficult. Additionally, we'd like to avoid creating a new road. That said, that option is open - we've also considered re-routing the smaller creek. We're checking out these options.

Q: What's the lifespan of a timber deck?

A: 50-75 years

Q: Will you do plantings/restoration?

A: Yes, if we have extra. It is well timbered already, however.

ii. Ann Weckback, Lewis County Public Works

Ann Weckback presented three projects, all of which would serve as a match for FBRB funding. Notably, ACE permits and HPAs are set for all projects: there should not be any cultural resources costs. Brief summaries of the projects follow; full presentations are available upon request.

1. MF Newaukum C. Alpha Fish Passage Const

This project would replace a 7' x 5' squash pipe which is 33% passable with a 22' x 9' x 50' box culvert. The location exhibits a tier 1 concern for fish passage, riparian cover, and sedimentation. It is the only remaining barrier in its system, and would provide access to 34 acres of upstream wetland. The passage was not assigned a PI, but a previous neighboring barrier was given a PI of 10. The project request would be for 20% of the total cost of around \$800k, at \$177,734.

2. MF Newaukum Trib – Kruger Fish Passage Const

This project would replace a 0% passable (due to velocity) passage on a tributary of the MF Newaukum. The existing twin 5' x 3.5' squash pipes would be replaced with a 21' x 11' x 43' box culvert to immediately restore 0.68 miles of habitat for coho and winter steelhead. Once an in-process culvert is removed, this passage would provide access to a total of 3.36 miles of habitat above. This project is requesting \$222,212 of the total \$1,111,058 cost from SRFB.

3. Lucas Creek Trib – MP 4.39 – Fish Passage Const

The third project would replace a 33% passable, 6' x 4' squash pipe with a 20' x 13' x 78' box culvert. This passage would restore 3,484 sq. meters of spawning area and 2,081 sq. meters of rearing habitat. It is a priority 1 passage on WDFW's prioritization mapper, and has a PI of 15.36. Project request would be \$392,573 from the SRFB.

iii. Alexa Brown – Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force

Alexa Brown presented a proposed project on Geissler Creek, north of Montesano. This project at mile 1.06 on Geissler Creek would synergize with much existing restoration work on the creek. The new passage would replace a 40.5' x 6' x 4.5' steel culvert that is 33% passable due to velocity with a precast, concrete bridge. It is a tier 1 passage, and would benefit chum, coho,

steelhead and both searun and resident trout. The passage replacement would restore 2 miles of habitat. In the following winter, volunteer planting would take place, and the site is public, and ideal for public engagement. Plans and permitting are completed. The project request would come in at \$311,172 (possibly less depending on contingent funding), with a match from the county at 15% of the total \$366,085 cost.

6. Coast Salmon Partnership Updates –

1. Annual Report Approval –

The CSP has polished its previously-distributed annual report into an attractive document for public distribution. Through their CSP representatives, each CSP LE needs to approve this document in order for it to be distributed. After some discussion, the group convened a vote to recommend that the Chehalis LE's CSP representatives vote to approve the document's distribution. Garrett Dalan moved the approval, which Key McMurray seconded. The motion passed unanimously.