

Chehalis Basin Collaborative for Salmon Habitat

Zoom Only

MINUTES

February 3, 2025

Adam High - <i>Thurston County PW</i> Alex Bradberry - <i>CSP Outreach Director</i> Alex James - <i>Capitol Land Trust</i> Alex Gustafson - <i>Trout Unlimited</i> Alice Rubin - <i>RCO</i> Amelia Schwartz - <i>Thurston Co Planner</i> Ann Weckback - <i>Lewis County PW</i> Anthony Waldrop - <i>Grays Harbor C. Dist</i> Ben Amidon - <i>Chehalis Tribe</i> Bob Russell - <i>Lewis County Citizen</i> Brandon Carman - <i>WDFW</i> Brett DeMond - <i>CBFTF Streamworks</i> Brian Combs - <i>Mason Conservation District</i> Caprice Fasano - <i>Quinault Indian Nation</i> Cindy Wilson - <i>Thurston County Citizen</i> Daron Williams - <i>WDFW</i>	Donna Albert - <i>Chehalis River Basin LT</i> Drew Meador - <i>ASRP Implementation Mgr</i> Elena Fernandez - <i>Thurston Co Public Works</i> Jacob Murray - <i>Mason Conservation District</i> Jennifer Lewis - <i>Office of Chehalis Basin, ASRP</i> Joey Burgess - <i>Thurston Conserv Dist</i> Kathy Jacobson - <i>LE Education Coordinator</i> Key McMurray - <i>Grays Harbor Citizen Rep</i> Kirsten Harma - <i>LE Coordinator</i> Kim Figlar-Barnes - <i>WDFW</i> Leeann Frank - <i>Lewis County PW</i> Mack Hunter - <i>Grays Harbor Conserv Dist</i> Martin McCallum - <i>Thurston Citizen Rep.</i> Molly Paige - <i>Non-Point Coordinator, Ecology</i> Olivia Williams - <i>USFWS</i> Tina Niels - <i>Grays Harbor Citizen</i>
--	--

1. Welcome & Introductions

2. Minutes – January

3. Organizational Business

a. Completed Projects Tour Recap & Berwick Creek Video!

Kirsten facilitated a conversation about a recent tour that CBCfSH members made of completed SRFB projects. Members shared thoughts, and discussed ways for collaborating to share restoration work ideas. In addition, Kirsten shared a video from a local landowner showing salmon spawning in Berwick Creek in the vicinity of two different passage projects.

b. CBC-fSH Outreach Updates

Kathy Jacobsen shared that WDFW, WA Parks, local conservation districts, Friends of Schaefer and Lake Syliva (FOSLS), and CBCfSH are collaborating on monthly events at Lake Sylvia state park and Ocean City park in the coming year. This will include a summer event at Lake Sylvia in August.

Kathy also shared that river table events will take place in the coming week at Onalaska middle school and at Orin Smith elementary.

Finally, Kathy reminded the group that the 30th annual Prairie Appreciation Days is taking place on May 10th, from 10 - 2.

Kirsten Harma shared that the CBCfSH's website subcommittee will be meeting on March 4th.

Bob Russel shared that he joined the Lewis Conservation District in visiting the restoration site on Port Blakely's property in the Mill Creek headwaters. Kelly Verd added that the project planted 12,000 willows, 125 Cedars, and 2,500 shrubs. Bob then further shared that the City of Chehalis and American Rivers received \$280K from the Office of the Chehalis Basin for the Coal Creek restoration work.

Finally, Kirsten reminded the group that the Salmon Day on the Hill is upcoming on February 5th.

c. Committee Updates (Cloquallum, Newaukum, Barrier)

Kirsten shared that Ned Pittman of the Coast Salmon Partnership, who supports these priority watersheds with technical expertise, is no longer with the Partnership. She noted that while this change will affect these projects, the projects are still on track to continue as before.

Drew Mealor shared that a riparian tool is coming together from WDFW, and should be a relevant tool for these pilot watershed projects.

Kirsten shared that Alex Gustafson of Trout Unlimited has three projects coming up in the Newaukum Priority Watershed. She also noted that the Barrier subcommittee is waiting on the basin-wide update to the barrier prioritization tool. She explained that Mara Zimmerman has shared that the tool will be reviewed one last time before going to WDFW to be made available.

d. Check in about dates – Spring Renewal, Site Visits, Lower Basin Completed Projects Tour

Kirsten shared that after the April meeting, CBCfSH had planned on holding our "Spring Renewal" event at Lake Sylvia State Park. However, this is also the week planned for site visits. She shared concern that this might be too much for one week, and discussed this with the group. After this discussion, the group decided to move forward with the renewal event taking place on April 7th, with the site reviews taking place on April 9th and 10th.

Finally, Kirsten led a discussion on plans for a Completed Projects tour for the Lower Chehalis Basin. Brett DeMond described a number of sites that would work well for the tour. CBCfSH members can expect to receive a poll to determine a date for this event.

e. Special item

Kirsten shared that Bob Amrine of the Lewis Conservation District, former chair of the HWG, will be retiring in February. She engaged the group for input on ways to honor his legacy and celebrate his retirement. It was agreed that a card will be passed around for signing at the next HWG meeting.

4. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)–

a. RCO Updates

Alice Rubin shared that RCO had their application workshop last week, and that a recording should be available on their website in the coming week.

b. Conceptual Project Presentations:

i. Thompson Creek Restoration Design

Joey Burgess of Thurston Conservation District shared a project proposal for a restoration design on Thompson Creek, in the lower Skookumchuck management unit. Briefly, the project would create a full design to reconnect floodplain with the incised creek, plant a riparian buffer, and add in-stream wood, improving habitat for Coho and Steelhead near its confluence with the Skookumchuck. Joey noted that this reach of the creek is upstream of a barrier slated for correction, which described 10 miles of habitat above that barrier. He also emphasized that the landowner is a very enthusiastic and open partner. This design project has an estimated cost of \$185,000.

DISCUSSION:

- Elana Fernandez noted that this summer, Thurston County Works will be replacing the downstream crossing.
- Kim Figlar-Barnes mentioned that WDFW has 20 years of spawner surveys which could inform the project. Coho have been able to spawn above the downstream barrier. This isn't considered a prime steelhead stream. She also noted that Reed Canary Grass is problematic in this system.
- Bob Russel noted that it is worth considering treating Reed Canary Grass
- Daron Williams noted that it is best to not default to just planting conifers. This area was probably historically scrub-shrub.
- It was pointed out that temperature information should be available from John Winkowski's work.
- Alice Rubin suggested to consider how to protect the plantings from elk browse. Joey noted that putting in fenced clusters is an option.
- Drone footage to find seeps would be a nice addition to this project
- Brian Combs would like to offer support on protecting trees from elk browse, and noted that shallow ponds that come with beaver dams can quickly fill with grass, so it is important to consider the layers here.
- The group recommended considering access needs to get the review team to see the site during site visits

ii. Independence Creek Tributary Fish Passage Design

Adam High of Thurston County Public Works presented a project proposal for a fish passage structure design on an unnamed tributary to Independence Creek at Backman Road. Briefly, the project would improve salmonid access by replacing an undersized culvert, placing LWD, and installing riparian planting. The current culvert is a 67% passable barrier, and measures 1.75m x 1.95m. Replacing this barrier, the most downstream barrier on the tributary, would open 4.9 miles of habitat. The project would have a total cost of an estimated \$135,000.

Suggestions:

- Alice Rubin noted that it's important to describe the project as 'conceptual' design, rather than 'predesign'. She also noted that the project would need a landowner acknowledgement letter for any work on private land.
- It was suggested that TCPW consider doing an upstream fish survey
- Kirsten Harma pointed out that it is important not to claim more benefits than can be provided by work in the County right-of-way if there are not plans to work with surrounding landowners.

iii. Ripple Creek at Haywire Fish Passage Designs

Ann Weckback of Lewis County Public Works presented a project proposal for the design of the replacement of two barriers with fish-passable structures on Ripple Creek - a tributary to Stearns Creek - at Haywire Road. Briefly, this project would restore passage to 1.12 miles of Coho and Steelhead habitat through replacement of two twin cast-in-place concrete box culverts which are both 67% passable. The barrier replacement would also include LWD placement and the installation of low-flow notches. The project requests for these two sites are \$77,660 and \$81,972, which each represent 20% funding matches for requests from FHWA Aquatic Species Organism Passage Grants.

Suggestions:

-Alice Rubin asked when federal funding will be decided, and if there are considerations for alternate funding if those funds are not acquired. Ann noted that they should hear by July, and that they plan to apply to FBRB if the federal funding is not awarded.

-Kim Figlar-Barnes noted that WDFW has been monitoring strong coho use in this system, and pointed out that they wouldn't be in this stream in the summer. She suggested the project consider which species and life stages are present in the creek in the summer when claiming how the project will benefit species and life stage. Adult coho enter the system in November/December, and are not using stream in summer, so the project will just benefit juveniles for which passage statistics were described in the presentation. Further, she noted that the stream isn't likely used by steelhead, and that there's no documented use; if there was steelhead use, it would take place March or April.

C. Cost Increase Request – "SF Newaukum at Clark Fish Passage Design"

Ann Weckback shared a request that the CBCfSH consider a cost-increase of \$100,000 for their previously approved SRFB grant for LCPW's project on a SF Newaukum tributary at Clark Rd near Onalaska. The funds approved represented 60% of the project cost, with 40% requested from ASRP. However, ASRP funding looks unlikely at that 40% match, and the present cost-increase request from SRFB would change the ratio to 85% from SRFB and 15% from ASRP; at this ratio, ASRP has signaled they would be more likely to fund the project.

Ann noted that this funding would be requested from SRFB Cost-Increase funding available from the previous grant round, a process which Alice Rubin (with RCO) explained to the group. Such an adjustment would first require approval by CBCfSH, after which Alice would work with Ann to develop a request to submit for approval to the director of RCO. Kirsten reminded the group of the details of the project, and shared details from the SRFB review process.

After discussion, Anthony Waldrop moved that the group support LCPW's ask from the SRFB Cost-Increase fund, contingent on ASRP first agreeing to fund the remaining 15%. Upon securing this funding, the group would then support the ask being taken to the RCO director.

ACTION: Bob Russel seconded the motion, which the group passed unanimously.

5. Request for Letter of Support

Caprice Fasano presented a request for a letter of support to the federal Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMSART grant for the Quinault Tribe's Stevens Creek Tributary Restoration Project, which is an element of their Humptulips Restoration Strategy. This Humptulips Strategy has been carried out in partnership with Rayonier, and the strategy was completed in 2024. Briefly, this project aims to restore a disconnected, simplified stream by removing 500' of a railroad berm, a collapsing passage, and a failing bridge, as well as through the placement of

engineered log jams. The total cost of the project would be approximately \$1.6M, with roughly \$450K in match coming from Grays Harbor Waterkeeper and USFWS. As such, the project's request from the WaterSMART grant would be at total of \$1.2M.

ACTION: Bob Russel moved that the group provide a letter of support for the above project, which Anthony Waldrop seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Associated Program Updates

a. Grays Harbor Conservation District Plant Availability

Anthony Waldrop shared that the Grays Harbor Conservation District will be making plants available to the public, and shared a link to a form requesting these plantings.

b. Coast Salmon Partnership

Alex Bradberry provided an update, sharing that the board discussed four projects for the SRFB regional monitoring projects, which will be narrowed down to 2 during March's meeting. She also shared that the Communications and Outreach committee will be Monday, Feb 10th at noon. Finally, she noted that the regional technical committee will meet on Feb 24th, which will include regional scoring of the SRFB monitoring projects. Alex also shared that the partnership has concluded interviews for the vacant director position.

c. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

Drew Mealor shared that the RIT meeting in February will be in person, and encouraged folks to attend, as this is generally a virtual meeting.

Jennifer Lewis noted that the OCB is working on securing federal funding through a WaterSMART grant with Caprice for the Humptulips Project, and will also be helping to pursue a couple WaterSMART grants for Oregon Spotted Frog projects on the Black River.

7. Closing – This meeting was followed by a pre-application SRFB workshop