

Chehalis Basin Collaborative for Salmon Habitat

Chehalis Tribe Community Center – Library Classroom And Zoom

MINUTES March 3, 2025

Adam High - <i>Thurston County PW</i> Alex Bradberry - <i>CSP Outreach Director</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> Bob Russell - <i>Lewis County Citizen</i> Brandon Carman – <i>WDFW Region 5</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 Region 6</i> Donna Albert - <i>Chehalis River Basin LT</i> Drew Mealor - <i>ASRP Implementation Mgr</i> Farley Youckton – <i>Chehalis Tribe</i>	Jeff Mach – <i>Grays Harbor Conservation Dist.</i> Jennifer Lewis - <i>Office of Chehalis Basin, ASRP</i> John Stepanek– <i>Grays Harbor Cons. Dist.</i> Kathy Jacobson - <i>LE Education Coordinator</i> Kelly Verd – <i>Lewis Conservation Dist</i> Key McMurray - <i>Grays Harbor Citizen Rep</i> Kirsten Harma - <i>LE Coordinator</i> Mara Zimmerman – <i>Now WDFW</i> Mack Hunter - <i>Grays Harbor Conserv Dist</i> Martin McCallum - <i>Thurston Citizen Rep.</i> Molly Paige - <i>Non-Point Coordinator, Ecology</i> Nikki Atkins – <i>Lewis Conservation Dist.</i> Olivia Williams – <i>Citizen</i> Shannon Shula – <i>Thurston County</i> Toby Koch - <i>USGS</i> Victoria Knorr - <i>ASRP</i>
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1. Welcome & Introductions

2. Minutes – February

3. Organizational Business

a. Salmon Day on the Hill recap

Kirsten shared a brief recap from the Salmon Day on the Hill event, with Bob Russel providing input as well. They particularly highlighted a number of positive and productive interactions with local representatives.

b. CBC-fSH Outreach Updates + Logo! (Kathy, Kirsten)

Kirsten shared a mock-up logo for CBC-fSH, designed by Kenna Fosnacht. The group provided feedback, including thoughts about color/B&W considerations; inclusion of words; and other design details. Kirsten will send these comments to Kenna, along with any further comments sent to her via email.

Kathy Jacobsen then shared a presentation highlighting her River Table presentations to Onalaska Middle School and 4th graders at Orin Smith elementary in Chehalis. These

presentations included the participation of Bob Russel, Katie Nielsen with WDFW, Ann Weckback and her team, and Maddie Wilcox with Lewis County Stream Team. Kathy shared elements of her presentation to the students, and then showed the group images of the students working with the river table. Kathy also shared and discussed surveys filled out by the students before and after the presentation, noting learning goals. She also noted that kids were very engaged and excited, and that the collaboration of entities at these presentation really helped provide a rich and robust experience for the students.

Kirsten reminded the group of the upcoming Green Student Congress on March 20th, which involves the participation of fourth graders at Evergreen State College for water quality presentations. Facilitators are needed, and anyone interested can reach out to Kirsten.

c. Committee Updates (Cloquallum, Newaukum, Barrier)

Kirsten shared that last month the *Cloquallum subcommittee* met and discussed the current state of their model, and worked on integrating climate planning into their developing plan, identifying potential actions about which they've received feedback.

Kirsten shared an update from the *Newaukum subcommittee*, noting that she is looking to assemble members to work on the committee's outreach plan. Further, she shared that Alex Gustafson has received permits from Weyerhaeuser to begin assessment work. Kelly Verd then noted that Lewis Conservation District has capacity to assist with this Newaukum outreach through their Voluntary Stewardship Program. In discussing upcoming outreach work, members discussed possible strategies for not overwhelming landowners with outreach from multiple entities in the Newaukum. Kristen shared that currently, primary targets for outreach are Weyerhaeuser and the City of Chehalis. While the the committee has engaged with Weyerhaeuser successfully, she noted that they are still working to communicate with the City of Chehalis on this project.

d. Spring Renewal, Site Visits, Lower Basin Completed Projects Tour

Kirsten reminded the group that the next CBCfSH meeting will be followed by a Spring Renewal activity. Following the meeting, the group will go to Lake Sylvia State Park for a social gathering that will involve a shared activity to discuss focus and goals of the group and individual members.

Kirsten also noted that SRFB site visits will be taking place April 9th and 10th. She also reminded the group that the Lower Basin completed projects tour will take place April 30th.

Bob Russel shared that on March 13th, American Rivers will host a presentation to the community on their 280K grant to do engineering feasibility for the Coal Creek project. On March 10th, the project will also provide an update to the city commissioners.

The group discussed the funding source for this project, which are Integrated Funds from OCB, as opposed to ASRP funding. While ASRP funding is focused more directly on habitat, the Coal Creek project has a broader focus on community benefit and education that is better suited to this funding.

Martin McCallum shared that Olivia Williams' federal position with USFWS was terminated due to federal cuts, and advocated to the group on her behalf, asking that members consider ways in which they might assist her in finding new employment.

4. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) (10:00)

a. RCO Updates

Alice Rubin shared that she visited the Schaefer Boom project at Camp Creek with Lonnie and Brett DeMond. She also shared that in spite of heavy rains, the project was functioning very successfully, and was allowing water and passage where previously the road would have been flooded.

Secondly, Alice shared that the quarterly SRFB meeting will be Tuesday the 11th.

b. Conceptual Project Presentations:

i. West Fork Satsop RM 3.0 Riparian Restoration (Mack Hunter, Grays Harbor Conservation District)

Mack Hunter presented on a proposed restoration project by the Grays Harbor Conservation District on the West Fork of the Satsop River. This restoration would take place on approximately 4500 feet of riverbank, involving the installation of a greater than site-potential tree height buffer on either side of the stream. He noted that both sides of the river have current private riparian work implemented by landowners, but that these landowners have reached out to the conservation district for further support.

He noted that goals for this project involve installation of a robust riparian buffer of locally-adapted and drought-tolerant conifers, and thereby to facilitate natural ecological succession and reduce/eradicate invasive species. The CD's focus is to establish, enhance, and maintain work begun by both involved landowners. He shared that this work would benefit Chinook, Chum, Coho, Steelhead, Cutthroat, and possibly Bull Trout, primarily by addressing the 303d-listed issues of high temperature and low dissolved-oxygen, both of which are of greater concern given climate change effects.

Mack further shared that the project will cost an estimated \$432,100.

Key McMurray *Q:* What is the age of SASSI data? I doubt the presence of Bull Trout.

A: Unsure. I was also surprised that they were listed as present.

Mara Zimmerman *Comment:* That SASSI data is very outdated. That said, the West Fork is listed as Bull Trout habitat for the Chehalis. It is very unlikely they are present in the summer, however, when the riparian benefit would be most significant.

Bob Russel *Q:* Is this site above the boat launch on the West Fork?

A: Yes, this site is above the boat launch above the confluence.

Kelly Verd *Q:* The forestry LO is planting a 300' buffer; will he be harvesting?

A: The LO plans on thinning, but does not plan on harvesting.

ii. Ripple Creek @ Romerman Fish Passage Design-Build (Kelly Verd, Lewis Conservation District)

Kelly Verd presented on a fish passage design-build project on Ripple Creek at Romerman Rd, on behalf of the Lewis Conservation District. The project aims to open passage to all life stages of coho and steelhead, through replacement of a 33% fish passable barrier. Kelly noted that this culvert is a priority two culvert, but will become a higher priority once two downstream barriers are removed. She also noted that Ripple Creek is a tributary to Stearns Creek, where the CD has done a lot of related work. She also listed that this passage correction would provide access to 3621 sq meters of rearing habitat and 1483 meters of spawning habitat.

Kelly stated that the existing culvert would be replaced with a 36' long and 14' wide bridge, which would allow free movement of the stream. Replacement of this passage would have a project cost of approximately \$162,000.

Q: Can you clarify? You said that this culvert doesn't score as high as it could because of two downstream barriers?

A: Correct. This barrier will be a higher priority barrier as soon as the downstream barriers (which are in process) are corrected.

Alice Rubin Q: Your budget doesn't include cultural resources or permitting. Are you covering these with other funds?

A: No, this is a rough budget, and those items will be included in the final budget.

iii. Berwick @ Bishop Fish Passage Construction (Ann Weckback, Lewis County Public Works)

Ann Weckback presented a proposal from Lewis County Public Works for a fish passage construction project on Berwick Creek at Bishop Road. She stated that correction of this priority two barrier will provide improved access to 8.36 miles of coho habitat and 6.66 miles of steelhead habitat, and that the completion of three downstream barriers (which are in progress) will provide unimpeded access to this habitat, as well as to approximately 90 acres of wetland. She also shared that this barrier replacement would implement both LWD placement and a low-flow notch. The current pair of 5' culverts which are 58' long would be replaced with a 24' x 7' fish passage culvert, which will be designed to address modeled future climate conditions. Ann shared that this project would address both tier 1 and tier 2 concerns, and benefit all life stages for both coho salmon and winter steelhead.

Ann shared that the project request for SRFB totals \$314,192, which represents about 19% of the total project cost of 1,899,959. The remaining funds have been secured by partnerships with the Port of Chehalis - who received a FBRB grant - and a private landowner, Chehalis Land, LLC.

Alice Rubin Q: Those funds for the port of chehalis are in hand, yes?

A: Yes, the agreement is signed.

Kelly Verd Q: What is the culvert extension you mentioned was required [of Chehalis Land, LLC]?

A: The developer is required to include sidewalks and a turn-lane, and would have to extend the crossing by 20'. To avoid a piece-meal crossing, we're partnering with them and incorporating this extension requirement into our design with their financial contribution.

Bob Russel Q: Have you seen that land owner's development plans? Are they including a sufficient buffer?

A: This is the city's call. The city has allowed the buffer here to vary such that the *average* buffer is sufficient.

iv. Clark Road Project Cost-Increase Request

Ann Weckback provided an update on the county's cost-increase request presented during February's meeting. She shared that ASRP has declined to fund match for the project even at the smaller amount that could have been facilitated by an increased share of the grant being covered by SRFB. As such, Ann proposed to the group that the scope of the project be changed to preliminary design only. This scope change would reduce project costs to \$256,929. In that

case, LCPW's funding request to SRFB would remain roughly the same, but the amount would be 85% of the (lowered) total project cost; SRFB originally approved 60% share. If this change was approved, the county itself would provide the remaining 15% match. After confirming with Alice Rubin of RCO that this would be feasible, Ann asked CBCfSH for approval of this change.

Bob Russel moved to approve the above scope change to the Clark Road project, as well as the resulting reduction in match as initially approved. Martin McCallum seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Alice Rubin Q: What is the difference in the grant funding with this change?

A: As currently granted, it's approximately \$230,000. After the scope change, it would be less, approximately \$218,000.

C. SRFB Monitoring Proposal: Smolt Residence Time and Survival in the Grays Harbor Estuary

Mara Zimmerman and Toby Kock of USGS presented on one of the three SRFB monitoring proposals up for consideration by the Coast Salmon Partnership. Two of these projects will be selected. Mara described this project, which would focus on estuary survival of juvenile salmon and steelhead in Grays Harbor. The project would leverage existing smolt monitoring by WDFW with ASRP collaboration. The project is focused on steelhead (which observe high mortality rates in the estuary) and chinook salmon (which have longer rearing periods in the estuary). This project would fill data gaps which will help the entire coastal region, as well as provide equipment essential for this monitoring which could be shared throughout the region.

Toby Kock described the techniques that would be used for this project, which would seek to answer knowledge gaps about how long juvenile steelhead and salmon survive in the Grays Harbor estuary. Toby described that a partnership of USGS, WDFW and Anchor QEA developed a Chehalis River smolt outmigration study, and in doing so recognized the gap in knowledge of estuary residence and survival. They determined that a second, dedicated estuary study in Grays Harbor would be necessary to address this data gap. As such, they developed a study slated for 2026 which would monitor not only 600 tagged smolt (300 coho, 300 chinook) throughout the full reach of the Chehalis River via telemetry, but also deploy 200 tagged smolt (100 steelhead, 100 chinook) just above the Grays Harbor estuary for monitoring. Toby described the radio telemetry techniques and survival models that will be used in this study, which are already well-established and proven. He then described the specifics of telemetry design in the Grays Harbor, which would involve the installation of 4 acoustic telemetry receivers at the mouth of the Chehalis (to capture fish migration into the Grays Harbor estuary), as well as 10-16 receivers at the mouth of the Harbor (to capture fish migration out into the ocean). After the completion of this project, those acoustic receivers would become property of the CSP, and be available for use throughout the region.

This project would cost approximately \$534,000.

DISCUSSION:

Martin McCallum Q: Will this study be able to determine any of the mortality causes?

A: Not this study, but the data could be used in future studies into that question.

Bob Russel: Q: What kind of survival impact do PIT tags have on these fish?

A: Very minimal. There have been very robust studies looking into this issue, and PIT tagged smolts regularly return with PIT tags still embedded as adults.

Alice Rubin

Q: Do PIT tags retained by predators affect the accuracy of data?

A: Generally, we can use the context of the data to suss out those occurrences. And in most cases PIT tags pass through predators within a couple days, so there's not a significant impact.

Q: Will trainings be available for these receivers that the CSP will own after this project?

A: Absolutely. We provide trainings on other equipment and techniques we have available already.

Mack Hunter

Q: Why tag coho for the river and steelhead for the estuary?

A: We looked at the available trap data for the Chehalis and worked to reflect what would be occurring. Additionally, as stated, steelhead predation in estuaries is of particular concern.

Q: Are there other PIT tag studies in the estuary?

A: I am unsure of the occurrence of PIT tag studies in the estuary, but it is important to note that this is an acoustic tag study which is an entirely different technology.

Anthony Waldrop Q: It would be great to have data on residence time in the transition from riverine to estuarine environments. What is the possibility of adding receiver gates to this study?

A: Each receiver is ~\$4,000, and two at least are needed for each 'gate'. So each gate would be a cost of about \$8K. But beyond the equipment cost, there's not much of an increase in analysis or data collection costs, so that would be a possibility.

Mara Zimmerman *Comment:* That said, the tagging and releasing of fish is being planned specifically for the focus of this study at the mouth of the Chehalis. The placement of tagged fish may not be ideal for understanding the dynamics of other nearby rivers.

Kelly Verd

Q: In a healthy system, what would the expected natural mortality be?

A: There is a lot of variability in survival, regarding predation and stream temperatures and many other factors, so there's not a clear understanding of that.

Brett DeMond

Q: With that much natural annual variability, how many years do you intend to do this study in order get information that takes that variability into account?

A: At this point, it's just this one-year study, while this funding is available. Ideally, a study like this would certainly span several years to capture that variation - but at this point we're looking to get a baseline and idea of distribution and start there at least.

d. SRFB Monitoring Project List – Preparation for Vote

Alex Bradberry shared that the CSP's Regional Technical committee met the week prior to this meeting to do scoring for the SRFB statewide monitoring grant. The committee will be choosing two monitoring projects from our region to submit to the contest. These results will be announced at the March board meeting. From there, the board will decide which projects to send along to the statewide contest.

Alex then described four projects that had been submitted as high priority projects for the region, three of which submitted letters of intent: Smolt residency time and survival through estuary; effectiveness of ELJ treatments; and improve species distribution to inform barrier

prioritization and restoration priorities. She then described the scoring system used to rate these projects, which ranked out as follows: GH Estuary Survival (75.9), Willapa Fish Distribution (69.1), Quinault ELJ effectiveness (60.6). She also noted that these are preliminary scores, which are subject to change when reviewed by the board.

Kirsten Harma *Q:* Do you know the reason behind the disproportionately low transferability score for the Willapa project?

A: Yes, there was concern that the information garnered might be too specific to the unique context of the Willapa Bay. In this case, there is a conflict between the unique needs throughout the region and the statewide interest in transferable projects. In this light, the RTC discussed the need to honor the region's needs yet also prioritize statewide competitiveness. This is also a part of the consideration for weighting the transferability score lower.

Alex then described next steps, which will be the next CSP Board meeting on March 27 from 10AM - 2PM. There the board will discuss approval of RTC scoring results and choose two projects to send on to the statewide competition. Kirsten then noted that CBCfSH will be advancing the recommendation for the Chehalis, and any input on this recommendation is welcome.

5. Associated Program Updates (11:45)

a. Coast Salmon Partnership - abbreviated (Alex)

Alex Bradberry shared that on March 27th, the partnership will also be asked to approve their annual report. She noted that if there is any input from the group on the report, that input needs to be received before March 17th. She also shared that Jane Atha, the new executive director, starts March 10th.

6. Closing

Concept 3 *Edit #1*

