

Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group

April 4, 2022 -- Minutes

Zoom Meeting

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

<p>Ann Weckback, <i>Lewis County Public Works</i> Alex Gustafson, <i>Trout Unlimited</i> Alexa Brown, <i>Grays Harbor Stream Team</i> Andrew Deffobis, <i>Thurston County</i> Anthony Waldrop, <i>GH Cons. Dist.</i> Ben Amidon, <i>Chehalis Tribe DNR</i> Bob Amrine, <i>Lewis Cons. Dist.</i> Bob Russell, <i>Lewis County Citizen</i> Bill Teitzel, <i>Port of Chehalis</i> Brandon Carman, <i>RCO</i> Caprise Fasano, <i>Quinault Indian Nation</i> Colleen Suter, <i>Chehalis Tribe</i> Elena Fernandez, <i>Thurston County</i> Emelie McKain, <i>WDFW ASRP</i> Garrett Dalan, <i>The Nature Conservancy</i></p>	<p>Jerilyn Walley, <i>GH Cons. Dist.</i> Kathy Jacobson, <i>CBLE Outreach Coordinator</i> Kirsten Harma, <i>Lead Entity Coordinator</i> Kelly Verd, <i>Lewis Cons. Dist.</i> Kelsey Mack, <i>Aspect Consulting</i> Keith Underwood, <i>Mason Conservation Dist.</i> Lee First, <i>Twin Harbors Water Keeper</i> Lonnie Crumley, <i>Chehalis Basin Fisheries T. F.</i> Mara Healy, <i>Thurston Conservation District</i> Mara Zimmerman, <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i> Megan Tuttle, <i>WDFW Region 6</i> Mike Sharft, <i>WDFW</i> Ned Pittman, <i>Coast Salmon Part/Fdn</i> Paula Holyroyde, <i>Thurston County citizen</i> Rickie Marion, <i>Chehalis Tribe</i> Sarah Watkins, <i>Grays Harbor Citizen</i></p>
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1. Welcome, Introductions

2. Networking Time in Breakout Rooms

Groups were asked to discuss whether or not we should meet in person for our May Habitat Work Group meeting. The Gathering Room at the Chehalis Tribe is booked if we want to meet in person. One group suggested quarterly meetings to balance the need for in-person connections and networking, and the need to save on the time and expense of travel. Bob offered that we should plan dates to meet in person where meeting in person adds value. Kirsten noted that our SRFB project list voting meeting is in June, with nothing important on the agenda for May. At the end of the meeting the group returned to this topic and expressed interest in meeting in person in May. There are no important decisions to be made, but this will be a good opportunity to get used to meeting in person again and seeing what hybrid options may be available.

3. Minutes Approval – March

Ben motioned to approve March's minutes, and Alexa seconded. The motion passed.

4. Organizational Business

a. Note-Taker Contract

Has not been approved yet as contractor is waiting for approval by her current employer.

b. Newaukum Subcommittee

Alex provided an update on what is on the committee's agenda for April and May.

c. Outreach Updates

Kathy's outreach activities have included: writing a Watershed Hero story about Adam Fleming, WDFW wildlife biologist; preparing for an open water swim at Twin Bridges county park, June 26; preparing to demonstrate how surface water and groundwater are connected through use of a groundwater model at the Lewis County Youth Fair, April 29; preparing to host an educational table at Prairie Appreciation Days, May 14; preparing to host a "forest bathing" walk at Lake Sylvia State Park, that will educate others on the connection between forests, streams and salmon. Several HWG members volunteered to help staff the education tables at upcoming events.

d. Bottle Beach clean-up photos

Lee First showed photographs of a beach clean-up put on by DNR staff with the help of Washington Conservation Corps youth. The youth enthusiastically removed 52 tires from Bottle Beach in a single day. There are at least 350 tires on the beach. The tires were from "Early Tire" and dumped on the beach by residents in the 1950s, supposedly to help with beach erosion. Small tires were removed with hand tools, and larger tires removed with a small ATV and excavator. The tires that were removed will be cleaned, shredded, and burned in a facility that scrubs toxins out of the air. Washington legislative funding has been provided to fund this, using funds collected from a "waste tire fee" on every purchase of new tires.

Megan Tuttle commented that the DNR did not secure an HPA permit for this work. This is a serious problem because forage fish are using the beach gravels for spawning at this time of year. Megan is reaching out to find out who is in charge in order to work to get them into compliance.

5. Salmon Recovery Funding Board

a. Cost Increase Request follow-up

Brandon shared that the Fisheries Task Force cost request, approved by this group at the last meeting, was approved by RCO Director Megan Duffy. Lonnie thanked the group and Brandon for their help meeting this need.

Director Duffy wanted me to relay 2 reasons why she approved the cost increase, considering this is a large, unprecedented award.

The SRFB decided to roll over \$154,000 of unused funds from the 2021 cost increase pot, drastically offsetting this request.

The CBFTF has proven to be a fiscally responsible sponsor for many years, and has returned well more than this \$170,000 request to RCO programs over the last 5 years alone.

b. All Projects Overview

Kirsten provided an overview of all of the projects that are seeking funding through open funding programs – SRFB, FBRB, WCRRI and Streamflow Restoration. The basin-wide request is \$25 million! Sponsors have risen to the occasion of all of these open funding

programs and have planned and proposed lots more projects than we have ever seen in the past.

c. SRFB Funding Request and Discussion affecting 2022 Grant Round Allocation

Kirsten read a request from Jeannie Abbott, RCO: "As you are aware, the legislature provided an additional \$75 million in salmon projects in the supplemental budget. This funding was put in the Salmon Account, which has a likelihood of being reappropriated although not guaranteed.

After RCO admin (4.12%), there is \$23.97 million projects under \$5 million and \$47.94 million for projects over \$5 million.

We are interested in hearing your perspective on how these funds might best be allocated by the SRFB for the greatest benefit to salmon. Please send me your thoughts for both types of project funding by Tuesday, April 15. I will compile these and get them to Marc and Brock for consideration in drafting possible options for board discussion."

Kirsten noted: Our current 2022 SRFB ask is \$1.5 Million. I have vetted all of those projects for fit to strategy and they are all good projects. Between SRFB, FBRB, Streamflow Restoration, an WCRRI, there is \$25 Million in project ask in the Chehalis Right Now in Addition to what's coming in through ASRP. We have projects that already meet a minimum standard qualification of fit-to-Strategy that are ready to go. I think we are ready to use this funding now, but want to hear any partner arguments for delaying allocation before I provide input to Jeannie.

Discussion:

-Note that a lot of our 2022 grant requests are contingent on FBRB or other large funding sources. Consider asking for flexibility to use funds in subsequent years.

-Consider telling RCO how much of our grant ask for 2022 is contingent on FBRB, and how much could proceed with most of the funding from SRFB and a smaller sponsor match.

-Ask if FBRB will be receiving additional increases from Infrastructure bill \$

-Pushing back a SRFB grant until 2023 will not affect Ann's ability to do their projects as they have to wait for FBRB funds anyway. But they would need to apply for SRFB again in 2023, taking up room on the LE list (we won't see these go away until they get funded!)

-Ask for a Chehalis-specific cost-increase pot. Brandon notes that RCO may use some of the funds to support the statewide cost-increase pot

-Consider that costs will go up. We should spend the funds now before costs increase further

-Ask RCO to take the one-year deadline off when grant funds are available for another project within the Lead Entity. A year is too short. They should be more flexible to allowing us to keep the allocation in the basin.

d. Ranking Criteria Updates and Discussion

Kirsten presented changes recommended for the Lead Entity's project review criteria. Ned Pittman and Caprice Fasano provided input to those changes. These will better reflect current science and thinking on salmon biology.

For Species criteria, existing criteria state:

"Will the project protect or restore habitat for multiple salmonid species and/or unique populations? "

New states: ""Will the project protect or restore habitat for multiple salmonid species and/or rare populations?"

Considerations of what "rare" was chosen as Spring Chinook, Summer Steelhead, and Bull Trout.

Bob asked how "multiple" species are determined. Kirsten notes that effectively each species adds one point. Ned added that rare applies to Spring Chinook but not Fall Chinook. Bob noted that this change will benefit projects in the upper basin tributaries.

Megan likes the change to "rare." Fisheries managers have data to represent "rare" but not "unique" which is more subjective. She added that there are closures for steelhead this year, so there is focus by fisheries managers on protecting Steelhead. She would like to see the "rare" apply to all steelhead, not just summer steelhead, since there are declining numbers in winter as well.

For Life History Benefits criterion, existing criteria state: "Will the project benefit multiple life history stages and/or limiting life stages?" Old science and thinking talked about limiting life stages, but we haven't figured out what those are in our basin. The new criteria states: "Will the project benefit multiple life history stages?"

No comments on the Life History Benefits criterion change. Two thumbs up.

For the Watershed Processes and Habitat Features, the concept was changed to just "Watershed Processes" – this reflects a move towards improving habitat processes not creating habitat features. Interested parties can learn more about definitions of watershed processes by reading the Pilot Watershed White paper or participating in the Newaukum Sub-committee.

No comments on Watershed Processes criterion change. Several thumbs up.

The technical team will use these criteria this year, with the understanding that we can always refine them going forward.

6. Project Presentations and Request of Support Letters

- a. Ann Weckback, Lewis County, requesting support letters for FBRB and WCRRI:**
 - i. Lucas Creek Trib. MG 4.24 Fish Passage Construction

Project being submitted to WCRRI and FBRB. Issue is a 2-ft water surface drop in the undersized culvert. Meets a Tier 1 concern in the North Fork Newaukum. Very high upstream habitat quality with forest cover and beaver complexes.

Discussion:

Q) Megan asked: Is there any proposal to deal with road runoff? Could you add a check-dam system above this site? We're seeing unwanted runoff during big storms

A) No, as this is a primitive gravel road. The County will look at the option for other County proposals. Would consider straw waddles or rock check dams.

Q) Would this project cost more if the road was paved?

A) At least 10s of thousands dollars more to pave, if not 100s of thousands. The project includes guardrails for safety.

Q) How is this project meeting WCCR community resiliency question?

A) Highlighting education at the Spring Youth Fair where there will be displays showcasing all Lewis County culvert projects and the benefits to those basins. They will also talk about salmon life cycles and limiting factors to salmon.

Q) Would this site be appropriate for a planting by the Lewis Stream Team?

A) These county sites aren't typically appropriate due to safety. There is no good parking at most sites. Would have to get traffic control to do this and it's not very practical.

Members provided comment here: It's possible to do Stream Team events on County road – this has been done in Grays Harbor County. Thurston County sees issues with safety at their culvert sites. They put up traffic control, but there are still dangers. Grays Harbor Stream Team offers safety vests, puts out cones, and has seen other groups that offer a shuttle from a safe parking site. Don't forget that there is always a danger to being out on roads.

Motion by Bob Russell: "To provide a support letter for this project." Sarah seconded. All in favor.

ii. Scammon Creek at Graf Fish Passage Construction

Project being submitted to WCRRI and FBRB. Issue is a depth barrier in a squash pipe. Adults can't get through in low flow period and juveniles can get through due to velocity in the winter months. Fish passage is a Tier 1 concern in the sub-basin. There are 3 more Priority 2 barriers remaining to be corrected upstream of this one. Lewis County has recently replaced a downstream barrier. This is a high traffic road appropriate for check-dams

Discussion:

Site likely not good for bringing volunteers to.

Motion by Bob Russell "to provide a letter of support to this project", seconded by Ben. All in favor.

b. WF Hoquiam Dam Removal and Groundwater Supply -- Kelsey Mack and Jill Van Hulle – Aspect Consulting for City of Hoquiam (11:00)

Hoquiam wants to explore options for moving its municipal water supply to groundwater, which would allow for removing current surface water dam. They are applying for funds through WCRRI and the Streamflow Restoration Act grant. This project would include establishing feasibility of dam removal, preliminary design for dam removal, building on the 2010 groundwater study through hydrogeologic site characterization, installing production wells, completing necessary water right permitting. A future phase would include actual design and construction of the dam removal and water system conveyance. Aspect expects total project cost could be up to \$10 million, though pre-design will provide a more accurate project cost. The grant ask is \$1.13 million.

Q) Are the proposed new wells for a deep aquifer or one connected to the river?

A) Deep aquifer. There is no evidence that the deep aquifer is connected to the river. Because of this we will be applying for a new water right. The City had previously applied for a water right change – which isn't appropriate since the groundwater is not connected to the current surface water source.

Q) Why isn't the funding to plan a new water source being provided by the city?

A) Jill doesn't know the answer to this question and will ask Brian. She expects that the city does not have the funds. They certainly don't have the staff with the expertise to do this sort of planning work. Ann noted that Lewis County is looking in to the American Rescue Plan Act/ Infrastructure bill money, to fund some of its water supply development.

Comment: WCRRI as a funding source is a good fit since it isn't just about habitat restoration or community planning – it is about both.

Comment: The Infrastructure bill funds would be a good funding match for this project in the future.

Motion: Sarah made a motion "To provide a letter of support to WCRRI for this project." Megan seconded. All in favor.

7. Associated Program Updates

a. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan –

Emelie provided an update on Steering Committee approved projects for the portfolio of 2021-2023 biennium ASRP funds. These included 6 new on-the-ground project packages. Several "experimental" projects (sediment wedges/BDAs) were funded outside near-term ASRP priority areas. Those will be associated with monitoring efforts. 3 barriers were funded in Wildcat Creek and they will go to construction summer 2023. New reach-scale project on the Skookumchuck River approved – "Riverbend Ranch." The full funding amount through construction was approved for that project. The total allocated for project packages is \$10.5 million. There is substantial funding still available.

Emelie encouraged sponsors to apply for Project Development funding that can be used for outreach in specific areas, to garner landowner willingness and look at specific opportunities.

The Aquatic Species Restoration Plan symposium will be 9:30-12 April 20-21. You need to register in advance.

Discussion: What is a beaver-dam analogue? Maybe we need another name instead of “analogue” to make this idea more relatable for the public.

b. Coast Salmon Partnership

Ned provided two updates: 1) CSP Board will meet Thursday April 28. There will be a discussion with Megan Duffy and Erik Neatherland, GSRO. This will be a great opportunity to discuss the connection between coast issue and statewide salmon recovery issues. Meetings are open to the public. 2) WCRRi – received 25 applications that were eligible. Will be virtual project presentations April 25, 27 and 29. Presentations are open to public but only technical reviewers can ask questions to the sponsors. Chehalis projects will likely need to be presented on several days.

c. Chehalis Basin Partnership

Received a cash donation from the City of Chehalis. They have also received funding from the Chehalis Generation Facility. There may be a slight focus on upper basin issues as a result.

Kirsten invited sponsors to present project information to the Chehalis basin Partnership over the summer. This is a great opportunity if you want to get community feedback. Please contact Kirsten if you would like to provide a presentation.

Other Business

Lewis County Stream Team had an event last weekend. A Farm Forestry rep arrived to give a presentation. The project was on a well-known forester’s property, and they are hoping for more participation as a result. Kenna has been doing a great job with the Stream Team.

Regarding the next HWG meeting, June is our voting meeting, so is appropriate to have that be in person. Do you want to meet in person two months in a row? Members voiced interest in having an in-person meeting in May. May will be about updates and in-person networking. Members who can’t make it won’t miss a voting meeting.

SRFB site visits are April 14 and 15th.