**Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group**

**April 5, 2021 – Minutes**

Zoom Meeting

**9:00 am – 12:00 pm**

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| Alex Gustafson - *Trout Unlimited*  Alexa Brown - *GH Stream Team, CBFTF*  Ann Weckback - *Lewis Co. Public Works*  Anthony Waldrop - *Grays Harbor Conserv. Dist.*  Ben Amidon - *Chehalis Tribe* *Restoration*  Bob Amrine - *Lewis Conservation Dist.*  Caprice Fasano - *Quinault Indian Nation*  Cindy Wilson - *Citizen*  Claire Williamson *- WDFW*  Elena Fernandez - *Thurston Co. Public Works*  Emilie McKain – WDFE, *ASRP Manager*  Eric Erler - *Consultant*  Garrett Dalan - *The Nature Conservancy*  Greg Green - *Ducks Unlimited*  Hope Rieden - *Chehalis Tribe DFW* | Jim Hill *- Citizen*  Jonathan Bradshaw - *Citizen, Minutes* Kathy Jacobson - *Lead Entity Education Coordinator*  Kelly Verd - *Lewis Conserv. Dist.*  Key McMurry - *Grays Harbor Citizen*  Kirsten Harma - *Lead Entity Coordinator*  Luke Kelly - *Trout Unlimited*  Mara Healy - *Thurston Conserv. Dist.*  Megan Tuttle - *WDFW*  Mike Scharpf - *WDFW*  Miranda Plumb - *USFW*  Ned Pittman - *Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn*  Paula Holroyde - *Thurston Co. LWV*  Pete Hammer - *Chehalis River Basin LT*  Steve Hagerdy - *Mason Conserv. Dist.*  Thom Woodruff *- Capitol Land Trust*  Tom Kollasch - *Grays Harbor Conserv. Dist* |

1. **Welcome, Introductions**
2. **Networking Time in Breakout Rooms**
3. **Minutes Approval – March**

Key McMurray made a motion to approve the minutes from March. Megan Tuttle seconded the motion, and it passed without comment.

1. **Organizational Business** 
   1. **Outreach updates**

Kathy interviewed local WDFW biologists Lea Ronne and Nicholas Vanbuskirk for a *Meet Your Local Fisheries Biologist* outreach profile. It will be sent out online (LewisTalk), and through local papers. In an upcoming outreach article, Kathy will be interviewing the founders of Root Seller Farm in Onalaska, discussing what it means for their farm to be Salmon Certified. She is continuing to assemble publications on the importance of Beavers and the potential of Beaver Dam Analogues.  
  
Recently, Kathy hosted a presentation given by Ben Goldfarb on Beavers. She had 55 folks participate. A link to a recording of the talk is available on the first page of the LE webpage.   
  
If there is a topic you’d like to hear more about in the future, let Kathy know.

In other outreach news, Alexa had a good willow stake harvesting and planting work party at the lower Satsop restoration site. It was preceded by an educational activity for volunteers, as well.

* 1. **Culvert Committee updates**

Kirsten reached out to the group for any updates regarding the replacement of Cade Roler, who has moved on from his work with WDFW. As he was the HWG’s most direct link to WDFW culvert work, the group looks forward to clarity on maintaining this link - though Chris Dwight will serve to offer some continuity.

Kirsten also commented, however, that she is aware that the WDFW is currently working with Chinook-focused culvert prioritization.  
  
**Aquatic Species Restoration Plan**

* 1. **Protection and Restoration Stakeholder Survey – Presentation and Discussion**

Eric Erler presented on the findings of the “Chehalis Stakeholder Survey” he conducted in partnership with Ducks Unlimited and WDFW. The survey was conducted with an ASRP grant and sought to illuminate perceived gaps between the restoration/ conservation goals of the ASRP and the capacity of existing restoration /conservation entities within the basin. The project saw the participation of 29 diverse restoration entities throughout the basin, and Eric shared the survey’s results with the group. Among many findings, the survey highlighted that the most significant impediments to carrying out maximum restoration and conservation in coming years - as seen by basin organizations - include limited funds, landowner willingness, funding-agency oversight, and match funding. The survey also found that the vast majority of organizations would be willing to increase their capacity for work in the basin, if funding were a given: there is a lot of expertise in the basin available and willing to do the work of the ASRP. Eric also highlighted that given the significant work ahead, we will need to further develop the strong relationships in the region. He recommended that stakeholders: engage in ASRP-specific strategic planning; anticipate invested time for establishing/building LO relationships; observe flexibility and support for projects that meet recovery goals but may include larger properties with non-priority habitats; develop strategic, large scale projects.   
  
Eric can be reached with questions and input at ericerler@centurylink.net

DISCUSSION:  
  
Bob noted that LO participation is an obstacle, for sure, and that it is helpful to see potential project impediments laid out as they are in the survey. He also commented that it is surprising and encouraging to see how many projects are already planned throughout the basin.

Q: Will this presentation be available?  
A: Our hope is to make all of this info widely available: it is for the stakeholders! We’re looking at how best to move forward with that with DU and WDFW.

1. **Salmon Recovery Funding Board**
   1. **SRFB Updates**

No budgetary updates for SRFB at the time. The most recent information available to the group is that of the requested $80 million, the Governor’s budget proposed $40M, the house budget proposed $30M, and the senate’s budget proposed $40M. This is a significant improvement over our previous biennium, in any of those cases.

* 1. **2021 SRFB Grant Round Updates**

The Virtual Tour of the SRFB project sites will take place next Tues/Wed. Kirsten tested a Google Earth flyover tour for the visits with the group.

DISCUSSION:   
  
Q: What is this LE’s usual SRFB funding?   
A: Usually around $650,000; this is double the other Coast LE’s funding, as we comprise 2 WRIAs.

1. **Associated Programs Updates** 
   1. **Coast Salmon Partnership**

The Salmon Recovery Conference will take place May 28 - 30.  
  
The pilot watershed whitepaper is in its final draft version. It’s undergone implementation committee review and input, and will be circulating among LEs for discussion and input over the next two months. The plan is to finalize the paper and present it to the board in August. The paper will also benefit from scientific review from without the basin by folks with perspective from other pilot watershed work.  
Ned has done extensive research on other area pilot watersheds, how they work, and what are best practices for executing pilot watersheds; the goal is to come up with a strong model to execute again throughout our watershed.

* 1. **Chehalis Basin Partnership**

The CBP is looking at implementing their approved plan, and are looking at the water right work in process on the Skookumchuck. There are a lot of moving parts with this process, and Kirsten has shared an infographic with the group that attempts to clarify it. Reach out to her if you would like a copy.

It is also noteworthy that the Scatter Creek project that has applied for SRFB funding is a part of the CBP streamflow plan.

* 1. **Aquatic Species Restoration Plan – other updates** (Emelie, others)

Anthony shared that the Satsop and Wynoochee Early Action Reaches both have log procurement developing, and are going well. The Wynoochee is out to bid for log procurement, which will be completed before the project; the contractor will have all spec’d and sorted logs from get-go. Construction bidding is behind due to permitting, but it sounds like the bid should be able to go out in the next week or two.

Emilie shared that the Steering Committee has had more direct dialogue with the Chehalis Basin Board in the past few months. There aren’t any huge budget updates for the upcoming biennium, as legislation is still pending. The budgets across the Governor, Senate, and House, all support $70M total for the Chehalis Strategy, and the CBB supports a 50/50 split of this funding between fish habitat and flood mitigation.  
 The Steering Committee and CBB are discussing the formal transition from ASRP planning and development into implementation and adaptive management. This transition should take place in the upcoming biennium, and will involve outreach work: materials for legislators; outreach to LOs on what to expect from the ASRP as it gets rolling; project guidance for priority areas and project actions. The hope is that the public can understand what is driving funding priorities in the next biennium.

* 1. **Other**

Regarding the Transalta Skookumchuck project discussed at the recent CBP meeting, Jim Hill shared that the project has seen a lot of pushback as proposed, and has been a pretty politically hot topic locally. It is on hold for the moment, but parties are doing a lot of work to resolve this, and a conclusion will be welcome.

Ben Amidon shared that the Tribe just finished a quarter mile of planting on the USFWS-funded Big Buffer project. They got 1000 trees planted and mulched. In addition to this new quarter mile of planting, they also got the quarter mile that was planted last year mulched. Keep an ear out for future field trips.

Meet Alex Gustafson, the new Chehalis Project Manager with Trout Unlimited. She previously worked as a contractor for Freestone Environmental Services on the Hanford Natural Resources Damage Assessment case, leading the restoration planning team. She achieved a Masters degree in Marine Affairs at UW, and studied a mix of citizen science, community involvement and watershed mapping, as well as water quality and juvenile salmonid preferences. Feel free to reach out at alex.gustafson@tu.org

Bob Amrine shared that the Weyerhaeuser project is in full swing. At the date of the meeting, the project was beginning; clearing debris for the approaches for the new bridges. The project is on track to be completed this summer.

**Note: This meeting was followed by a meeting of the Newaukum Subcommittee**