

**Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group  
May 2, 2022 -- Minutes**

In person – Chehalis Tribe Gathering Room

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

Ann Weckback, <i>Lewis County Public Works</i> Alex Gustafson, <i>Trout Unlimited</i> Anthony Waldrop, <i>GH Cons. Dist.</i> Ben Amidon, <i>Chehalis Tribe DNR</i> Bob Amrine, <i>Lewis Cons. Dist.</i> Elena Fernandez, <i>Thurston County</i> Greg Green, <i>Ducks Unlimited</i>	Jerilyn Walley, <i>GH Cons. Dist.</i> Kathy Jacobson, <i>CBLE Outreach Coordinator</i> Kirsten Harma, <i>Lead Entity Coordinator</i> Rickie Marion, <i>Chehalis Tribe</i> Sarah Watkins, <i>Grays Harbor Citizen</i> Tara Livingston-Scott, <i>Chehalis Tribe DNR</i>
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**1. Welcome, Introductions**

**2. Small Group Activity**

Kirsten led the group through a small group activity. She posed the question: *“What would you like to change about salmon recovery – at your job, and on a policy level?”* Small groups discussed these questions, and then rotated members to further discuss and develop ideas.

Results:

1-Job level changes:

Benefits can be had by streamlining and coordinating efforts even more. Participants like the idea of sharing outreach tasks through the Stream Team Coordinators – this helps “raise all ships.” Enhance existing outreach. How can we reach more people?

-Seeing a database of all grant sources available to our basin would be helpful (*editor’s note – one already exists on the Coast Salmon Partnership website*)

-Expanding and including non-traditional partners in the work (examples given include drinking water utilities and schools, and others not interested in salmon but other watershed issues)

-Look into the near future and plan ahead

-Approach projects as teams! Bring multiple perspectives to a potential project site early in project development – get input on traditional knowledge, plant succession, and fish biology needs. Also cooperate through life of project.

-More monitoring of fish impacts of fish barrier corrections.

-Work more on invasive (plant) species removal

One thing we can do to maintain optimism at our jobs is to reconfigure our brains – we may be doing good things to help salmon, but we can’t expect a salmon response. There have been 10,000 cuts to reduce salmon viability, so we will need to keep working on 10,000 band aids.

2-Policy level changes:

-Streamlining and coordinating were also a theme at this level. There is still interest in improved Army Corps permit streamlining. Specifically target Chehalis permitting efforts.

-Participants would like to see better inter- and intra-agency coordination so folks stop reinventing the wheel. A specific example was an interest in knowing who is collecting water quality data where so that groups can share resources instead of duplicating effort.

-A repeated theme was the need for more funding for local NGOs and other groups. There is a desire for dedicated salmon funding. Build capacity and fill gaps. Increase the pot of funding through both private and public funds.

-Integrate all existing plans for the basin – county, state, tribe, NGO, etc. Integrated land conservation plan.

-New policy – instead of easements as an incentive to protect riparian buffers which reduces land value, reduce property taxes, but then compensate the Counties for that lost tax value.

-Incentives to businesses to reduce toxic chemical use.

Kirsten congratulated the group on their hard work on this topic. Similar discussions are happening at the statewide level, so it's good to know what our local interests would like to see improved. We can make a difference!

### **3. Minutes Approval**

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

### **4. Organizational Business**

#### **a. Newaukum Subcommittee**

Alex provided an update on what is on the committee's agenda for May and June. The group is seeing the finish line with a report that will be available to the public.

#### **b. Outreach Updates**

Alexa is moving to Grays Harbor Conservation District to work full time on the Grays Harbor Stream Team. A current project is "salmon in the classroom" where she released hatchery fish with schools at Aberdeen Lake and Skookumchuck.

Kathy participated in the Lewis County Youth Fair along with Ann, Devin, Bob Amrine and Bob Russell. It was a great success! Lewis County reps shared reasons culverts are barriers to fish. They were able to reach a large audience not reading print media.

Kathy has been taking the RiverTable to schools and continues to provide education about how rivers work.

Bob shared that two reporters from The Chronicle will be doing a kayak trip down the entire Chehalis River and reporting on what they see. This will be close to the time of World Fish Migration Day – May 21. The reporters are still looking for people to meet up with on their journey. Ben expressed interest in meeting them on Tribe land. The journey is a follow up to a report Brian Mitge of the Chronicle did 15 years ago.

#### **c. Bottle Beach clean-up photos**

Lee was not present to share photos. Kirsten mentioned that she would like to invite a guest speaker to talk to the group about tire impacts on water quality and clean-up actions. The group was interested so long as there is a direct link to tire impacts on salmon.

### **5. Infrastructure Bill – Summary of Opportunities**

Kirsten reported that a single RFP soliciting applications for multiple federal infrastructure fund sources will soon be released by the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NWIF). NOAA will have a separate solicitation. Applications will be due in July, with funding available in November. Unknown is the date of the next funding solicitation.

Q) Will there be competition with state agencies for these awards? Is WSDOT eligible?

Q) Can we duplicate an ask we've already made to NWIF?

Q) Will landowner acknowledgement forms be required at the time of application?

No answers were available to these questions.

Participants noted that a constraint to applying for these types of grants is the time and knowledge it takes to fill out a federal grant application. Kirsten suggested that funding or a paid-for consultant to write grants may be a way to increase sponsor capacity. This was brought up again in the capacity discussion under the ASRP agenda item.

## **6. Salmon Recovery Funding Board**

### **a. Washington Salmon Coalition updates**

RCO's policy liaison provided some useful information to Lead Entity Coordinators at the Washington Salmon Coalition meeting. He gave the background for the burst of state funding we're seeing in salmon programs this year. We have more funds than expected because the legislature had been planning for a recession, so the supplemental budget was unprecedented. We're not likely to see this amount of money again, but it's possible if we show we can use it.

The SRFB received an additional \$75 million for this biennium. Of that, \$50 M is for "large projects" described as being over \$5 million. Lead Entities and Regions are discussing fair ways to suggest distributing this across the state. The remaining \$25 M can be used on any sized project. Lead Entity coordinators agree that these funds should be spilt out through the statewide allocation formula as part of the current grant round, with the flexibility to use it next grant round, as well.

Q) Will there be a supplemental grant round to distribute these funds?

A) Kirsten has not heard of this being an option.

Q) Can we bundle multiple culverts as a single \$5 M project?

A) This is an option under discussion.

RCO is requesting that Lead Entities submit their Planned Project Forecast list for the 2023 and 2024 grant round by June 13. As a reminder, this list is part of the reason SRFB was able to secure more funding this session from the legislature – we showed that we had projects lined up to use it. The due date for the list is after we will learn whether we can use the funding increase towards our 2022 list or not. It's ok to phase projects, but if you think you can complete the with a single award, keep it as one project.

All sponsors will project ideas not currently saved in the Salmon Recovery Portal are encouraged to submit the basic project information to Kirsten as soon as possible.

We are being asked to finish the "completed project list" by May 31.

## **b. SRFB Board Retreat Topics, Updates, Other**

The Board is discussing cost increases and how to deal with them. There is a cost increase committee actively working with the SRFB. Sponsors are encouraged to work cost increases in other line items – as they are not allowable as stand alone costs.

The Washington Salmon Coalition is developing recommendations to the SRFB on how to address emerging issues. Some solutions are being proposed to deal with the match requirements, that become more burdensome as we experience cost increases.

Participants expressed frustration at match – what is the purpose? Have we outgrown the need to find match? It's harder to sequence projects when each needs match.

Kirsten asked for more ideas on these themes, as there is still time to influence SRFB discussions at their June retreat and board meeting.

## **c. Site Visit Recap & Additional feedback**

Most of the local review team members weren't present for this discussion.

# **7. Project Presentations and Request of Support Letters**

## **a. Mill Creek Beaver Habitat Enhancement – Bob Amrine**

The Lewis Conservation District is seeking a WCRRI grant and is asking the HWG for a letter of support.

The Mill Creek project would control 12 miles of Reed Canary Grass through planting willow and cedar. The project will not construct artificial "BDA" as they will rely on real beaver to do the work of dam building. They will mow RCG and use an allowable herbicide. They will plant alder on any bare soils. The project will create 1 FTE and put a veteran intern to work. Port Blakely is supportive. Stream Team volunteers will help with the planting. They are only asking \$138,000 to do the work.

Motion: Write a letter of support for this project. A quorum of members was present and all were in favor.

## **b. Schafer Creek Headwaters -- Anthony Waldrop**

The Grays Harbor Conservation District is seeking a WCRRI grant and is asking the HWG for a letter of support.

The project will restore 10 miles of headwater stream in implementation of the Satsop Wynoochee tributary restoration strategy. A WCRRI grant will allow for additional restoration over additional stream miles. The CD is partnering with Trout Unlimited to share project management duty. Their goal is to reduce the impact of climate change on stream warming. They will construct artificial BDAs as there are no beaver in the area. Most of the grant would go towards labor. The project total is 2,103,000.

Motion: Write a letter of support for this project. A quorum of members was present, with the involved parties abstaining from the vote. All were in favor.

## **8. Associated Program Updates**

### **a. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan – Capacity Building Discussion**

The ASRP RITs were asked to provide input on the capacity gaps of their organizations and how the ASRP could help meet them. Kirsten requested additional ideas from those present at the meeting.

Themes:

-Funding for consultant support to write grants for project sponsors. This would be especially useful for applying for federal grants, which take more special expertise and will be a lot of work. This will be critical as we attempt to take advantage of the infrastructure bill funds!

-Permit streamlining would help! Esp. streamlining/expediting Army Corp permitting! Set up process for interagency permit streamlining, at least for the Chehalis!

-Dedicated funding to support sponsor organizations

-Additional funding for filling data gaps

-Streamlining and coordinating landowner outreach

-Bring multiple-perspectives to early project development (e.g., invasive plants and fish biologists for efficient project development early on; inclusion of traditional knowledge/indigenous perspective....)

-Money specific to planting trees (with no buffer requirements)

-Financial support to increase number/time of administrative staff at organizations

-Funding for outreach jobs that goes to basin groups – Stream Teams, etc., that can help “lift all boats” basin-wide. General education about the importance of ecosystems and salmon, as well as project-development oriented outreach.

-Increase in planting crew capacity. One option could be a crew that is run by one organization, but for which MOUs are in place to share the crew with other organizations, depending on projects and need. -A “crew coordinator” would be a very important part of that role. Someone who can focus on retaining and recruiting new staff. Hiring this position based at one of the colleges (Grays Harbor or Centralia) would be a great way to increase local knowledge, training, and local jobs.

-In general, share positions that support multiple sponsor organizations.

### **b. Coast Salmon Partnership**

The partnership is advancing a “Strong Salmon Futures” campaign, and would like the group to identify 2 additional locations to place signs by completed restoration projects.

### **c. Chehalis Basin Partnership**

No time to discuss.

### **Other Business**

No time to discuss.