

**Chehalis Basin Lead Entity -- Habitat Work Group  
June 6, 2022 -- Minutes**

Zoom

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

<i>Ann Weckback, Lewis County Public Works</i> <i>Alex Gustafson, Trout Unlimited</i> <i>Anthony Waldrop, GH Cons. Dist.</i> <i>Ben Amidon, Chehalis Tribe DNR</i> <i>Bob Amrine, Lewis Cons. Dist.</i> <i>Bob Russel, Lewis County Citizen</i> <i>Brad Murphy, Thurston County</i> <i>Caprice Fasano, Quinault Indian Nation</i> <i>David Marsell, Pacific Conservation District</i> <i>Elena Fernandez, Thurston County</i> <i>Jacob Murray, Mason Cons. Dist.</i> <i>Jerilyn Walley, GH Cons. Dist.</i>	<i>Kathy Jacobson, CBLE Outreach Coordinator</i> <i>Keith, Mason Conservation District.</i> <i>Kelly Verd, Lewis Conservation District</i> <i>Kendall Barrameda, RCO</i> <i>Key McMurray, Grays Harbor Citizen</i> <i>Kirsten Harma, Lead Entity Coordinator</i> <i>Kitty Weismann, Capitol Land Trust</i> <i>Megan Tuttle, WDFW</i> <i>Miranda Plumb, US Fish and Wildlife Service</i> <i>Ned Pittman, Coast Salmon Partnership</i> <i>Paula Holroyde, Thurston County Citizen</i> <i>Sarah Watkins, Grays Harbor Citizen</i>
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**1. Welcome, Breakout Rooms**

**2. Minutes Approval**

Anthony motioned to approve March’s minutes, and Key seconded. The motion passed.

**3. Organizational Business**

**a. Membership Update**

The Habitat Work Group has 4 voting seats for “environment” representatives, “Representatives of a group whose mission is in local natural resources through education, recreation, habitat protection and restoration.” Alex and Garrett have decided to switch their roles between primary and alternate, with Alex taking the primary role and Garrett serving as back-up for when she can’t attend. Members didn’t have any issue with this arrangement. Kirsten proposed a similar arrangement for another one of the “environment” seats currently held by Jamie Glasgow, Wild Fish Conservancy. Jamie is frequently unable to attend meetings at their current meeting times. She proposes Alexa Brown serve in the primary role representing Grays Harbor Stream Team, and that the sea more generally be a “Stream Team” seat. This would allow her to continue to have a voting role on the HWG and serve as a better link in her role as a CBLE representative on the Coast Salmon Partnership Board.

Discussion: Concern was expressed that Alexa is now a Grays Harbor Conservation District employee so now partially represents this agency. Kirsten offered that the seat be generally for “Stream Team” and could be filled by another Stream Team rep in the future. Also, she can talk to Alexa and draft a clarifying statement that she will only represent Stream Team in this role.

Decision: Members will think more about this. Vote postponed until next meeting.

**b. Newaukum Subcommittee**

Alex provided an update on what is on the committee's agenda for the summer. The group is seeing the finish line with a report that will be available to the public. A group will soon be convening to develop a similar plan for the Humptulips. The QIN is funding plan development and ASRP will be funding landowner outreach in a small section of the basin. A work group will discuss this further.

### **c. Outreach Updates**

Kathy hosted a booth at an in-person Prairie Appreciation Day. She also co-hosted a World Fish Migration Day at the Chehalis Discovery Trail, along with Lewis Stream Team, but no one showed up. Next time they will think of activities that better attract families with small children. A "watershed heroes" story will soon come out about Dan and William at the Chehalis Tribe. August 14, we'll be hosting a swim event at the Twin Bridges park, titled "The Chehalis River – Experience it!" The event will celebrate getting the public out on to the water, whether it be by kayaking boating or swimming.

Mara Zimmerman presented on the Coast Salmon Foundation's Strong Salmon Futures campaign. There is a larger outreach plan for promoting salmon recovery and enhancement activities along the Washington Coast. A part of this is putting interpretive signs near completed project sites. Signs will be funded by the CSP. Over time, sponsors will be encouraged to incorporate costs into their own grants. Each sign will have a QR code that links to more information and a map of where the other signs are across the region. Mara would like volunteers to help identify some good project locations in the Chehalis.

Discussion: Bob A. noted that the issue in Lewis County is that a lot of projects are on private property and isolated. It would be good to showcase projects from the Willapa Hills trail, but would need to contact the Parks Department. Miranda is excited – this is like the Salmon Superhighway project she has been talking about for years! Kirsten noted that no one volunteered to be on the committee from Thurston County area. Mara said it's ok to start out with a few signs then expand.

### **d. Open Public Meetings Act**

According to Manual 18, the group's guiding document, as the "citizen's committee" we are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act. This is because Lead Entities are considered "sub-agencies of the state, because they operate through committees that play a mandatory role in the nomination and approval of salmon recovery projects. The OPMA now has a new rule that groups that met in person before the pandemic must now have a physical meeting space where the public may attend again. Groups are required to allow time for public comment before decisions are made.

Options: 1 - Have a physical location for all of our meetings where the public may attend, or 2- Pass a motion citing public health information as a reason to be all remote.

Discussion: The group recognizes that public health can't be an excuse forever and we'll have to find some public meeting spaces for months our group doesn't want to meet in person for travel and other reasons (Kirsten noted that earlier this group expressed interest in meeting all together quarterly). The Lewis CD office or Grays Harbor CD office could be good locations. The site could move around so that people in different parts of the basin may attend. There was discussion that if we don't make funding decisions, why do we even need to comply? (because Manual 19 says we're sub-agency).

Bob Russell made a motion to put out a temporary statement about health concerns, but have it be a temporary clause while we look for alternative meeting locations. Sarah seconded. There was general concurrence.

Kirsten will put on the website: “The Habitat Work Group will hold in-person/hybrid meetings so long as they can be held with “reasonable safety” regarding Covid 19 risk. Reasonable safety is defined as Low or Very Low in the relevant counties of Grays Harbor, Lewis, Thurston and Mason. In-person meeting locations where the public may attend will be advertised on this website at least 1 week prior to the meeting.”

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

##### **a. Report-out from NFWF webinar**

Attendees reported on what they learned. Applications are due by July so this is a short turn around! There are 4 programs, with 2 having just States and Tribes as eligible attendees. Other types of groups can be “sub-awardees.” Another program is a riparian planting program which is open to other types of groups. There is a strong likelihood that they will reconsider eligibility criteria in future grant rounds. Anthony is trying to determine if conservation districts, as “quasi-state” qualify for the “state” focused grants.

It was clear from the webinar that land acquisition won’t do well competitively unless attached to a larger landscape. Kitty has worked with NFWF before and describes them as helpful and encourages folks to reach out to staff with questions.

Participants will likely work to get “ducks in a row” for the next grant round. Lewis CD won’t be applying. Grays may apply for Lower Satsop Phase II.

##### **b. Report-out from Federal fish passage webinar**

Elena Fernandez reported out on learnings. Grants are available for fish passage through USFWS, NOAA, Federal DOT and the Army Corps. More money is available to states and tribes and local government. The Army Corps is willing to partner with another group on a project. Just submit a letter of qualification for your organization and they will work with you and provide funding. The Forest Service is awarded grants, but projects need to be close to their lands. We are still waiting on a few notices of funding – see grants.gov for announcements.

Miranda says that in the National Fish Passage Program the Department of Interior is taking a big role. It’s sounding like at the end of fall there will be a new announcement. Miranda will let us know. \$1.7 million has already been allocated to Western WA. There will be an additional grant round each of the next 4 years.

#### **5. Salmon Recovery Funding Board**

##### **a. Update from SRFB meeting June 1 and 2 including total funding allocated to the 2022 grant round**

Kirsten shared the SRFB's decision on allocation of the extra \$75 million allocated to the SRFB by the legislature this year. For the additional funding allocated to our *regular* grant round, we as Lead Entities can decide to use all of our funding for this grant round, or save it until the next grant round. For the pot of funding allocated to large projects (defined as over \$5 million), we will get enough funding for one large project as the Coast Region, and still need to decide as a region how to allocate this funding. The decision process will need to happen very quickly as we will need to have a project selected by October. This is a fast process and some extra work, but it means a significant investment in coastal watershed restoration. Expect to see an RFP come out soon.

### **b. SRFB Project Ranking**

The Local Review Team has completed their work and compiled a ranked project list for Habitat Work Group consideration. A quorum of members without a conflict of interest was present at the meeting. Kirsten presented the list to the group, noting that all projects scored over 76%.

Bob Russell provided public comment that he'd observed good hard work on spending public money. A lot of data was used, good questions asked, and an overall analytical approach to reviewing the projects.

Decision: Bob Russell made a motion to approve the ranked list. Anthony seconds. All in favor.

### **c. Planned Project Forecast List 2023-2024**

Kirsten presented the draft Planned Project Forecast List for 2023-2024 and reminded sponsors to provide updated information by the end of the week. This list will help us secure needed funding for future years.

## **6. Associated Program Updates**

### **a. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan**

The ASRP RITs were asked to provide input on the capacity gaps of their organizations and how the ASRP could help meet them. The Habitat Work Group also briefly provided input on this topic at their last meeting. Kirsten is working with Joey at WDFW to flesh out next steps for identifying and filling gaps.

Kirsten put out a brief poll with two questions. 1) has your organization undergone strategic planning relative to its involvement in the Chehalis? 2) if all of your current proposed projects were funded, could you complete them?

Survey results weren't recorded for the purpose of the minutes. Roughly 2/3s of respondents replied "yes" to #1 and 1/3 replied "no" to #2.

### **b. Regional Implementation Team Updates**

There is an upcoming meeting next Thursday. The July meeting will be a site visit day. Currently, the project portfolio is nice and diverse. \$14 million has already been allocated. Merri Martz will help administratively to move things along until a new ASRP implementation manager is in place.

### **c. Coast Salmon Partnership**

Final WCRRRI applications are due June 9. We won't know how many projects are funded until next summer when the legislative budget comes out.

The next Coast Salmon Partnership meeting will include guest speaker Ben Donatelli from RCO to talk about the carbon credits program. Greg and Kitty expressed interest in attending.

#### **d. Chehalis Basin Partnership**

No updates

#### **Other Business**

Alex shared her interest in working on Vance Creek and McDonald Creek. She recently toured the area with Megan Tuttle, who continues to hear interest in further restoration by Jarred. Key and Greg were interested in discussing this system. Ducks Unlimited came up with a conceptual plan for parts of Newman Creek, in the lower part of Vance Creek. Fish Passage is the priority limiting factor in this system. The railroad crossings are still significant barriers. Megan asked if anyone has a new contact person with the railroads. Kevin Dahl was mentioned. Kirsten asked why the sudden renewed interest in this degraded system with constraints like the railroad when there are so many other priorities for restoration in the basin. Megan said it's a surprisingly productive system, with 16 Coho redds observed in just a quarter mile! Chinook are trying to get to the lower part of the system. Alex will send an e-mail to interested parties.