

Habitat Work Group, Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

MINUTES

July 10, 2023

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

Zoom Meeting

<i>Aimee Richardson - Creekside Conservancy</i>	<i>Jan Robinson - Chehalis R. Basin Land Trust</i>
<i>Alex Gustafson - Trout Unlimited</i>	<i>Jacob Murray - Mason Conservation Dist.</i>
<i>Ann Weckback - Lewis County Public Works</i>	<i>Kelly Verd - Lewis Conservation Dist.</i>
<i>Ben Amidon - Chehalis Tribe Restoration</i>	<i>Key McMurry – Citizen Rep.</i>
<i>Bill Teitzel - Port of Chehalis</i>	<i>Kim Figlar-Barnes - WDFW</i>
<i>Bob Russell - Lewis County Citizen</i>	<i>Kirsten Harma - Lead Entity Coordinator</i>
<i>Brett DeMond – CBFTF/ Streamworks</i>	<i>Mara Healy - Thurston Conserv. Dist.</i>
<i>Caprice Fasano - Quinault Tribe DNR</i>	<i>Martin McCallum - Thurston County Citizen</i>
<i>Chris Volmert - Lewis Conservation District</i>	<i>Miranda Plumb - USFWS</i>
<i>Cindy Wilson - Thurston Co Citizen</i>	<i>Ned Pittman - Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn</i>
<i>Drew Mealar - ASRP Implementation</i>	<i>Sarah Watkins - Grays Harbor Citizen Rep</i>
<i>Farley Youckton - Chehalis Tribe Water Qual</i>	<i>Sasha Medlen - RCO</i>
<i>Grace Adams - Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn</i>	<i>Tom Kollasch - GHCD/Willapa Bay LE</i>
<i>Greg Green - Ducks Unlimited</i>	<i>Victoria Knorr - ASRP Program Manager</i>

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

2. **Minutes Approval**

No minutes to be approved this month - these will be approved next month.

3. **Organizational Business**

1. **Outreach Contract Work Plan 23-25**

Kirsten led a discussion on the details of expanding the HWG’s Outreach Coordinator contract for 2023-2025. She shared several different types of outreach relevant to the LE’s scope of work, (Landowner outreach; community education on local projects; community environmental education; outreach to community leaders and elected officials) and the present roles of various LE members and partners in carrying out that outreach. From that summary, she asked members to consider which areas of outreach could use the added bandwidth of an expanded LE Outreach Coordinator scope.

Suggestions made for increased coordinator scope include: outreach to landowners specifically about stream health; supporting Lewis County Stream Team development; increased emphasis on childhood education; mentoring citizens and groups who are or want to be involved in LE work; coordination and collaboration of outreach work across various entities and organizations within the LE; increased language accessibility and/or liaison work with various cultural groups.

Guidance/Decision

With the above suggestions, Ben Amidon facilitated a vote to approve an expanded outreach contract for the coming year for Kathy Jacobson, from 15k to 20k. Bob Russell moved to do so, and the motion was seconded by Key McMurray. The vote passed unanimously.

2. PWR Plans

i. Introducing the final Newaukum Plan

Kirsten presented the newly completed Newaukum Pilot Watershed Plan (PWR) to the group, and requested that members review the plan more fully before the next meeting. She then walked through the document, sharing the basic structure and contents of the document. At the following meeting, the group will vote to officially adopt the document and plan.

ii. Discussion on Next Subwatershed to focus on

Ned Pittman discussed the next prioritized watersheds under consideration: the Humptulips River and Cloquallum Creek. He first discussed relevant attributes of the Humptulips watershed, which is roughly 75% forestland, some of which is National Forest Service land. He then discussed the Cloquallum, which also includes Wildcat Creek, and is about 45% designated forestland. He noted that the Cloquallum has more private ownership, more infrastructure, and is more incised, which would make it more of a challenge to work in. Both the Humptulips and the Cloquallum watersheds have a large number of existing fish passage barriers. Both watersheds contain Fall Chum and Chinook, Winter Steelhead, Coho, Rainbow and Cutthroat Trout, while the Humptulips also have Summer Steelhead and possibly Bull Trout. Ned noted that the Humptulips contains over 160 stream miles of Coho habitat, whereas the Cloquallum contains about 70 stream miles. Ned noted as well that the Quinault Nation is presently also putting together a plan for work on the Humptulips. While there is active work by various members of the HWG in the Cloquallum funded through ASRP, the area doesn't currently have any such plan in process.

After discussion, the group as a whole gravitated toward taking on the Cloquallum watershed as the next priority watershed. This is for several reasons, among which are: the Humptulips currently has investment and funding for a plan already in progress; the Cloquallum has a number of different efforts that could use the coordination provided by a plan; and the complications of working with a high number of private landowners on the Cloquallum would be well served by the forethought afforded by such a coordinated plan.

4. Conceptual Project Idea – Discussion

Bob Russell gave a presentation to the group, seeking their advice for getting a conceptual project off the ground. He shared that he would like to coordinate restoration and acquisition of natural areas in the lower reaches of Coal Creek and Salzer Creek, where they enter the Chehalis River, at the boundary between Chehalis and Centralia. He shared some specific ideas and insights into the possibilities for restoration work on different properties, and then asked the group for direction on next steps, and on developing a scope for this work.

Several entities from the group offered insight and guidance, offering both suggestions for execution of specific projects, as well as broader guidance for how to structure the coordination of this project and develop its scope.

Next steps that coalesced from the conversation included seeking conservation-oriented land-ownership partners, as well as hosting a beginning with a broad meeting of stakeholders within the project area to begin forming a clear project vision.

5. Climate Resiliency Tool

1. Progress & Discussion

Grace Adams presented an update on the progress of the Climate Adaptation Framework being built by the Coast Salmon Partnership. She described their progress in developing phase II of the project, which is working to identify the best opportunities to improve climate resilience of salmon in their habitat by developing a Climate Resilience Index (CRI). Through quantifying climate resilience at a local level, the index is intended to identify effective actions to maintain or improve that resilience. Grace shared a timeline for development of this tool, as well as for updates the HWG can expect in the coming months.

Briefly, Grace shared that the Climate Resilience Index is based on an area's: exposure (types of changes occurring due to climate change), sensitivity (the landscape characteristics that influence the impact of an area's exposure), and adaptability (the social adaptability of an area's human systems to climate change).

She also shared maps she has developed that illustrate the relevant characteristics of land use and land ownership throughout the area of the Coast Salmon Partnership.

In describing the intended application of the CRI, Grace shared that the tool would serve to describe differences in resilience across watersheds, as well as to identify the best kinds of actions to maintain and improve that resilience. She then walked through a couple examples of applying the tool to theoretical watersheds.

Throughout the presentation, Grace invited and received input on the alignment of her products with on-the-ground knowledge from LE entities, and she continues to invite that input going forward.

Finally, Grace asked sponsors to reach out to her with photos or anecdotes of any projects that have exhibited climate-driven impacts, such as low summer flows or high winter flows.

6. Associated Programs Updates

1. Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Kirsten shared that all SRFB projects are submitted and cleared. She also noted that Alex Gustafson withdrew the Trout Unlimited (TU) project, as the project was fully funded by the ASRP. As this project was the first alternate from the SRFB round, the next alternate project would receive funding if any other projects drop out or receive other funding.

Kirsten shared that the Board will be meeting in September, and among other topics will be deciding on riparian grant guidelines. Anyone with relevant input should reach out to either Kirsten or Nick Norton.

Also, Kirsten noted that thus far, the board has determined that SRFB match requirements will be adjusted, but will not be eliminated.

2. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

Drew Meador shared that there will be no July RIT meeting, and the next meeting will be in August. He also shared that in addition to the TU Dry Bed Creek project, the ASRP also approved match funding for the Mill Creek RM 4.5 project. The ASRP also funded an Elodea survey and treatment project on the lower Chehalis, and a lower Newaukum (RM 8-9) planning, restoration and easement project.

Anthony Waldrop shared that there is a plant grow-out project for ASRP-sponsored projects. These free plants will be made available first to ASRP projects. It is anticipated, however, that extra plants will be available to other projects. At first, these will be made available to non-ASRP projects in long- and medium-term ASRP priority areas. If there are still plants available after that distribution, these plants will be made available more broadly. Reach out to Anthony if you are interested in these plants for this winter or next winter.

3. Coast Salmon Partnership

Ned Pittman shared that the next CSP meeting will take place July 27th, with an in-person meeting at the port building. John Winkowski (WDFW) will be presenting on Chehalis Basin stream temperatures, as well as on eDNA work working to determine the extent (current and future) of invasive bass throughout the basin. Anyone with an interest in this topic is encouraged to attend!

Finally, Kirsten shared that the next HWG meeting will return to a hybrid meeting format at the Chehalis Tribe Community Center. **She also shared that the HWG will need a stand-in facilitator for its September and October meetings, as she will be out on vacation for both of those meetings.**