

# Habitat Work Group, Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

## MINTUTES

August 7, 2023

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

Chehalis Tribe Community Center: 461 Secena Road, Oakville, WA

<i>Aimee Richardson - Creekside Conservancy</i> <i>Alex Gustafson - Trout Ultd</i> <i>Ann Weckback - Lewis County Public Works</i> <i>Ben Amidon - Chehalis Tribe Restoration</i> <i>Brad Murphy - Thurston County Planning</i> <i>Brett DeMond - CBFTF Streamworks</i> <i>Caprice Fasano - Quinault Tribe DNR</i> <i>Chris Volmert - Lewis Conservation Dist</i> <i>Drew Mealor - ASRP Implementation</i> <i>Jacob Murray - Mason Conservation Dist</i> <i>Kathy Jacobsen - LE Outreach Coordinator</i>	<i>Kelly Verd - Lewis Conservation Dist.</i> <i>Karen Adams – WDFW Habitat Bio.</i> <i>Kendall Barrameda – RCO Grant Manager</i> <i>Key McMurry - Pacific County LE</i> <i>Kim Figlar-Barnes - WDFW</i> <i>Kirsten Harma - Lead Entity Coordinator</i> <i>Luc Lamarche - Beaver Craftworks, LLC</i> <i>Meghan Tuttle - WDFW</i> <i>Miranda Plumb - USFWS</i> <i>Ned Pittman - Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn</i> <i>Sasha Medlen – RCO Grant Manager</i> <i>Tara Livingood-Schott - Chehalis Tribe F&amp;W</i>
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### 1. Welcome & Introductions

A quorum of voting members was present for this meeting.

### 2. Minutes Approval

Apart from a name correction, no changes were requested for either June or July's minutes. Megan Tuttle moved to approve them, a motion which Kelly Verd seconded. A vote on the motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Organizational Business

#### a. Outreach Updates

Kathy Jacobson shared that she and Lauren, an intern with Kirsten Harma, staffed a table at the Chehalis Fest. She noted that she had some robust conversations with local citizens, particularly on questions on water usage and the proposed dam above Pe Ell.

Kathy also shared that both Lake Sylvia Days (Sept 10) and the Onalaska Apple Harvest Festival (Oct 6-8) are coming up, and that she will be tabling for the Lead Entity at those events.

Kirsten Harma shared that she and Lee First spoke with the Chronicle this month, which led to an article on low river flows in the basin.

Kirsten shared that Mara Zimmerman of the Coast Salmon Partnership (CSP) is encouraging basin project sponsors to include Strong Salmon Future signage in their grant requests. These signs the CSP is producing can be funded for \$200, and including them as a line item in project budgets would help this public signage to become a standard part of basin projects.

**b. Newaukum Prioritized Watershed Plan Adoption**

Kirsten led the group in a discussion followed by a vote to formally support the Newaukum River Headwaters Prioritized Restoration Plan as a guiding document for the HWG, adopting it as a part of the Lead Entity's existing Strategy.

After a short group conversation about the plan,

**Action:** Key McMurray moved to support the plan as a group, and to include it in the LE Strategy. Jacob McMurray seconded this motion, and a vote to approve the motion was passed unanimously.

Kirsten also shared that on Friday, August 18th, a group from the HWG will be taking a field trip to Newaukum Lakes, the headwaters of the South Fork Newaukum. She extended the invite to the group as a whole.

**c. Cloquallum Prioritized Watershed Restoration (PWR)**

Kirsten shared that since the July meeting, a group of members has met regarding the development of a new pilot watershed group - which will likely focus on the Cloquallum. An invitation will be forthcoming for anyone who is interested in participating in the developing subcommittee.

Caprice shared that the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) has been working with Natural Systems Design (NSD) on a watershed restoration plan for the Humptulips watershed. While originally focused on Rayonier lands and implementing construction there, funding deadlines derailed these plans. QIN will instead carry out wider GIS work, expand their focus to all anadromous streams in the Humptulips, and design three projects throughout the basin.

Caprice also shared that a stakeholder workgroup for this plan is coming up, and will reach out to members about this directly.

**4. Salmon Recovery Funding Board**

**a. 2023 SRFB project list**

Kirsten shared that at the most recent CSP meeting, the partnership reviewed and voted on the 2023 SRFB project lists. While it was anticipated that there would be no extra funding to redistribute at the meeting, the Quinault LE shared it had decided not to go forward with a \$189,000 project. As a result, this funding became available for redistribution among the other LEs, resulting in a lengthy discussion. Ultimately, after discussing many options including the funding of some Chehalis LE projects, the partnership decided to allocate all of the available funding to partially fund a restoration and passage project on Patton Creek in the Willapa Basin. In conversation among the CSP, it became apparent that among the possible reallocations, the Patton Creek project demonstrated uniquely strong potential for benefit to salmon in the Willapa headwaters.

After this update, Kendall Barrameda then led the HWG in a discussion involving further extra funding that recently became available within the Chehalis LE's project list. A reassessment of the bid for geotechnical work on the Chenois Creek project resulted in \$28,193 being available for redistribution. Kirsten shared a breakdown of proposed use of this funding. In light of the above conversation at the CSP, she suggested that after the Chehalis LE allocates \$3,130 of that available funding to top off its own nearly-funded Lucas Creek Passage project, they then reallocate the remaining \$25,063 to the Willapa LE's Patton Creek project. Doing so would bring the Patton Creek project much closer to its full funding (\$221,014 of \$251,500).

**Action:** Megan Tuttle moved to approve this reallocation of funding from the Chenois Creek project to both the Chehalis LE's Lucas Creek Passage project as well as the Willapa LE's Patton Creek project. Key McMurray seconded this motion, and a vote on the motion passed unanimously.

Key shared her appreciation for the group's participation in the partnership of the CSP, noting that the region is unique in this cooperation.

#### b. Policy Updates

Kirsten shared that the upcoming SRFB meeting will be September 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, and the group is looking for input on new policies.

First, the SRFB has received statewide funding that is allocated for riparian restoration, but the board felt that distribution through the regular grant round would lead to too much funding given to areas that may have a hard time using the full amount for riparian work. As such, the options they presented are:

1. Distribute a flat \$250,000 in riparian funding to each LE, and then have a statewide competition for the remaining funds, or
2. Distribute the full riparian funding available through a statewide competition.

Kirsten asked the group for input as to whether the group felt it could readily use \$250K for riparian-specific work or acquisitions, or whether they might instead recommend Option 2.

Jacob noted that with Option 1, local LE funds could be used for stewardship and assessment projects. This would not be the case for the statewide competition.

Kirsten also noted that the Conservation Commission received statewide riparian funding as well, and that they will have a rolling application process. With a quicker turnaround than the upcoming competitive SRFB riparian funding, it may be a consideration that most of the riparian projects in the wings will seek funding from the streamlined Conservation Commission funding. This may leave fewer projects for riparian SRFB funding. After some discussion, however, the group felt there was enough potential for riparian work across the basin that the \$250K would be spent without a problem.

It was noted as well that riparian projects haven't been prominent in SRFB projects up to this point, largely because they haven't competed well against other types of projects. With dedicated funding, it is likely these projects would come forward.

**Action:** After group discussion, it was decided that the group would submit a letter to RCO in support of Option 1.

Second, Kirsten shared that she is working with other LE coordinators to put together a letter to ask the SRFB to consider a no-match policy: an option which was on the table, but is currently no longer in consideration. They will be showing examples and reasons that match is no longer a relevant requirement, and that it serves as a barrier to project efficiency and implementability.

Lastly, Kirsten shared the passing of HB 1775 in the last legislative session, which is a state policy that clarified previous bills regarding landowner and sponsor liability exemptions: to legally qualify for such exemptions, projects were previously required to be on a "Habitat Work Schedule". A change in language clarified that projects must be on a "Lead Entity List" to qualify. The bill also added sponsor exemptions for Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups. Many people would like to see all project sponsor groups added to this exemption, but this policy is a good place to start.

#### 5. WDFW Fish Data-Sharing for Salmon Grant Apps.

Kim Figlar-Barnes shared that she and Curt Holt were approached to help with fish distribution data for basin projects. They have been able to do so on a case-by-case basis, and hope by this winter to develop a resource for distribution to project sponsors in the basin. This will likely be a table listing rivers and streams and salmonids present in those streams. For more up-to-date or specific data, however, Kim continues to be available directly on a case-by-case basis. With at least a couple weeks'

notice, she can pull relevant information from WDFW databases and get back to sponsors. For the Newaukum basin, sponsors should contact Lea Ronne (WDFW).

## **6. Summer Construction Progress**

Brett DeMonde shared that Camp Creek is going into construction next week, and should be complete in a few weeks. Wildcat is nearly finished, and is just waiting on asphaltting. The Elma-Hickman bridge is going in currently, after which they will move to the Summit Road site.

Drew Mealor shared that Riverbend Ranch is currently working on the fish passage component, with the bulk of the project going into construction next summer.

Alex Gustafson shared that the Schaefer Creek (RM 8-9) project crew has been working on its brush-bundles, and the project just completed an Army Corps permit. Some work may take place this summer, but most of the project will start next summer.

## **7. Federal Funding Workshop**

Kirsten shared that she, Anthony Waldrop, and Office of the Chehalis Basin (OCB) staff are working together to put together an in-person federal funding workshop in the fall for area entities and sponsors. The workshop's goal is to develop large bundles of projects from throughout the basin that would be a good match for upcoming large federal funding grants.

## **8. Associated Programs Updates –**

### **a. Coast Salmon Partnership**

Ned shared that the next implementation meeting will be taking place August 22nd from 1-3PM. This year, the group has been looking at regulations and how they align with the Washington Coastal Sustainable Salmon Plan. He also shared that the Washington Coast Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WCRRI) will have its next project application intake in 2024, and that he is updating the grant guidelines manual. The WCRRI RFP will come out in January.

The group then discussed the status of a few projects federally-funded through the “Culvert AOP” DOT program within the basin.

### **b. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan**

Drew Mealor shared that the next RIT meeting will be on August 17th. There will be at least one project up for a vote, and this will also be the first meeting of this new biennium. There is now new funding along with some rollover, and so about \$25 million will be available for the next two years.

He also shared that the ASRP will be meeting with other area organizations to fund an invasive species coordinator position for the basin, and will also be hiring technical reviewers. Drew noted that they need a lot of applicants for these reviewer positions, as they need to cover local and technical expertise, and technical reviewers can't review their own projects.

Also, he shared that the ASRP is starting an effort to find what other forms of data need to be collected across the basin, and how to store and shepherd that information to different groups. This effort will be similar to the Salmon Recovery Portal (SRP), but with a focus toward basin data and information. Drew then opened up a conversation about use of the SRP, and asked how it or a similar database could be used as a broader resource for project, landowner, and sponsor information. Sponsors responded that they don't use SRP or another platform to store project concepts primarily because of lack of time. Lewis CD stores ideas on a piece of paper on the wall. Karen uses One Note to document ideas for properties. Some feel that too much time passes between landowner interest and possible funding, so they just don't bother recording interest.

The group discussed the possibility of setting aside Regional Implementation Team time to compile and organize this kind of information.

Finally, he also directed the group to a set of summaries of various ASRP-associated studies and reports. It is available here <https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/publications/> under Technical Studies, at the end of the “Aquatic Species & Wildlife Studies” heading. Victoria will provide the group with more details about these studies at a subsequent HWG meeting.

#### **9. Other Business**

Luc Lamarche of Beaver Craftworks updated the group on his beaver coexistence work. He shared that he’s been in conversation with various national working groups through the Beaver Institute. Some of what they have discussed includes the development of locally-relevant innovations and structures, and building consistent and holistic procedures for implementing and phasing out structures as needed.

Luc is working to compile these conversations into a more formal presentation, which can be expected at an upcoming meeting.

#### **10. Closing**

Kirsten reminded the group that she will be on vacation during the next two meetings. Ben Amidon and Key McMurray will be standing in for her, and anyone with agenda items for these meetings should reach out to Key or Ben.