

**Chehalis Basin Lead Entity**  
**Habitat Work Group Meeting Minutes**  
**November 9, 2012**

The November 9, 2012 meeting of the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity was held at the Grays Harbor County Forestry Building in Montesano. The Habitat Work Group toured a 2011 SRFB project completed in September at McDonald Creek in Elma from 9:30-10:30. Jarred Figlar-Barnes and Lonnie Crumley led the site visit. Chair Bob Amrine called the meeting to order at 10:50 a.m. in the Forestry Building. In attendance were:

Ann Weckback, Lewis Co. Public Works	Bob Amrine, Lewis Conservation District
Bob Burkle, WDFW	Bruce Treichler, Citizen
Caprice Fasano, Quinault Indian Nation	Eric Delvin, The Nature Conservancy
Janel Bistrika, Chehalis Basin Partnership	Janet Strong, Chehalis River Basin Land Trust
Kat Moore, RCO	Mark Swartout, Thurston County
Lonnie Crumley, Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force	Miranda Plumb, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Miles Batchelder, WCSSP	

**Site Visit of 2011 SRFB Project: McDonald Creek Restoration in Elma:**

The group visited a mostly completed 2011 SRFB Project at McDonald Creek in Elma. Jarred Figlar-Barnes and Lonnie Crumley led the site visit. In September 2012, two undersized shotgun culverts were removed and replaced with a 40 ft long concrete slab bridge. Large woody debris and root wads were installed just downstream of the bridge. Large rock armoring was also done near the abutments of the bridge to protect it during high flows. In flooding conditions, water moves through that area quite rapidly. A tree planting will be completed late winter/early spring 2013 with volunteers from the Grays Harbor Stream Team and Elma High School. The group was curious about options for the landowner to keep cows out and away from the stream. The landowner keeps his cows on the property part-time. The landowner had a meeting with NRCS to learn about some of the programs and options but has yet to make a commitment.

For more information about the McDonald Creek Restoration Project contact Jarred Figlar-Barnes, Lonnie Crumley, or Janel Bistrika.

## Update on Derelict Gear Removal Project:

Eric Delvin with the Nature Conservancy updated the group on the Grays Harbor/Lower Chehalis River Derelict Gear Removal Project. They are in year two of the pilot project. A partnership formed through funding from NOAA Marine Debris Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chehalis Basin Fisheries Restoration Program, Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Year 1 consisted of consultation and data management. Year 2 consisted of derelict gear surveys, dive removals, and data collection. Removal operations coordinated through TNC, QIN and The Grays Harbor Marine Resources Committee (MRC).

Derelict fishing gear can cause many problems for a variety of fish and aquatic life. In Grays Harbor, years of fishing and no removal program has led to an accumulation of derelict gear. Active fishing nets become derelict gear by unseen underwater obstructions, drifting wood debris, accidental vessel strikes, and vandalism and sabotage. Derelict fishing gear results in uncontrolled and unreported catch, and can cause more harm to the environment and its inhabitants than legally active gillnets.

In 2011, a survey vessel utilized underwater camera and grapple for target identification. Coordinates were then recorded and a marker buoy was attached. A grapple was used to snag target, then recovered with a gillnet drum. Net characteristics and observed impacts were recorded. The results of the 2011 survey and removal identified 35 derelict gear targets. In 9 days of removal work, 23 nets were removed, and 10 were not able to be removed with the grapple. Five white sturgeon were found in 1 net alone, with a projected annual mortality for white sturgeon to be 143. Approximately .46 acres of net were removed, covering .45 acres of riverbed, weighing approximately 1,800 lbs. Gear was salvaged if conditions allowed, otherwise it was disposed of. Some limitations from the 2011 sampling and removal work included: grappling method did not ensure complete removal of nets encountered; unable to disentangle nets from snag; standard characteristics of nets difficult to describe without observing net underwater; and video and grapple survey methods cover limited area of defined work site.

For 2012 survey and recovery, the TNC, QIN and NRC separated Grays Harbor into six distinct sub-area to facilitate a multi-year, systematic approach to derelict fishing gear removals throughout the Grays Harbor/lower Chehalis River. Utilization of sidescan sonar surveys for derelict net targets will ensure full coverage of the entire fishing grounds. Diver investigation and removal of net targets ensures full recovery of gear item and complete description of net characteristics. 2012 surveys and removals are focused on: Sub-area 1: North Channel from Blue Slough to Hoquiam River; Sub-area 2: N. Channel from Hoquiam River to ~3.5km west of Bowerman Airport; Sub-area 3: South Channel.

Combined efforts from 2011 and 2012: 49 gillnets were removed (38 NWSF/NRC). 5 white sturgeon, 1 double-crested cormorant (mortal entanglements) found in nets. 0.79 acres of

net removed and 0.77 acres of habitat recovered. The nets weighed approximately 2,200 lbs. The projected annual mortality: 143 sturgeon, 26 cormorants.

Next steps for the project include: efforts underway for further funding opportunities; complete removal efforts of remaining 40 targets in sub-areas 1 and 2; continue sonar surveys and dive removals in sub-areas 4, 5 and 6; encourage best management practices to minimize accumulation; education and outreach to user groups of Chehalis River and Grays Harbor.

Another project that dovetailed from the Grays Harbor Derelict Fishing Gear Removal project started in 2012 is the Derelict Crab Pot Removal Project on the outer coast. Derelict crab pots continue to catch and kill Dungeness crab until disabled or removed. Crab lines/floats pose significant problems, including a hazard to navigation. They are a major snag hazard for troll fishers. Entanglement of marine mammals is another concern. QIN defined survey area with heavy accumulation: Moclips – Pt. Grenville. 2 days of sidescan sonar surveys, 255 targets total (sonar and visual), 3 days of dive removals (SCUBA & QIN vessel), 41 lines removed, 2 days of pump removals (QIN vessel), 18 pots removed.

Specific project objectives are to: Survey and remove derelict crab pots and other derelict gear from four 1 square mile areas off the Washington coast; Estimate ecological impact, density, and extent of derelict crab pots on the Washington coast; Survey and remove derelict fishing gear in the lower Chehalis River and Grays Harbor Estuary; Support and coordinate marine debris removal from beaches; and Develop and test a derelict pot reporting and recovery program with Quinault Tribal Fisheries.

### **WCSSP Updates:**

Miles Batchelder updated the group on the Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership (WCSSP). Their regional plan (Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Plan) is set to be completed by June 30, 2013. They have a second revised version out for public comment so if you have any feedback you can visit the draft plan on their website or contact Miles for more information. WCSSP is working on compiling a list of projects for the Coast region and would like to see any new proposed projects on the Grays Harbor/Chehalis Basin conceptual list be discussed at an upcoming meeting. Miles would also like the Habitat Work Group to review the list Miles currently has at an upcoming meeting to make sure there are no projects missing from his list.

Miles briefly discussed a proposal to update the Habitat Work Schedule (HWS) and “normalize” the data with the rest of the coast Lead Entities. Miles will have a draft Scope of

Work for the HWG to review at their next meeting and will have a further discussion about what this project will entail.

**Discussion of Lead Entity Coordinator Transition:**

The group discussed the departure of Lee Napier as the Lead Entity Coordinator for Grays Harbor/Chehalis Basin Lead Entity. Grays Harbor County is Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery and Lead Agency for Watershed Planning. There was a discussion that the groups hopes Grays Harbor County will remain as the Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery and with that they would likely need to keep a Lead Entity Coordinator. The group was supportive of Janel Bistrika, taking over the duties of the Lead Entity Coordinator. The Habitat Work Group will send a letter to the Grays Harbor County Commissioners thanking them for their involvement as Lead Entity and asking that they remain as the Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery.

An update on this topic will also be discussed at December meeting.

**December 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting Agenda:**

- Review a WCSSP Project List from Miles
- Review Scope of Work on updating and normalizing the data in HWS-from Miles
- Review Draft 2013 SRFB Schedule
- Discussion of Habitat Work Schedule Projects and Future Directions
- Updates/Discussion from Project Sponsors on 2013 projects

**The meeting concluded at 12:10 p.m.**