

Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary

APRIL 24, 1998

Introduction

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dick Nichols. Chairman Nichols referred to a letter from Mayor Penberth (Town of Pe Ell) which stated –

Presentations of specific issues such as Pe Ell's moratoria or Chehalis' and Centralia's TMDL experiences should be based on a sound understanding of past and present conditions on the Chehalis. It is essential that this contextual information be presented first so that all the members of the Partnership have the benefit of the same background technical information. This will allow more informed discussion of the specific issues to be highlighted in subsequent meetings, and will help ensure that the Partnership stays focused.

One of the purposes of today's meeting is to provide an overview of issues in the watershed. (Presentation by Brian Walsh, Department of Ecology)

I. Intergovernmental Agreement

Chairman Nichols provided two variations of the draft Intergovernmental Agreement – a regular version and one in bill form. Elizabeth Petrich, an attorney with Thurston County Prosecutor's Office, revised draft agreement in order to make it consistent with ESHB 2514 (the recently enacted watershed planning grant bill). Chairman Nichols asked the group to provide comments to Brian Walsh by May 8. The document will then be revised and decided at the next Chehalis Basin Partnership meeting on May 22. Brian offered to meet with the Quinault Indian Nation and cities in the Chehalis Basin to provide them the opportunity to be a part of the partnership.

II. Update on Watershed Management Grants

Laura Lowe (Watershed Grants Administrator, Department of Ecology) made a presentation on the ESHB 2514 Watershed Grant Program. As Laura explained, the grant money, which was applied for under last year's bill (SHB 2054), expired with the court ruling on the Governor's veto. The grant for this year's program requires a new application. Ecology has scheduled a series of workshops to assist applicants, including a session in Lacey on May 4. The legislature has provided Ecology with \$3.9 - \$1.4 million to be awarded by June 30. Three types of grants are available: 1) organizing grants (up to \$75,000 for a multi-WRIA¹ management area); 2) watershed assessment grants (up to \$200,000 per WRIA); and 3) watershed planning grants (up to \$250,000 per WRIA). Laura explained that the program is voluntary with a local process. However, grant recipients must follow established criteria in the bill. There are 3 eligibility requirements that will be used to evaluate applications –

- wide range of interests represented
- demonstrated need for state dollars
- readiness to proceed

¹ WRIA is Water Resource Inventory Area. The Chehalis watershed consists of 2 WRIA's – WRIA 22 & 23

Following Laura's presentation, there was some discussion of whether the group should pursue applying for the grant. Joe De La Cruz (Quinalt Indian Nation) made a strong statement about the need do watershed planning in the Chehalis. Chairman Nichols stated his concern about the group's readiness. He also questioned the value in "chasing grant dollars." Dr. Sodhi (Chehalis Tribe) stated his view that the purpose of the Chehalis Basin Partnership was broader than what 2514 calls for. He expressed concern that the grant program might prove too limiting. Brian Walsh agreed to send copies of the bill which the Governor signed to all on the mailing list. Laura urged people to call her (360/407-7255) if they have further questions.

III. Next Steps

Marc Duboiski (Lewis County) explored two options in his presentation on "Next Steps". One would be continuing with the existing partnership. Marc touched on the questions of organization, mission, funding, future outcome, areas to coordinate with, and when to act. This would maintain the status quo, although it would increase awareness of activities in the basin. By pursuing the 2514 grant, the Chehalis Basin Partnership could qualify for up to \$975,000 to address water quantity, quality and habitat issues. The Partnership would embark on a process of issue identification, assessment, planning, prioritization, and implementation under this scenario.

Following Marc's presentation, there was discussion about when steps need to be taken for the grant application. Marc agreed to prepare the new grant application, borrowing from last year's. There was interest expressed in pursuing the initial \$75,000 available for organizing. Chairman Nichols requested that Marc prepare a timeline showing specific decision points in the process. Brian will mail this out along with the draft application before the next meeting. Jim Walls (Columbia-Pacific RC&D) suggested linking the watershed grant application with the new salmon habitat bill 2496 to comply with the habitat component of 2514. He offered to help Marc accomplish this.

Dr. Sodhi provided some clarification to attendees on the role of Lewis County as the lead agency.

IV. Basin Overview

Brian Walsh presented a 40-minute slide program which highlighted the history, geography, culture, and environmental concerns of the Chehalis Basin. This was followed by questions.

V. Public Comment

Margaret Raider (Chehalis River Council) recommended consideration be given to the Partnership's decision-making process, i.e. voting or consensus.

VI. Wrap-Up/ Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for May 22 at 9:00 AM at the Chehalis Indian Reservation.