



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – March 26, 1999

Introduction

Mayor Spahr welcomed everyone back to the Chehalis Tribal Center after the February meeting. He thanked Dr. Sodhi for chairing that meeting in his absence, and he noted that the group had covered a number of topics. In his introduction, Mayor Spahr thanked Senator Swecker for coming to the Partnership meeting during the session to provide the group with an update on this year's legislation on salmon and watersheds.

I. Legislative Update

Senator Swecker reported on current salmon legislation. He acknowledged that some things were needed, for example improvements to water rights transfers. However, he did not see the need for sweeping statewide approaches such as the Governor's proposal to regulate "exempt wells" (those which produce less than 5,000 gallons per day). He agreed that instream flows need to be set, and that watershed groups are the best place for those decisions to be made. Returning water to the stream is one of the goals. One of the most important tools for doing so is the *Trust Water Rights* program, according to the Senator. (This is a voluntary program which enables senior water rights to be placed in a trust which can be used to support instream flows.)



Native Pond Lilly (*Nuphar polysepalum*)

The Senator asserted that "little is to be gained" by eliminating salmon harvest. He stated that the real issue is temperature. Other factors which he cited include over-wintering habitat, predators, and ocean conditions. Jeff Wetzel (City of Hoquiam) asked about opportunities to control predators. Senator Swecker responded by giving an example on the Columbia River where troops were sent to control nesting terns. "We need to be listening to people on the rivers." He stated that the tribes should be involved as they have perhaps the best technical expertise. Dr. Sodhi wondered if the so-called 5,000 gallon per day exemption was too generous for a single residence. The Senator agreed that through conservation, reuse, and storage, homes could use far less. "Policy should follow science." Margaret Rader asked, "What is the implication for the Chehalis where we don't have (ESA) listings?" Senator Swecker said that was a good question – one that he hasn't addressed yet. He added - "I want folks like you looking at your river, solving problems, and coming to me."

II. Watershed Planning Grant

Marc Duboiski presented the budget for the 2514 grant. Marc asked the group if they wanted to shift any money out of “professional services” and into education and outreach. Sara LaBorde (WA Department of Fish & Wildlife) suggested expanding the

“The only thing that will work is what’s happening in this room.”

– Senator Swecker

education and outreach budget. Margaret Rader countered that the Level 1 and 2 assessments will require major expenditures. There was some discussion about the amount of money needed to complete the assessments. Don Meek (Port of Centralia) suggested we maintain some flexibility until we have more certainty about Level 1 vs. Level 2 costs. The group agreed. Doug Fricke (Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force) commented that Carol Smith (Conservation Commission) would need help on the 2496 limiting factors analysis. He suggested using some of the 2514 grant to hire someone to assist Carol. Marc responded by saying that once the final signature is obtained (from the Chehalis Tribe) for 2496 lead entity, Lewis County would receive funds to do what Doug has suggested.

III. Report on Draft Request for Proposal

[Brian Walsh provided copies of the *Guide to Watershed Planning & Management* to the members of the Partnership]

Marc Duboiski showed an overhead from the *Guide to Watershed Planning & Management* which highlighted the 4 possible elements of watershed planning. There was some discussion about whether the optional element – setting instream flows – should be included. Brian Walsh pointed out that instream flows have already been set in the Chehalis (in 1976). The challenge is to develop a plan which identifies ways of meeting those established flows. This would be accomplished in Phase 3 (plan development) and Phase 4 (plan implementation) of the watershed planning process.

The Draft Scope of Work for the Level 1 Assessment was distributed. The scoping group had met earlier in the month to discuss and revise the document. However, they did not get through the entire document. Margaret Rader pointed out some sections that need additional review. Brian Shea (City of Aberdeen) suggested having the scoping group reconvene to complete the assignment. He suggested we dedicate a major portion of the April meeting to the topic of the RFP. There was agreement. Sara LaBorde wanted the scoping group to find out what the Department of Transportation is doing and also the relationship to 2496 (Salmon Recovery).

IV. Update on Chehalis Flood Project

Mayor Spahr gave the update on the Chehalis Flood Project. He mentioned that money is a “big issue”. He referred to a letter from state and federal agencies to Lewis County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which was critical of the process. “I am shocked that Tom Fitzsimmons (Director, Department of Ecology) signed the letter when he has a representative here for the last 2 years.” Correspondence from Senators Gorton and Murray and Representatives Dicks and Baird was sent to Colonel Rigsby of the Corps of Engineers suggesting a summit to resolve issues. The Corps of Engineers is now the lead on the project. Mike McGinnis (Chehalis Tribe) mentioned that the Department of Transportation (Leni Oman) has received money to look at alternatives. An alternative is close to development.

V. Water Quality Project Ranking

Dave Campbell (City of Chehalis) explained the local ranking process for Ecology's FY 2000 water quality grants and loans. A group was formed to review and rank 5 projects in WRIA 22 and 9 projects in WRIA 23. As Dave explained, a project could qualify for up to 100 bonus points if they underwent a local ranking process. The initial meeting was in Chehalis on March 16. Criteria were developed and projects in WRIA 22 were ranked. Brian Shea stepped in to explain the rest of the process. A second meeting was held in Aberdeen to complete the ranking process. Brian Shea emphasized that all of the projects were excellent and would benefit the watershed. The ranking criteria included the following factors – type of assistance (grant or loan), TMDL, domestic water, regulatory order, and dollar amount. The next step will be to obtain signatures of concurrence from all of the governments (local and tribal), conservation districts and water and sewer districts prior to the April 16 deadline. Sue Patnude (City of Ocean Shores) participated in the meeting in Aberdeen. She suggested that a letter be sent to Ecology with suggestions for next year. Ideally, we would have time to have presentations on each of the projects to better understand them. She agreed to draft such a letter. Jeff Wetzal stated that he would like to judge the projects on their merits, not on the grant vs. loan criteria. Dick Southworth pointed out that some things are grant eligible while other may be loan eligible making the process difficult.

VI. Report from Citizens

Margaret Rader reported on the March Citizen Advisory Committee meeting. She referred to the handout which captured the meeting's main points. The CAC members identified their key issues, raised questions about salmon (e.g. how to get the Partnership more engaged in the salmon issue) and talked about data needs. J. Roach made an excellent presentation on salmon issues in the Black River sub-basin (including Black Lake). Margaret suggested that the Partnership invite J. to make the presentation at a future meeting.

VII. Salmon in the Chehalis Basin

Mike Kelly (US Fish & Wildlife Service) gave an excellent presentation on the various species of salmon and trout in the Chehalis Watershed. He mentioned that Endangered Species Act listings are possible for coho salmon if conditions don't improve. Mike said that flow is critical to coho salmon. The US Fish & Wildlife Department did an extensive habitat study in 1993. Mike said that data is available to anyone in the basin who would like a copy on CD-ROM. (ArcView GIS software is needed to read the data.) According to Mike, projects need to be done intelligently. He expressed concern about well-meaning projects which can do more harm than good. Regarding Bull Trout, it is not known whether they exist in the upper reaches of the rivers which flow from the Olympic range. (They require pristine conditions to survive.) New studies of salmon carcasses are building on our understanding of relationship of salmon and nutrients.

VIII. Wrap-Up/Adjourn

Dr. Sodhi introduced Gale Blomstrom, Section Supervisor for Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program. Brady Engvall asked the Partnership to include the Grays Harbor Estuary. Brian Walsh suggested that this be scheduled for a future meeting – there are a lot of things going on in the estuary which need to be understood. Marc Duboiski requested a standard meeting date and time for the scoping committee. Those meetings will be held on the first Friday of every month in the Grays Harbor County Commissioner hearing room (in Montesano) at 9:00 a.m.. The next Chehalis Basin Partnership meeting is scheduled for **April 23 at 9:00 am** at the Chehalis Tribal Center.