



# *Chehalis Basin Partnership*

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Meeting Summary – April 28, 2000

## **Introduction**

Mayor Spahr welcomed members and opened the meeting. Three new representatives from Partnership members were introduced: Dan Keahey (Centralia City Council), Brian Galloway (Lewis County), Chad Stussy (WDFW).

Attendance: Nineteen designated representatives or their alternates attended this meeting. There were twelve additional citizens, or visitors that attended.

## **Lead Agency Update (Agenda Item #1)**

### Contract with Envirovision for the Level 1 Assessment

Grays Harbor County announced that the contract with Envirovision for the remainder of the Level 1 Assessment has been signed. The Level 1 Assessment was broken into two stages. Stage one (identifying existing information) has been completed under the previous contract. This contract is for stage 2 of the Level 1 Assessment, which will evaluate the existing information to identify gaps in the existing information that need to be filled before we can effectively plan to manage water in the Chehalis Basin.

### Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Grays Harbor County, acting on behalf of the Partnership as Lead Entity, provided an overview of the April 7 SRFB workshop and April 21 SRFB meeting. Copies of draft policies for future salmon recovery funding cycles were handed out, followed by a review of the major recommendations being made in the draft policies.

The proposed schedule for the next application period – referred to as the Late 2000 Grant Cycle – calls for project lists to be submitted to the SRFB by Lead Entities by September 29, 2000. Decisions about which projects will be funded would be made at the SRFB meeting held in early December.

During the Partnership's general discussion about the recommended policies, the question "what does the SRFB expect?" was raised. Do they expect a new priority list containing entirely new projects each time? Will they reconsider projects that were not funded last cycle? Should we submit a combination of old/new projects? Have they decided that culvert replacement projects to open up habitat that is currently inaccessible to salmon will

continue to be ineligible, or are they considering policies that would allow projects like this to be funded?

The subject of land acquisition to protect fish habitat was also discussed. There are mixed feelings about more acquisition of private lands by “government” because one governmental jurisdiction or another already owns or controls so much of the basin. There are concerns about the loss of tax revenue and public access. Acquisition does have benefits that can include protecting high quality habitat that is threatened. On the other hand, acquisition of habitat that is not particularly threatened needs to be carefully weighed against the benefits of other projects such as opening up currently inaccessible habitat by replacing culverts that are currently blocking high quality habitat.

There are alternatives to acquisition by government such as land trusts. It was suggested that a presentation on land trusts would be an interesting agenda item for a future meeting.

The CBP Technical Advisory Committee will take up the issue of comments to the SRFB on the draft policies at its May 4 meeting. All Partnership members are invited to participate in the TAC. Margaret Radar, Chair of the TAC, expressed her reservations with the TAC developing positions that doesn't have the support of the full Partnership. She requested that Partnership members get their comments to the TAC before the May meeting.

### Staff Support Issues

There is a growing recognition among Partnership members that the workload associated with keeping up on the latest information coming from the SRFB, soliciting project applications, and coming up with a locally prioritized project list is significant. Add in the workload from all the other initiatives that are being generated at the state or federal level, such as local ranking of state water quality grants, flood control project development, etc., and it becomes more than Grays Harbor County can be expected to do with the one-half position provided for administration of the 2514 water planning effort. A recommendation was made that the Partnership look for options to fund full time staff that could manage Partnership activities and look out for Partnership interests on a daily basis. This suggestion was discussed and while there appears to be support, no agreement was reached during the meeting.

### 2514 Grant Application for Phase 3 (Plan Development) Funding

The Department of Ecology has \$500,000 set aside for the development of an actual plan to manage “water for fish and water for people” under 2514. The Partnership has been invited to apply for this funding before the end of the current state fiscal year on June 30, 2000. If the funding is not under contract by that time it will return to the state general fund. The Partnership would still be eligible for Phase 3 funding, but we would have to compete with other basins for the funding available during the next state fiscal year. Agreement was reached that Grays Harbor County should apply for the Phase 3 funding. Some of the

activities we are currently doing would qualify as planning, and having the Phase 3 funding would allow us to reserve the Phase 2 (assessment) funding for gathering the new data we will need to prepare an effective plan.

### **Grays Harbor Fecal Coliform Bacteria Study (Agenda Item #2)**

Dave Rountry and Greg Pelletier from the Department of Ecology presented information on the fecal coliform bacteria study that was recently completed for Grays Harbor. This study was initiated in 1997 as a result of public workshops held by Ecology's Water Quality Program to identify high priority areas of concern. Dave explained that the study is just the first step in a lengthy process that will ultimately lead to the implementation of a Water Clean-Up Plan (also known as a Total Maximum Daily Load or "TMDL"). The study is currently available for comment. Once the study report is published in final form, Ecology's Water Quality Program will invite groups that will be affected by the control measures and the interested public to participate in developing the Water Clean-Up Plan.

The study results show that during normal wet and "dry" conditions for Western Washington the Chehalis River and its tributaries are the largest single source of fecal coliform bacteria in the Harbor. About one-third of the bacteria loading to the Harbor actually comes from the upper basin (WRIA 23). If you add in the bacteria loading from the Chehalis River and its major tributaries in the lower basin, the study shows that this accounts for over 70% of the bacteria loading. The Humptulips River accounts for another 9%. Point sources (municipal sewage treatment facilities and industrial discharges) account for 4.3% of the loading under normal conditions. When these municipal or industrial facilities experience system failures, however, they can become the single largest source of bacteria to the Harbor. Sometimes the effects can linger for several days depending on weather conditions and tidal action.

### **CCWF/SRF Project Ranking (Agenda Item #3)**

The subcommittee established to evaluate and rank the water quality project applications submitted to Ecology by organizations in the Chehalis Basin reported the results of its efforts. Last year the ranking committee recommended that a separate list be created for each of the two WRIAs in the watershed. Last year's committee also recommended that applications from one WRIA be evaluated and ranked by a sub-committee made up of representatives from the other WRIA to avoid putting committee members in the position where they might feel they had to promote or defend their project in front of the other committee members.

Project applications were evaluated individually by committee members. Each project proponent was then provided an opportunity to present their project to the committee and respond to questions. The committee found that this process worked well, although it was time consuming.

Only one application was submitted to Ecology from the lower basin. Eight projects were submitted from the upper basin. The letters of agreed priority for each basin were signed by the Chair of the Partnership and submitted to Ecology by the April 14 deadline. Copies of the letters of agreed priority to Ecology are attached to this summary.

#### **Report from Citizen's Advisory Committee (Agenda Item #4)**

Margaret Rader, a Citizen Committee member from Thurston County reported on the April meeting. The first agenda item was a discussion of riparian buffers. Dick Wallace from the Department of Ecology attended. Dick has represented Ecology on the state Forest Practices Board and is currently involved in the Agriculture and Fish negotiations on riparian buffers. The second agenda item was organization of the committee. Rob Schanz agreed to serve as Chair of the Citizen's Advisory Committee. J. Roach will serve as vice-chair and Bill Barmettler will prepare a summary of committee meetings. Bill was complimented on his meeting summaries by the Partnership, and members were encouraged to read his summary of the riparian buffer discussion since it is such an important subject.

#### **Update on Flood Projects (Agenda Item #5)**

Lewis County reported that its quest for flood project funding in the aftermath of Initiative 695 is not meeting with much success. Grays Harbor County reported that it looks like about two-thirds of the state list of Army Corps of Engineer projects will be funded. Representatives will be going back to Washington D.C. to work on funding for the Chehalis Basin.

The Army Corps of Engineers has asked Grays Harbor County to help them identify potential projects in the basin for a reconnaissance report. They are looking at both flood damage reduction and environmental restoration projects. Grays Harbor staff handed out a survey for members to consider. So far, Lewis County has identified approximately fifteen projects and Grays Harbor County has identified approximately eight. Once the reconnaissance report is done the ACOE will be asked to explain what they learned.

#### **Wrap-up/Adjourn**

The next Chehalis Basin Partnership meeting will be held on **Friday May 26, 2000 at the Chehalis Tribal Center from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.**