



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – March 23, 2001

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

Chairman Spahr welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

Seventeen of the thirty-two member organization's had a representative or alternate at the meeting. Twenty additional citizens, alternates, or visitor attended.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Citizens' Advisory Committee had its second work session on a public outreach strategy. The committee has worked on setting public outreach goals and is beginning work on developing strategies designed to meet those goals. The next meeting is April 11th at the Oakville Office of the Chehalis River Council. (The results of that meeting are included with this mailing.)

By-law Review Committee

The committee evaluating the by-laws met March 15th at the office of the Chehalis River Council to continue work on draft Operating Procedures (currently called by-laws). The committee has made it through five of the six sections. As soon as the sixth section is complete a draft will be sent out to Partnership members for review and comment. It is anticipated that the draft should be completed sometime in May, although the process of selecting a consulting firm to help with the initial stages of Phase 3 (Planning) of the Watershed Management Plan special project will take precedence over completing work on the revised by-laws.

Annual Plan of Work

The purpose of today's discussion was to remind members that there is still time to comment on the draft Annual Plan of Work that was included in the March meeting packet. The Annual Plan of work will be presented to the Partnership at its April meeting for discussion and approval. There are many demands competing for the attention of the Partnership and over the last couple of years these demands have more or less controlled the actions of the Partnership. The Annual Plan of Work will help the Partnership manage its workload by identifying priority activities that need to be

accomplished during the year, assigning target dates and responsible parties, and allowing the Partnership to track progress. (Copy attached)

TMDL Updates

Grays Harbor Fecal Coliform Bacteria: More than 80% of the total fecal coliform bacteria load to Grays Harbor comes from the rivers entering into the harbor. Approximately 50% of this loading is from the upper Chehalis River drainage. A 65% reduction in fecal coliform bacteria loading from the rivers must be achieved for the system to meet state water quality standards. The advisory group is in the final stages of completing a draft Summary Implementation Strategy. This draft will be presented to the Partnership at its April 27th meeting by a panel of the advisory group members. Ecology's goal is to release the draft for formal public review and comment in May and prepare for a formal submittal to the U.S. EPA by the end of June 2001. (Information attached)

Upper Chehalis River Basin Temperature: Working together, EPA and Ecology have revised the 1999 Temperature TMDL for the Upper Chehalis Basin. The revisions change the temperature wasteload allocations for point source discharges to the river where temperature is warmer than the water quality standard, and clarify how forestland activities will be handled. The public review and comment period on the revised Temperature TMDL package ended March 16th. Comments were received from eight organizations. Ecology will review the comments and prepare a formal written response prior to submitting the revised TMDL to the U.S. EPA. The target date for submittal is June 30, 2001.

The discussion of the status of these two TMDLs led to a discussion of how the state is revising the state WQ standards. Mayor Spahr from the City of Chehalis expressed his frustration and anger over the process that Ecology uses when it makes revisions to regulations such as the Water Quality Standards. The Mayor feels that Ecology doesn't do enough to inform the public about proposed changes, and by the time they find out it is too late to have any meaningful say in the outcome. The proposed changes to the Temperature standards are an example. The City of Chehalis is already faced with having to reduce the temperature of its effluent to 18°C under the proposed Temperature TMDL, and now proposed changes to the temperature standard could reduce that to 12°C. If it is adopted, this change will take the City from a very difficult (and expensive) situation to a practically impossible situation. It is unlikely that the Chehalis River itself ever had summer water temperatures as low as 12°C.

Kahle Jennings, Ecology's representative to the Chehalis Basin Partnership said he would check on the status of the Water Quality Standards and include the information in the meeting packet mailed out for the April 27th meeting (attached). There was support among the Partnership members for a presentation by the Department of Ecology on the proposed changes to the state Water Quality standards and the implications for TMDLs.

Water Quality Financial Assistance

The application period for water quality grants and loans administered by the Department of Ecology closed March 2, 2001. Ecology has kept the option for local prioritization of grant/loan applications in the rule that guides its administration of the grant/loan program. Local prioritization must be completed and a letter of agreed priority submitted to Ecology by April 18th. The Partnership delegated the responsibility of signing the letter of agreed priority to the Chair. A sub-committee made up of Brian

Shea, Ron Schillinger, Laura Schinnel and Mac McWhorter will review the projects from the upper basin. Only one project was received from the lower basin.

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Planning under RCW 90.82

Level 1 Assessment

The Level 1 Assessment of existing basin information on water rights, flow, water quality and fish habitat has been completed. The Level 1 assessment is the foundation for the watershed Planning process the Partnership has been funded to do under RCW 90.82. The assessment will be available on CD free, but there is a significant cost to reproduce it as a paper document. Right now the best local estimates of the cost for a paper copy are around \$80.00 but an effort is being made to check with other printers. Ecology is working on creating a link to an electronic version of the report through the Chehalis Basin page in the "Watershed" section of Ecology's web site.

Budget

Grays Harbor County (Lead Agency for the Watershed Planning Grant) provided a handout that shows the status of Phase 2 and 3 of the Watershed Planning Grant from Ecology and the Salmon Recovery grant from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. A copy of the handout is attached. Phase 2 of the Watershed Planning grant paid for the Level 1 Assessment. The remaining funds in Phase 2 are for filling critical data gaps identified in the Level 1 Assessment. Phase 3 funds are for plan development.

Draft Request for Qualifications for beginning Phase 3 (Planning)

A draft Request for Proposals for a consultant to help the Partnership determine the scope of our Watershed Plan was handed out. This is for a short-term contract that will go through approximately September. It could possibly be extended to include work on the plan if the Partnership is comfortable with the initial work of the consultant.

The reason for initiating Phase 3 before Phase 2 has been completed is fairly simple. The Level 1 Assessment just completed identified a lot of gaps in the information needed to develop a plan to manage water quantity, water quality, and habitat. There are many more information gaps than can be filled with the limited amount of Phase 2 funds that remain. By developing the outline of what will be in the Phase 3 plan now, we can use that information to prioritize which data gaps are the most important to fill.

Once the draft RFQ has been approved by the Partnership it will be published in the Vidette and the Daily Journal of Commerce. Grays Harbor County will coordinate the process of selecting a consulting firm to do the work. A sub-committee of Partnership members will review the proposals and participate in the interview process.

The Partnership approved the draft RFP.

Salmon Recovery RCW 77.85

Lead Entity Grant

Grays Harbor County has been acting as the Lead Entity for this special project. It is time to re-apply for the grant from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife to continue the work. The County requested that the Partnership authorize the County

to draft a grant proposal for support to continue the salmon recovery work. The Partnership approved the request.

Limiting Factors Analysis

Carol Smith will present the Limiting Factors Analysis for the Upper/Lower Chehalis Basin (including Grays Harbor) to the Partnership at the April meeting.

The Technical Advisory Group has been developing criteria to prioritize habitat needs identified in the Limiting Factors Analysis. The prioritization will be one of the basic building blocks of a detailed salmon recovery strategy for the basin.

Flood Control

Centralia Flood Damage Reduction Project

Dennis Fischer reported that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has received approximately 75% of the river cross sections. The remaining cross sections should be completed in the next couple of weeks. The cross sections are being updated because the computer model uses river cross sections as one factor in predicting flood levels. Up until now, the only cross-sections available were from the 1980's.

Proposals for independent review of the flood model are also due in the next couple of weeks. The best current estimate is that selection of preferred flood damage reduction alternatives will be completed by December 31st.

Chehalis Basin Study

Lori Morris (project contact for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) reported that they have been working with Grays Harbor County to develop the scope of the project and a budget. The actual project is anticipated to begin sometime between July and September of this year.

This is a distinct project from the Centralia Flood Damage Reduction project. This project is based on the recognition that there are basin-wide needs for flood control, mitigation and restoring the health of the basin. The two projects are related however, and eventually both projects will work together.

C. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

The focus of today's presentation is the Chehalis River Basin Fisheries Restoration Program. An assessment of various habitat concerns and a report outlining the status, trends and restoration goals for the Chehalis Basin was completed in 1993. Since then, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received a limited amount of funding each year for restoration efforts.

An independent review of that program was completed in 1998. That review, along with a response prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was distributed at this meeting and is available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Based on the findings of the independent review the USFWS is proposing to make changes in how the program is implemented. Up until now, most restoration funds have been used to implement individual projects that support the goals of the restoration program. The projects have been implemented through many different organizations

and they have been spread throughout the basin. One weakness in this approach is the difficulty of documenting the real results of the individual projects.

The USFWS proposes to select a sub-basin of the watershed and spend the time necessary to prepare a detailed analysis of the sub-basin. This analysis will focus on the natural and human processes that create various habitat conditions. The resulting information will make it possible to determine if restoration efforts are showing results and where to focus our efforts.

The timing of these changes coincide with a change in USFWS staff working on the project, however that timing is a coincidence. The changes were planned shortly after the independent review of the program was released in 1998. Mike Kelly, the former USFWS coordinator for the program introduced Chris Mendoza. Chris is the author of the independent review and has been hired by the USFWS to replace Mike as the project coordinator. For copies of the independent review and USFWS response contact Chris Mendoza at (360) 753-9560.

The next meeting of the Chehalis Basin Partnership will be at 9:00 a.m. on April 27th at the Lucky Eagle Casino.