



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – November 16, 2001

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

Chairman Spahr welcomed everyone and opened the meeting. Fifteen of the Partnership's thirty-two member organizations had a representative or alternate at the meeting. Fifteen additional citizens, alternates, or visitor attended.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

Committee Chair Rob Schanz reported that the Citizens Advisory Committee met with Triangle Associates in November to work on development of a public outreach and involvement plan. A summary of the committee's November meeting was included in the packet mailed out for the Partnership's November 16th meeting. Due to the holidays in December the committee's next meeting will be in January.

Steering/Technical Advisory Committee

Committee Chair Mark Swartout reported on the Steering/Technical Committee's (STC) November 7th meeting. A summary of that meeting was included in the packet mailed out for the Partnership's November 16th meeting.

The committee discussed the proposal to form a Water Quality subcommittee that was referred back to the STC by the Partnership at its October meeting. It was agreed that the Water Quality subcommittee should work on more than just Ecology TMDL issues. For instance, the Water Quality subcommittee could take on the responsibility to review and rank water quality grants and loans submitted to Ecology each year in place of the ad-hoc committee that has been doing it for the last couple of years. No resolution was reached on further recommendations about the Water Quality subcommittee so the discussion will continue in December.

Instream Flows - The legislature amended the Watershed Planning Act during the last legislative session and provided additional funding of up to \$100,000 per watershed for those watersheds that choose to make recommendations on instream flows. In its original watershed planning grant contract the Partnership did not agree to take on the optional element of recommending new or amended instream flows. This new funding allows consideration of other than just minimum instream flows (which are a regulatory flow used by Ecology to determine if there is water available for appropriation) such as target flows for fish, restoration flows, etc. This new funding would allow the Partnership to gather flow information on the 15 sub-basins

where we don't have any. There is a December 1, 2001 deadline for submitting a letter of intent to Ecology indicating that the Partnership wants to consider applying for the additional funds and will use the information to make a recommendation of some kind on flows in the Chehalis. The STC recommends that the Partnership send the letter of intent. The letter does not obligate us to continue pursuing the funding; it only preserves our option to do so. A detailed proposal and application will have to be filled out and approved before a contract with Ecology can be negotiated.

There was a discussion of whether this would fall under the role and mission of the Partnership. From the beginning the Partnership clearly felt that it didn't want to become involved in recommending new minimum instream flows (regulatory flows) but it always recognized that instream flows would be an issue that needed to be addressed. This funding can help obtain the information the Partnership needs to work on the issue. Consensus was reached to submit a letter of intent by the December 1 deadline (copy attached). It is recognized that letters from each of the Initiating Governments may be needed when the actual application is submitted.

Annual Plan of Work -- Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2002

The Annual Plan of Work shows that appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair should occur in November. The Chair and Vice-Chair are appointed annually and serve for one calendar year.

During the October meeting the current Chair, Bob Spahr, and Vice-Chair, Dr. Sodhi, were nominated to serve another year in those positions. Jim Haslett was also nominated for the position of Chair.

At today's meeting Jim Haslett said he appreciated the nomination but respectfully asked to withdraw his name from consideration. The Partnership accepted his request and appointed Bob Spahr as Chair and Dr. C.S. Sodhi as Vice-Chair for 2002.

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Planning under RCW 90.82

Attachments for this discussion were sent out with the meeting announcement for the November 16th meeting.

The schedule for the next six months was reviewed and the proposal for the four study area (sub-basin) meetings was discussed. It was agreed to move forward with planning for the four study area meetings. The tentative schedule for the meetings is as follows:

February	The regular Partnership meeting will be held on the 22 nd ; a separate study area meeting will be held in Ocean Shores one evening.
March	Both meeting combined into a joint evening meeting located in the area of Montesano.
April	The regular Partnership meeting will be held on the 26 th ; a separate study area meeting will be held in the area of South Thurston County one evening.
May	Both meetings combined into a joint evening meeting located in the area of Centralia/Chehalis.

This schedule is still tentative. The purpose and structure of the meetings is described in the handouts provided in the mailing for the November 16th Partnership meeting (attachment "A").

The Partnership agreed to the approach for the study area meetings.

The issue of how to include the Grays Harbor estuary in the “watershed” planning effort came up during the Level 1 Assessment. The watershed plan must address “flows” for fish and people, which is not an issue that pertains to the estuary. However, the Partnership agreed to include water quality and fish habitat issues in the plan and both of these do pertain directly to the estuary. The Steering/Technical committee prepared a recommendation (attachment “B” provided in the November 16th meeting mailing) which relies on assistance from local governments and organizations to help identify what additional Level 2 Assessment studies are needed to fill important data gaps. After discussion, the approach recommended by the Steering/Technical committee was accepted by the Partnership.

Salmon Recovery RCW 77.85

Grays Harbor County, acting in its role as Lead Entity, will contact project sponsors and review committee members to discuss how to continue improving the process of soliciting for, and evaluating projects.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Work in the Chehalis Basin

Flood Damage Reduction Project sponsored by Lewis County

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is going through the process of selecting the preferred alternative by December 31, 2001. The Partnership will receive a report describing the decision in January.

Ecosystem Restoration Study sponsored by Grays Harbor County

This project is the subject of the special presentation today.

C. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has signed an agreement with Grays Harbor County to review potential ecosystem restoration actions. A project management plan was distributed at the October Partnership meeting. This project will be a four-year study that evaluates the potential for restoring historical ecosystem functions where they have been modified or lost. The results of the project – improvements in fish and wildlife habitat, reducing the severity of flooding, etc. - must be acceptable to the local citizenry and something local governments can support.

Lori Morris from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented an overview of the project. The presentation and the Project Management Plan may also be viewed at the Corps website www.nws.usace.army.mil/pm/chehalis/.

Questions and Responses

Is anything like this being done elsewhere in Washington State? *Yes, work is being done in the Skagit, Green/Duwamish, Stilliguamish, Puget Sound Nearshore and others.*

How will it be done – all at once or by sub-basin? *We may have to break it into sub-basins.*

Will the Grays Harbor estuary be included in the study? *Yes.*

Will you be looking at the jetties and their impact on the estuarine environment? *We don't know at this time.*

Will five million dollars be enough? *These funds are for the study portion of the project, not design of individual projects or construction.*

How do the goals and recommendations of the watershed plan the Partnership is working on fit into the ecosystem restoration study? *Our hope is that they will both work together.*

What about data gaps? *We will have to collect new data. Some of that will probably be contracted out.*

Is flood damage reduction a mandate of the study or is zero impact acceptable? *Zero impact may be OK but we hope each project identified will have some benefits in reducing flood damage.*

Does the project cover both WRIA 22 and WRIA 23? *Yes.*

The flood control project sponsored by Lewis County appears to be looking at many of the same things -- how are the two projects related? *The project managers for both these projects work closely together. The projects can't be combined because they are proceeding under different time schedules and one is directly focused on flood damage reduction in a specific area while the other is a basin-wide ecosystem project. The work being done on the flood control project sponsored by Lewis County will result in information that will be useful in this ecosystem restoration project.*

Is monitoring included? *Monitoring is a component, but there is limited funding for it.*

D. OPEN COMMENT

Grays Harbor County handed out a summary of the budget status and a summary of information it has recently received (both attached).

The next meeting of the Chehalis Basin Partnership will be at 9:00 a.m. on December 21st at the Lucky Eagle Casino.

Decisions

- ◆ The Partnership agreed to submit a letter of intent to Ecology before the December 1st deadline regarding our desire to pursue supplemental funding for working on the issue of instream flows.
- ◆ The Partnership appointed Bob Spahr as Chair and Dr. C.S. Sodhi as Vice Chair for 2002.
- ◆ The Partnership agreed to move forward with planning for the four study area meetings in early 2002
- ◆ The Partnership agreed with the approach to the four study area meetings.
- ◆ The Partnership accepted the Steering/Technical Committee's recommendation on how to approach including the Grays Harbor estuary in the watershed plan.