



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – October 26, 2001

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

Chairman Spahr welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

Eighteen of the Partnership's thirty-two member organizations had a representative or alternate at the meeting. Twenty-eight additional citizens, alternates, or visitor attended.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

Committee Chair Rob Schanz reported for the Citizens Advisory Committee that the CAC is again meeting and working on issues related to development of a public outreach and involvement plan. A summary of the committee's September meeting was included in the packet mailed out for this Partnership meeting. The group will meet again today right after the Partnership meeting in order to plan its next steps.

Steering/Technical Advisory Committee

Committee Chair Mark Swartout reported for the Steering/Technical Committee (STC). Mark welcomed Terri Willis (a Citizen Advisory Committee member from Grays Harbor County) as a new participant in the Steering/Technical Committee and reviewed the highlights of the committee's October 11th meeting.

At this meeting the committee discussed a proposal to form a Water Quality subcommittee within the Partnership. This new subcommittee would ensure that the Partnership was clearly informed about, and involved in, water quality activities going on in the basin, including but not limited to Ecology TMDLs. The STC committee recommends that the Partnership form a special Water Quality subcommittee because water quality is a very important issue in the basin and the STC already has as much as it can handle working on watershed planning processes and issues other than water quality.

During discussion it became clear there are two basic questions about this proposal: should the Partnership form a Water Quality subcommittee, and how should the committee be organized and function within the general organization of the Partnership? The Partnership agreed that it makes sense to form a Water Quality subcommittee but referred the issue back to the Steering/Technical committee for further evaluation of the second question.

The Steering/Technical committee then recommended that the Partnership accept an offer by Ecology to initiate a pilot project to develop an estimate of the amount of water represented by water rights, permits for withdrawal, water claims, etc. in the basin. Preparing this information is one of the "minimum requirements" for the watershed planning effort (see RCW 90.82.070). Since Ecology has a database of this information, it should be more efficient for Ecology to do this work for the Partnership than to contract out the work to an outside party. Some work on this issue was done under the Level 1 Assessment contract with Envirovision but additional work remains to be done. Ecology would coordinate the work with the Partnership's current consultants (Triangle Associates and TetraTech/KCM) and the Steering/Technical Committee will provide oversight and direction. The Partnership concurred with having Ecology compile the information and develop the estimate.

Annual Plan of Work

The Annual Plan of Work shows that nominations for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Partnership are to be held in October and appointment to these positions should occur in November. The Chair and Vice-Chair are appointed annually and serve for one calendar year.

The current Chair, Bob Spahr, and Vice-Chair, Dr. Sodhi, were nominated by Aberdeen to serve another year in those positions. Thurston County's Citizen representative nominated Jim Haslett for the position of Chair.

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Planning under RCW 90.82

At its September meeting, the Partnership approved an outline containing the elements of its watershed plan, mission/goal statements and a general approach for further work on the watershed plan (attached). This represents the initial piece of the watershed planning effort. The next piece is to begin implementing what was approved in September. The Partnership's contract with Triangle/TetraTech-KCM expired at the end of September and the Steering/Technical Committee was directed to come up with a recommendation on how to proceed. The STC worked on this extensively since the September Partnership meeting and is recommending that the Partnership extend the contract with Triangle Associates/TetraTech-KCM until April/May 2002 so we can move forward with organizing and holding the sub-basin meetings, preparing a summary of the information presented in the Level 1 Assessment (existing information), evaluating and prioritizing Level 2 assessment needs (new information critical to our planning effort), and begin public outreach/involvement. A budget for this work was distributed and discussed. After lengthy discussion the Partnership reached consensus and agreed to extend the contract with Triangle/TetraTech-KCM as proposed.

Salmon Recovery RCW 77.85

Grays Harbor County, acting in its role as Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery, handed out a prioritized list of salmon recovery projects (attached) and thanked all the people who participated in developing and evaluating projects. The next step is to incorporate this list into a request to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. The Lead Entity application to the SRF Board for the current round of funding is due November 30, 2001.

There was a lengthy discussion of the process used to develop the list. As in previous efforts to prepare this prioritized list of projects, the participants all came away from the process with ideas on how the process could work better. There is a commitment to incorporate these ideas into the next cycle and the Partnership will have the opportunity to participate fully in that effort. Recognizing this, the Partnership focused on the issue of approving the list so the Lead Entity can prepare the application to the SRF Board and meet the deadline. The Partnership agreed by consensus that the list should be used as presented to prepare the application. Everyone who participated in the effort was thanked for their contributions of time and resources.

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

Centralia/Chehalis Flood Damage Reduction Project

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is going through the process of selecting the preferred alternative by December 31, 2001. Public meetings are scheduled for the first part of 2002 to explain the project, the selected alternatives, and receive comments from the general public.

Chehalis River Basin Ecosystem Restoration Study

The Chehalis River basin Ecosystem Restoration Study is not a flood control project and a request was made that we change the heading for this portion of the agenda to reflect that.

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 meeting and a lengthy presentation on this project is scheduled for the November Partnership meeting. The Corps is working with Grays Harbor County to set up a series of local public meetings to discuss the project. The Corps is required by law to have a general public meeting on the project so other interested groups can comment. Since the Corps offices are in Seattle this required meeting has been scheduled there. The presentation scheduled for the November Partnership meeting will contain the same information as the required public meeting, and Partnership members will have the same opportunity to comment.

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.

There were questions about the relationship between the two projects the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is involved in. Although they are separate projects there are common elements to both of them.

C. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Due to the extensive discussion needed on the topics above a special presentation was not scheduled for this meeting.

D. OPEN COMMENT

The next Steering/Technical Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, November 7th from 9:00 a.m. until noon in Montesano and all Partnership members are welcome. The meeting will be held in the conference room of the Fish and Wildlife building at 48 Devonshire Road.

Brian Peck, USFWS, handed out material on several invasive aquatic species that are a concern in the Northwest. These include the Zebra Mussel, the Green Crab and the Mitten Crab. There are opportunities for USFWS specialists to come and discuss these exotic invaders with the Partnership if there is interest.

Sue Patnude reported that Chad Stussy, the WDFW Watershed Steward that has been working both the upper and lower Chehalis and Willapa Bay, is being transferred to WDFW's Olympia office. Chad will continue working with the upper Chehalis Basin, but will be taking on additional work outside the basin in South Puget Sound and Hood Canal. WDFW will find a replacement for Chad to work in the lower Chehalis and Willapa Bay.

Margaret Rader informed the group that copies of the Chehalis River Council's November publication of "Drops of Water" were available at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30. **The next meeting of the Chehalis Basin Partnership will be at 9:00 a.m. on November 16th at the Lucky Eagle Casino.**

Decisions

- ◆ The Partnership concurred with having Ecology compile the information and develop an estimate of water rights, permit, claims, etc. for the whole Chehalis Basin.
- ◆ The contract with Triangle Associates/TetraTech-KCM for the next steps of the watershed planning effort should be extended through April/May 2002.
- ◆ The Partnership agreed by consensus that the Salmon Recovery Project priority list presented at the October 26th meeting should be used as presented to prepare the application.

Recommendations

- ◆ The Partnership agreed that it makes sense to form a Water Quality subcommittee but referred the issue back to the Steering/Technical committee for further evaluation.
- ◆ The "Flood Control Projects" heading on the agenda should be changed to more accurately reflect the variety of projects that are being done.

Future Agenda Items

- ◆ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presentation on the Chehalis River Basin Ecosystem Restoration Study (November)