



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – August 23, 2002

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

Chairman Spahr welcomed everyone and opened the meeting. Seventeen of the Partnership's thirty-two member organizations had a representative or alternate that signed the Partnership meeting attendance record. Fifteen additional citizens, alternates, or visitors signed the meeting attendance record.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) plans to meet on September 27 after the full Partnership meeting. The CAC will discuss its role in ranking Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF) Board grant applications.

Steering/Technical Advisory Committee

The STC met after the July 26 regular Partnership meeting. A summary of that meeting was included in the packet for this Partnership meeting and the issues the STC focused on will be discussed later during this Partnership meeting. The next STC meeting will be Sept 5th and is open to all Partnership members and the public.

Water Quality Committee

At the July 26 Partnership meeting Dave Rountry, Ecology's water quality coordinator for the Chehalis Basin, discussed Ecology's desire to work collaboratively with the Partnership on the water quality components of watershed planning and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the Chehalis Basin. Currently, TMDLs for dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform bacteria and temperature have been approved for some areas of the basin and a TMDL for fecal coliform bacteria affecting Grays Harbor is under development. Work remains to be done on each of these TMDL projects. Ecology has been criticized in the past for not providing enough opportunity for public involvement in the development of TMDLs, for organizing TMDL work groups that operated independently of the Chehalis Basin Partnership, for not recognizing "outside" sources of data and for not recognizing positive changes in water quality that may occur after a study has been completed but before a report has been finalized.

In an attempt to initiate this collaborative approach Dave sent out an e-mail invitation for a Water Quality Committee meeting on September 18th. From the reaction his e-mail caused it is clear that several Partnership members did not appreciate him taking the initiative and scheduling a meeting of the committee. The Partnership discussed the organization and role of the Water Quality Committee the Partnership established in February 2002, the size of the committee, the time available to prepare water quality recommendations for the watershed plan due October 2003 and how the Partnership and Ecology should interact on TMDLs. Some of the important points that were made include:

- The Chehalis Basin Partnership is a watershed planning group and TMDLs are a sub-set of watershed planning that need to be addressed in the plan.
- The Water Quality Committee was established to take on all types of water quality issues including understanding TMDL requirements and how TMDLs relate to the work of the Partnership, carrying out local prioritization of grants and loans submitted to Ecology, taking some of the pressure off the Steering/Technical Committee and integrating information on water quality issues and activities in a way that the Partnership can understand and build them into the watershed plan. Partnership members expressed an interest in seeing the WQC become more proactive in finding solutions so issues do not become problems.
- There needs to be a discussion on what part(s) of TMDL development can be deferred to the Chehalis Basin Partnership and what part(s) can only be done by Ecology.
- There is a lot of uncertainty about TMDLs. There are several in the Chehalis Basin and they are at different stages of development or implementation. A TMDL can be “approved” by EPA and yet still need significant work to determine how the pollution controls will actually be accomplished. The planning work for an “approved” TMDL and one that is still under development appear to be very similar. This can lead to more uncertainty about Ecology’s intent and the outcome. Some of the information released by Ecology feeds this uncertainty.
- Ecology can provide support for the Water Quality Committee but it is not in charge of the committee.

The discussion was concluded with the following agreements:

- 1) Grays Harbor County expressed a willingness to call a meeting to organize the Water Quality Committee prior to September 18th and provide both a point of contact and some coordination support for Water Quality Committee meetings.
- 2) Terry Willis, citizen representative to the Chehalis Basin Partnership agreed to Chair the Water Quality Committee.
- 3) The September 18th meeting that was scheduled by Dave Rounry will be used to present an overview of TMDLs in the Chehalis Basin.

Future Chehalis Basin Partnership Meeting Location

The Chehalis Basin Partnership will continue to meet at the Lucky Eagle Casino either in the bingo hall or the Chehalis Room until further notice. A handout showing the dates and times of Partnership meeting for the remainder of 2002 was handed out. (Attached)

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Planning under RCW 90.82

The contract with Triangle Associates has been extended through Oct. 2003 to complete Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the watershed management plan. Triangle is working with the Steering/Technical Committee to identify issues and group them into categories including water quality, water quantity, fish habitat and instream flows. All of the issues identified during the four public study area meetings should be included to show that the Partnership is tracking what is being said by the public. Since realistically the Partnership will not be able to solve all the issues that come up this information will be brought to the Partnership for discussion and prioritization. There will be opportunities for new issues to be included.

A brief review of the status of the Water Quantity Evaluation was presented. The Water Quantity evaluation has been structured to meet the minimum requirements of the watershed planning Act as described in section 90.82.070. It consists of a basin-wide water balance intended primarily as an educational tool and sub-basin water balances for priority sub-basins that are much more detailed and specific. The number of sub-basin water quantity evaluations that can be completed depends on how much each one costs. There have been some questions raised about the approach being taken in the water quantity evaluation by technical staff for organizations represented by Partnership members. The Partnership agreed that the STC should be authorized to make minor corrections to the proposal based on discussion of those questions.

The next discussion item was the three pending grant applications for supplemental water quality and multipurpose storage funding authorized by the Legislature last session. One proposal is for water storage and two are for water quality projects. If funded the storage project would identify possible water storage opportunities throughout the basin. One water quality project would develop a Level 1 assessment of Grays Harbor, work not previously done. The second would fund development of a monitoring strategy. If funded, each of the three grants would provide \$100,000 for a total of \$300,000. Kahle said the proposals would be submitted to Ecology's Southwest Regional Watershed Management Team for approval. Any revisions to the project proposals will be discussed with the Steering/Technical Committee and then brought to the Partnership in September.

Salmon Recovery Project

Seventeen letters indicating the intent to submit a project for SRF Board funding were submitted. A list of potential projects is attached. Complete applications are due September 30. The ranking criteria include technical merit (evaluated by a technical committee) and social objectives (evaluated by the Citizens' Advisory Committee). The results of these two committees work will be a combined priority list that will be presented to the full Partnership for discussion and approval on October 25.

Due to the SRF Board's feelings of uncertainty about "other" factors affecting ranking of projects based on technical merit, it was suggested that an "extra credit" approach be used -- proposals are ranked first for their technical strengths and then for their capacity to meet social objectives.

The question "How do you avoid conflict of interest when you have many different people evaluating the projects?" was raised. The response was that in the past individual project proponents have abstained from scoring a project in which they have an interest.

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

Flood Damage Reduction Project sponsored by Lewis County: A handout providing an overview of the project and inviting public comment on the draft Environmental Impact Statement was distributed. Public comment forms were also made available. Comments on the draft EIS can be made to the Corps through September 19, 2002.

Other Business

Earlier this year the Western Washington Property Rights and Water Rights Coalition requested that the Partnership recognize their delegate. The Partnership discussed the need for clear procedures as it moves forward to develop and adopt a watershed plan. Interim by-laws have been adopted, but they do not discuss adding members to the Partnership. Operating procedures have been discussed and can be found in the Partnership notes of July 28, 2000.

Work on the Operating Procedures chapter covering membership was never completed and as a result they have not been adopted. There was general agreement that the Partnership should proceed with updating the by-laws/operating procedures. The group agreed to review the operating procedures and take action on them in October. The Operating Procedures will augment the information in the Intergovernmental Agreement, not replace it.

Water Quality Standards: this was a continuation of the discussion started at the July Partnership meeting. A lot of state money and local resources are being devoted to watershed planning. There is some concern that the state is not taking advantage of the potential for using groups such as the Chehalis Basin Partnership as a forum for explaining proposed changes to regulations. It is not enough to announce a 30-day public comment period. The upcoming review of state water quality standards is one example of a regulation that has a tremendous impact on communities. The state should recognize this and use local planning groups such as the Partnership to reach out to the public. State interests and local interests often overlap. There is little point, for example, in spending a lot of time developing a watershed plan if it is based on standards that are going to be revised soon. A recommendation was made that a communication tool be developed that would identify the activities and timelines of various state activities that may affect local watershed planning and communicate this information to local planning units early on in the state process. Some effort should be made to include a discussion of how the activity could affect watershed planning.

Statewide Monitoring Strategy: J. Roach and John Penberth attended a meeting on the statewide comprehensive monitoring system (CMS) that is under development. The proposed CMS will provide a basic evaluation of “watershed health” but additional water quality monitoring tailored to individual watersheds will also be needed. It will probably take longer for the state to develop standards and protocols necessary to implement the CMS than the Partnership has left to complete its plan. Access to data like that generated by the CMS will be important to successful watershed plan implementation. A recommendation was made that a presentation on this strategy be scheduled for the Partnership.

The meeting adjourned at 11:24 a. m.

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

Decisions

- Grays Harbor County will set up a meeting to organize the Water Quality Committee prior to September 18th and provide both a point of contact and some coordination support for Water Quality Committee meetings.
- Terry Willis agreed to Chair the Water Quality Committee.
- An overview of TMDLs in the Chehalis Basin will be scheduled for September 18th.
- Authorized the STC to make minor corrections to the water quantity evaluation proposal based on its discussion of questions that have been raised
- Agreed to review the operating procedures and take action on them in October.

Recommendations

- Salmon Recovery Project proposals should be ranked first for their technical strengths and then their capacity to meet social objectives should be added as extra credit.
- State activities that may affect local watershed planning should be identified and tracked for the Partnership.