



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – February 22, 2002

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

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

Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Citizens' Advisory Committee continues to focus on preparing for the four study area meetings and coordinating citizen involvement. They also continue to work on a public involvement plan. A summary of the January 25, 2002 committee meeting was mailed out with the meeting packet for the February 2nd Partnership meeting.

Steering/Technical Advisory Committee

The Steering/Technical Committee continues to support the Partnership's work with Triangle Associates/KCM on the study area meetings, the detailed summary of the Level 1 Assessment of existing information and prioritizing Level 2 Assessment studies intended to gather new information critical to the Partnership's planning process. A summary of the Committee's February 8, 2002 meeting was mailed out with the meeting packet for the February 22nd Partnership meeting.

Other Business

Water Quality Sub-Committee

The establishment of a sub-committee focusing specifically on water quality issues such as TMDLs and water quality grants/loans has been the topic of discussion among Partnership and Steering/Technical Committee members for several months now. Concerns about duplicating efforts, coordination among different sub-committees and dilution of decision making authority have been expressed. But there are also positive aspects that have been recognized such as raising the visibility of water quality issues within the basin, bringing new people into a closer working relationship with the Partnership and giving greater local weight to water quality considerations by regulatory agencies.

In the end, the benefits of establishing a sub-committee of the Partnership to focus specifically on water quality issues were judged to be significant enough for the Partnership to reach

consensus and set up the committee with the understanding that it will operate in the same manner as the Steering/Technical Committee. Committees work on specific issues and make recommendations back to the Partnership for action. Several Partnership members and other individuals who regularly attend Partnership meetings volunteered to serve on the committee.

Water Quality Grants and Loans

The deadline for submitting state fiscal year 2003 water quality grant/loan applications is March 6th. Local prioritization of these grants/loan applications must be complete by April 25th. This will be one of the first responsibilities of the new water quality sub-committee.

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Planning under RCW 90.82

The first of the four study area meetings is scheduled for February 26th in Ocean Shores.

The Steering/Technical Committee is reviewing a draft of the detailed summary of the Level 1 Assessment of existing information. It is organized according to the four study areas. How to make the detailed summary available is under discussion. Printing copies of any document that has color becomes very expensive. The current approach is to post it on the web in electronic form that can be downloaded and printed by anyone who wants to do so.

Development and refinement of a process to select Level 2 Assessment projects (gathering critical new information) continues. One of the reasons for being so particular is that we are trying to make sure that our project selection process will meet the requirements of the state SEPA process and provide documentation that will answer future questions about why certain projects were done.

In-Stream Flow Proposal

The legislation this project would be funded under was intended to result in the establishment of in-stream flows. Ecology is the state agency responsible for actually writing the regulation that would establish the in-stream flow, but the legislature provided local planning units the opportunity to develop recommendations about what the flows should be. If local planning units decide not to develop recommended in-stream flows then the responsibility falls to Ecology. Although the legislation is primarily designed for basins where in-stream flows have not been set, it allows local planning units in basins where flows have been set to consider alternatives.

Minimum in-stream flows were established by regulation for the Chehalis Basin in 1976. This regulation established 31 flow "control points" where flows were to be measured. Recent work in support of the Partnership's watershed planning effort has found that there is enough flow data to prepare graphs of flows at 16 of the 31 control points. Without these graphs we really can't tell what the relationship is between existing real flows and the in-stream flows set in 1976. That will make it very difficult to prepare a watershed plan that addresses the needs of the 15 sub-basins without flow data.

A copy of a draft scope of work was included in the packet of information sent out for the February 22nd meeting. The purpose of this proposed flow monitoring project is to gather flow data in 15 of the 31 sub-basins where we don't have enough data to prepare graphs of flows, prepare the graphs, compare those graphs to the minimum in-stream flows established in 1976

and more recent work on flows needed to support fish habitat, and recommend flows that would be used by the Partnership in developing the watershed plan. The recommended flows could be the same as the minimum in-stream flows established in 1976 or they could be different. In either case, the resulting flows would not replace or amend the regulatory minimum in-stream flows set in 1976; they would be used as planning targets. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Lengthy discussion followed the presentation. Some Partnership members are reluctant to add developing recommendations on in-stream flows to the Partnership's already full workload. There is also a reluctance to amend the existing minimum in-stream flows set in 1976, and a concern that no matter what the Partnership's intentions are, the requirement that Ecology write a rule to implement the resulting flow recommendations will result in additional regulatory flows being set for the Chehalis Basin. This risk needs to be weighed against the need for flow information to prepare a meaningful watershed plan and the \$100,000 available to the Partnership under this legislation for gathering flow information and developing flow recommendations. There is also some concern about making flow recommendations based on one year's flow data. Finally, there is the question of how the Partnership will get the work done.

General agreement was reached that the Steering/Technical Committee should look at options for how the work would be done and make a recommendation to the Partnership at the March meeting. A final decision will be made on the proposed project at that time.

Salmon Recovery

Grays Harbor County reported that they met with the Salmon Recovery Funding Board Technical Review Committee to present the salmon habitat projects from the Chehalis Basin. The list of projects is down to fourteen. One of the projects had problems with local match and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funded one of the projects under a separate funding source.

Brian Peck from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service described the list of projects that they have developed for this fiscal year with the help of a review committee. Based on historical levels of funding he anticipates that they will be able to fund the top 6 projects on the list. Brian briefly reviewed the prioritization process and individual projects. He then asked if the Partnership would concur with the results of the prioritization process. The Partnership did concur with the results. A copy of the USFWS list of projects is attached.

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

Flood Damage Reduction Project sponsored by Lewis County

This project is the subject of today's special presentation.

Ecosystem Restoration Study sponsored by Grays Harbor County

The literature review is complete and is being reviewed. It needs to be organized by area and category. This project shares a common need for some of the same kinds of information that is needed for the Partnership's watershed planning effort. The Corps is working with the Partnership's Steering/Technical Committee to coordinate obtaining this information. The watershed characterization work that the Department of Ecology was going to do to support the project can't be done because the experienced staff person who was going to do the

characterization left Ecology for a position at the Department of Transportation. The Corps is working with other state agencies to see if one of them can do the characterization. Cost is a big issue.

C. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Beth Coffey presented the results of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers analysis of Flood Damage Reduction alternatives for the Centralia/Chehalis area. The last time the Corps looked at possible solutions to this flooding problem was in the 1980's. After the 1996 flooding Congress told the Corps to go back and re-look at potential solutions. A copy of the slides used in this presentation is included with this summary. The presentation was followed by a lengthy discussion.

D. OPEN COMMENT

The next meeting of the Chehalis Basin Partnership will be combined with the second study area meeting scheduled for March 19th in Montesano.

Decisions

- Agreed to form a separate Water Quality Sub-Committee
- Concurred with the USFWS proposed list of salmon habitat restoration projects