



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – May 30, 2003

This meeting was set up to be longer than normal and the format focused on technical reports and issues.

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

Chairman Spahr welcomed everyone and opened the meeting. Nineteen of the Partnership's thirty-two member organizations had a representative or alternate in attendance. Nineteen additional citizens, alternates, or visitors were at the meeting.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

Chanele Holbrook (citizen from Thurston County) has been elected chair of this committee.

Steering/Technical Advisory Committee

The STC continues to meet twice a month and work on issue papers and special projects, several of which are scheduled to be presented today. The next meeting of the STC will be a water quality workshop on June 5th at the Department of Ecology followed by a meeting on June 19th at the old WDFW headquarters office in Olympia.

Water Quality Committee

A meeting summary for the May 8th Water Quality Committee meeting was distributed with the meeting packet for this CBP meeting. The June meeting will be held on the 12th at the Forestry building in Montesano. Topics of discussion will be EPA's bacteria criteria and how that relates to proposed changes in the state water quality standards, the detailed implementation plan for upper Chehalis River TMDLs, and follow-up on a letter from a citizen regarding the Briggs Nursery Porter site.

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Planning under RCW 90.82

Legislative Update – Watershed plan implementation funding and “opt out” language are both contained in bills that are in limbo.

Water Quality Monitoring Plan – A handout was provided for the June 5th Water Quality Workshop. The focus of this workshop is development of a comprehensive water quality monitoring plan for the basin.

Watershed Planning – The mailing for this meeting included a series of issue papers printed on yellow paper. Any comments should be sent to Chris Page at Triangle Associates. He can be

reached at cpage@triangleassociates.com or (206) 583-0655. Chris will forward them on to the lead author.

In order to try to keep everyone up-to-date with the current versions of issue papers and other plan materials, all draft material will be distributed on colored paper. When the final version is complete it will be printed on white paper. Draft sections of the actual watershed plan printed on blue paper were handed out at this meeting. A memo explaining a suggested process for reviewing draft sections of the plan and a watershed plan comment form were included in the mailing for the meeting.

In-stream flow technical study – this study was funded by special legislative appropriation. The scope of the contract for the Chehalis Basin is to monitor flows for one year at minimum in-stream flow control sites established in 1976 where little or no flow data is available, compare that information with existing minimum in-stream flows, new information on flow/habitat relationships, computer models predicting historical flows and develop a recommendation. The deadline for the project has been extended from June 30 to September 30, 2003. Cynthia Carlstad (TetraTech/KCM) presented a slide show on the study results. Analysis of the data is underway.

Recognizing that there are limits in how only one year of flow data can be used, a discussion was held on how to continue the flow monitoring effort in 2003 so that we can start to build a long-term record of flows. An effort to share resources and spread the work of monitoring flows this summer (2003) out among several individuals and agencies is being discussed.

A general discussion of in-stream flows and flow/habitat studies underway followed. The Steering/Technical Committee will continue to work on the in-stream flow issue.

Water Quantity Evaluation – A handout and presentation reviewed the basic requirements of the watershed planning act and the work that has been done to meet those requirements, along with the fundamental data needed to manage water for both people and fish. The discussion during this presentation brought out some areas of sensitivity, particularly the concern that this watershed plan is “just going to validate the apparent Department of Ecology position that no more water is available for appropriation for human use.” The concept of uncertainty is the key to understanding the instream flow work. When there is great uncertainty about the amount of water allocated, amount actually used and amount available for use there is reluctance on the part of resource agencies charged with protecting the general public’s interests and fish to allocate more water. This leads to friction between them and people who want access to the remaining water. As the level of uncertainty goes down there may be more flexibility in allocating water among uses, which would in turn result in less friction.

Hydraulic Continuity Issue Paper – A handout and presentation described hydraulic continuity, its effects on water decisions and made some suggestions about what the watershed plan might recommend related to this issue. Discussion led to the following comments:

- Centralia hired a consultant to look at the aquifers where the city has, or proposed to develop, drinking water wells. That information might be useful for this issue paper.
- The recommendations at the end of this issue paper need to be reviewed by the Steering/Technical Committee and fine-tuned.
- The Ecology representative to the Partnership should review the recommendations regarding policy changes with Ecology and clarify if they are acceptable.

Storage technical study – A handout and presentation reviewed the analysis that has been done on the benefits of storage, storage options and potential project locations. The high levels of winter rainfall and winter runoff seem to make the study of storage options worth serious consideration. There may need to be state policy changes to take advantage of storing water.

Agriculture Issue Paper Outline – the outline was reviewed and in the subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

- The outline doesn't specifically mention shellfish production or aquaculture as forms of agriculture but that should not be interpreted to mean that it purposely excluded it.
- Economic conditions that make it difficult to sustain working farms lead to conversion of land to other uses. This can have impacts on water quality and quantity.

Additional issue papers presented at the meeting:

- Stormwater
- Protection of Areas with High Water Quality
- Water Quality Impairment

C. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Students from Aberdeen High School presented the results of the water quality/algae study they have been working on for Mill Creek. The students working on this project are part of a field-oriented natural resources-applied biology class.

The next meeting of the Chehalis Basin Partnership will be at 9:00 a.m. on Friday June 27, 2003 at the Lucky Eagle Casino.