



Chehalis Basin Partnership

Meeting Summary – June 25, 2004

A. GENERAL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS

Introduction

Vice-Chair Jim Haslett welcomed everyone and opened the meeting. Nine of the Partnership's twenty-eight member organizations had a representative or alternate at the meeting. Four additional citizens, alternates, or visitors were at the meeting.

The agenda was reviewed and there were no changes.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Citizens' Advisory Committee will meet again starting in September. The list of current CAC members was reviewed with a discussion of each individual's participation. Some have been very active, some participate when there is something to work on, and others have not participated at all. There is a real need to emphasize recruitment of members who can be actively involved.

Steering/Technical Committee

The STC has started looking at the next steps the Partnership could take now that the watershed plan has been approved. This will be discussed later during the Partnership meeting so it will not be reported on here. The next meeting of the STC will be on July 1st in the WDFW office conference room on Capital way in Olympia. The meeting will not start until 1:00 so that the committee chair and another member can attend a meeting organized by the Nisqually watershed planning unit with the state Departments of Ecology and Health to discuss the requirements and ramifications of agreeing to Phase 4 of watershed planning (Phase 4 is implementation).

Water Quality Committee

The Water Quality Committee has not met for the last two months. The next meeting will be on July 8th at the Montesano Forestry Building conference room. Topics of discussion include the detailed implementation plan for Chehalis Basin TMDLs and a basin water quality monitoring plan. The Chehalis River Council prepared a water quality monitoring quality assurance plan (QAP) for a grant project they received. If the CRC agrees to let the Partnership use their work a recommendation will be made to the Water Quality Committee on the 8th to use the CRC water quality monitoring quality assurance plan as a template for a basin-wide monitoring plan.

Other Partnership Business

Operating Procedures: A discussion of the Partnership's Annual Plan of work was scheduled for today. However, copies of the Partnership's draft operating procedures were brought by mistake so this discussion will focus on them instead. That is appropriate since work on updating the interim by-laws into detailed Operating Procedures stopped when watershed planning became the priority. The Annual Plan of Work showed both being worked on concurrently, but there just wasn't enough time at Partnership meetings so work on the draft Operating Procedures was suspended. Now that the watershed plan has been approved the Partnership can resume work on the Operating Procedures. This is actually a good time to renew that discussion because the only chapter that had not been discussed in detail and approved in concept is Chapter 5 on "Managing Partnership Membership" and the watershed plan includes an action that calls for a review of how the Partnership is organized and will continue to function. Copies of the draft Operating Procedures were handed out.

John Mudge made the observation that the Partnership probably qualifies as a public body that is subject to public requests for information. Certainly many of the Partnership's members are public bodies. The Operating Procedures should identify who maintains the Partnership's records and who to contact for access to that information.

Future meeting locations and status of the Partnership: Now that the watershed plan is complete there is a question whether the Partnership still qualifies as a planning unit or whether it reverts back to being a coordinating body as it was prior to watershed planning. Prior to watershed planning Ecology provided some support for the group that became the Chehalis Basin Partnership. Subsequent funding the Partnership received was linked to watershed planning and the little that remained when the plan was approved is not available to pay for continuing to meet at the Lucky Eagle Casino. Ecology has been approached about continuing financial support for the Partnership and agreed in concept to providing some limited support. However, Ecology has no budget for this kind of support outside of watershed planning so it will be limited.

There was a general discussion about where the Partnership could meet. This included the ideas of meeting in a different location each month or rotating between locations on something like a quarterly basis. There could be advantages to rotating meeting locations including the chance to see different parts of the basin and even the possibility of short "excursions" or "tours" after each meeting. The main disadvantages appear to be increased travel time for everyone at least some of the time and confusion about where the next meeting will be. Both of these carry the potential for reducing attendance at Partnership meetings.

The Department of Labor and Industries building in Tumwater was mentioned as a possible meeting location – the Partnership did meet there when the Lucky Eagle was being renovated. The Lead Agency will check on that possibility. The only concern is that L&I does not usually schedule its conference rooms for more than a month in advance.

B. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Watershed Plan Implementation

There is a wide spectrum of approaches to implementing the watershed plan. At one end is the approach used in the Nisqually watershed years ago. The Nisqually River Council developed a plan similar to the one the Partnership just approved. That plan is now being updated and the Nisqually group has found that most of the plan recommendations have been implemented. The plan itself however, did not drive implementation -- that was done by other programs such as the Growth Management Act. The one thing that the Nisqually group did have was sustained staff support and some funding support from Ecology.

The other end of the spectrum is Phase 4 that the legislature added to the Watershed Planning Act. Phase 4 is very prescriptive (a summary was distributed with the announcement for this meeting) and requires planning units to review and integrate municipal water system plans. Planning units who agree to take on Phase 4 are obligated to prepare a detailed implementation plan within one year of accepting Phase 4 funds. The funding available to planning units undertaking Phase 4 is limited in both the amount and how long it will continue. There is a concern that planning units can not possibly do everything required in Phase 4 in one year for the amount provided for the first year (\$125,000).

The Departments of Ecology and Health are now trying to develop guidelines for what Planning Units must address under Phase 4 of the Watershed Planning Act. Planning Units should find out how to be involved in that discussion also.

The general discussion that followed yielded the following questions and comments:

- Do we have to implement every recommendation and action in the approved Plan? Can we implement parts of actions, or schedule implementation over a long period of time?
- Is there a deadline for deciding whether or not to take on Phase 4 responsibilities? *(There is not statutory deadline, but the legislative appropriation may not be sustained indefinitely.)*
- What happens to the plan if we don't implement it? Will Ecology implement it? *(Ecology will look at the plan recommendations and, as resources allow, build them into the individual work plans for programs within the agency.)*
- If the Partnership takes the Nisqually approach to implementation described above the STC should review the plan and provide recommendations on how to implement the various actions.
- Without financial resources and legislative authorities provided under Phase 4 will the Chehalis Basin Partnership have any influence on the actions of local or state government? *(Under the Watershed Planning Act this group has the ability to influence the state to do things in certain ways. Voluntary implementation does not carry with it the same level of influence.)*

- This discussion leads me to be concerned about my comments before the plan was approved – that the result would be that counties would be forced to take over responsibility for implementation. As an example, the Chehalis Watershed Plan says that we should “protect existing high quality waters.” This seems innocuous enough, but could it be used to force counties to write ordinances? *(The law is fairly clear that no group can be obligated to take an action unless they agree to take that action.)*
- The value of this group is that we have a greater influence if we approach the state as a group. If we approach them individually they won’t listen to us.
- Other than putting us on a timeline of one year to complete the implementation plan, what does accepting the Phase 4 funding do?
- How did the Nisqually group receive this special treatment prior to watershed planning? *(The legislature supported the group through direct appropriation of funds.)*
- As Lead Agency for the Partnership, Grays Harbor County is very cautious about the Phase 4 requirements.
- Does Grays Harbor County continue as Lead Agency for the Chehalis Basin Partnership now that the plan is done? *(The Intergovernmental Agreement forming the Partnership does not expire. Under the agreement Grays Harbor County would continue to serve as Lead Agency until the County decides it can no longer fulfill that function.)*
- The Watershed planning act says that watershed plans should provide strategies to provide adequate supplies of water for...agriculture. What is “agriculture?” There is no definition.

By the end of the discussion it was clear that there is a general concern about the implications of the Municipal Water Bill and Phase 4 of the Watershed Planning Act. Both were passed last legislative session, long after the Partnership had started watershed planning. The Lead Agency introduced a process called “PLAN-2-FUND” that has been developed by the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Idaho. The Environmental Finance Center has budgeted some time to work with the Partnership (probably through the Steering/Technical Committee) using the PLAN-2- FUND planning tool. Is the Partnership willing to try this tool out? If it is determined that the PLAN-2-FUND tool does not work for watershed planning the Environmental Finance Center might be able to develop other tools that would work.

Salmon Recovery

Grays Harbor County, acting in its role as Lead Entity for salmon recovery presented the Partnership with a list of projects that it proposes to submit to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for consideration. After discussion the Partnership members present accepted the list (attached).

Next Meeting

The Partnership will meet as scheduled on July 23, 2004 at a location to be announced.

Decisions

- *The Partnership accepted the list of proposed Salmon Habitat Restoration projects prepared by the Lead Entity.*