

**CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP
HABITAT WORK GROUP
Lewis Conservation District Office
1544 Bishop Road
Chehalis, WA
April 10, 2009
9:30 a.m.**

Meeting Summary

PRESENT:

Lee Napier, Grays Harbor County
Bob Amrine, Lewis County Conservation District
Mark Swartout, Thurston County
Nicole Hill, Cascade Land Conservancy
Miles Batchelder, Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership (WCSSP)
Lonnie Crumley, StreamWorks Consulting
April Boe, The Nature Conservancy

Valerie Gow, Puget Sound Meeting Services
Janet Strong, Chehalis River Basin Land Trust
Janel Spaulding, Grays Harbor College
Kathryn Moore, Capitol Land Trust
Brett DeMond, StreamWorks Consulting
Miranda Plumb, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Birdie Davenport, Department of Natural Resources
Chris Stearns, Thurston Public Utilities District
Amy Iverson, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

Welcome, Introductions, and Changes to the Agenda

Chair Bob Amrine called the Chehalis Basin Partnership (CBP) Habitat Work Group (HWG) meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. Everyone present provided self-introductions.

The review on the Camp Delezenne Fish Passage project application was deferred to the June meeting. A review on the Hoquiam River Surge Plain Acquisition project application was added to the agenda.

Lee Napier reported 15 proposals were received for this grant round totaling \$2 million.

Miles Batchelder arrived at the meeting.

Ms. Napier reported Galvin Gore submitted an early application and had some problems with entering project data in PRISM. He has since been hospitalized for an illness. His agency has met the commitment for submitting the project application.

Two of the projects are sponsored by timber companies, which will also require a local sponsor. All project applications met the early application deadline. The committee will review five project applications during the April, May, and June meetings. Site visits are scheduled for June 1-2, 2009. If necessary, application reviews will continue until the July meeting with a final review of applications at the August meeting.

Members reviewed the following project proposals:

Hoquiam Surge Plain Acquisition – Phase 2

Janet Strong reported the project is the second half of a project submitted during last year's grant round, which was funded and recognized as one of the four most outstanding projects in the state. The project includes acquiring the bulk of the surge plain in the Hoquiam River watershed. The project meets three of the goals within the Salmon Habitat Work Plan to include obtaining a healthy and diverse salmon population. There are several salmon runs within the Hoquiam River for feeding, rearing, or migration. Bull Trout, an endangered species, is found in the lower Hoquiam River.

Ms. Strong reviewed the location of the project site. Phase 2 involves the east fork of the Hoquiam River where habitat is old growth consisting of wetlands and surge plain. The land is owned by Rainier Resources and Green Diamond Resource.

The acquisition will protect Grays Harbor by preventing erosion and other forms of pollutants from entering the river and channeling to Grays Harbor. Any roads in the area will be closed reducing the contribution of sediment to the river system. The acquisition preserves properly functioning riparian zones.

Ms. Strong noted the dam on the west fork, which blocks fish and is located upstream of the project area, is slated for removal by the City of Hoquiam. Ms. Napier noted the City is experiencing a funding gap for the project. As the design wasn't completed and permits not secured, the project was not considered to be shovel ready to receive federal stimulus funding.

Ms. Strong commented that the project addresses several Tier 1 and 2 concerns with the presence of old growth Spruce forest along the river to provide shade, temperature control, and large woody debris in the river system. The acquisition will protect over five river miles. A 100-foot segment belonging to Rainier Resources will be included in the acquisition package. For most of the river miles, protection will be afforded on both sides of the river.

Birdie Davenport inquired about the extent of tidal influence within the surge plain. Ms. Strong said the boat launch is located within the tidal area. She said she's canoed upstream from that point and found the tidal range is present upstream. There are multiple sloughs within the surge plain.

Nicole Hill described the funding sources. The match will be through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. Last year, the first phase of the project received \$1 million from the program. The project ranked very high and was the only project outside of Puget Sound in the state that was funded. The state received 65% of the national funds. There is an expectation that Phase 2 will rank as high as the program has a history of funding phased projects. The request is for \$890,000 from the program for a 68% match. One match not noted in the application involves an appraisal completed in December assessing the value of the east branch at \$2,100 an acre. Rainier Resources was advised funding is only available to purchase the land at \$2,000 an acre, which was accepted by Rainier, creating a potential match dependent upon the fluctuating real estate market.

Ms. Hill said project sponsors are working on reducing costs to the extent possible. Discussions have occurred with the Nature Conservancy, which has funding available through the statewide Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund grants program. If the agency considers contributing to the project, agency representatives indicated they are only interested in contributing to the east branch. However, the agency is not interested in contributing funds for the acquisition if funding has not been identified for stewardship endowment.

Ms. Strong commented that there are development threats to the property within the middle portion of the east branch. Portions of the property are upland sites that have been managed for timber that are young, closed canopy stands of Douglas fir. The area was subdivided with Rainier planning to sell the property for development, which could potentially create four development sites within the area. However, since development would occur in close proximity to the wetlands, any development occurring would be a threat to the wetlands.

Ms. Napier reported the City of Hoquiam received \$350,000 from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), with \$400,000 from the City of Hoquiam for the dam removal project. The City is seeking

\$500,000 in additional funding. The preliminary design is complete, agency approval obtained, and surveying and site prep will begin in the summer with construction beginning in 2010. The City is seeking additional funding for unanticipated costs for construction, monitoring, and additional construction costs not anticipated in the original budget.

Ms. Strong displayed a graphic of the project site. Ms. Napier suggested including the graphic with the project application.

Ms. Hill shared information on a grant she received for water quality work within the area. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a grant program available for community discussions/outreach on water quality. Because of previous work completed in the Hoquiam River system, a grant was submitted of \$50,000 to conduct community outreach on water quality and habitat in the Hoquiam River for the purpose of developing a citizen group focused on improving river water quality. There are few large surge plain communities within the state and because of that, the area is not well understood or appreciated. Having a community discussion on the importance of the surge plain and the river system will be beneficial.

Decker Creek Habitat Conservation Project Phase 2

Kat Moore distributed copies of the Letter of Intent on the project. The project is another phased acquisition following up on the Decker Creek acquisition. The property is located near Matlock along Decker Creek near the Mason County/Grays Harbor border. Approximately 500 acres were acquired in Phase 1, which was previously owned by Green Diamond. The land is a large wetland complex with several tributaries. Funding for Phase 1 was from the SRFB and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP). Mason County was the sponsor for Phase 1 with Capitol Land Trust as the co-sponsor. The second acquisition is an 80-acre wetland complex in the east fork Satsop watershed, directly north of the parcel acquired in Phase 1. The area is primarily wetland with some timber. The property was previously harvested and owned by a private landowner. The landowner is willing to sell the property. The property was identified in the original grant proposal along with two other properties. The property is not connected to the main stem of Decker Creek, which could be a drawback. However, it is a wetland complex and considered an additional buffer to the entire property. Decker Creek supports Coho and chum. The property is a tiered priority action within the Satsop watershed.

Ms. Moore responded to questions and indicated Capitol Land Trust originally intended to purchase the property. However, the match is WWRP funds, which are not eligible funds for non-profit organizations. Mason County agreed to sponsor WWRP funding with Capitol Land Trust transferring the SRFB grant to Mason County. Mason County will own a portion of the land because WWRP funds were used to purchase the property. The Legislature is considering opening WWRP funds to non-profits for funding of projects located within riparian areas. The goal is using SRFB funds to purchase the easement with Mason County purchasing the underlying fee with WWRP funds to ensure the property is completely protected. Most grant funds impose a deed restriction or a permanent conservation to ensure the property is never converted to other uses.

Ms. Hill commented that an absentee landowner in the area is interested in donating land in the area. She asked whether the donation could be considered as a match. Ms. Moore referred to the map of the property and outlined the area to be owned by Capitol Land Trust. The larger portion will be owned by Mason County. Ms. Hill said the property is located several miles upstream of Decker Creek and consists of 50 acres of wetlands. She asked whether acquisition of the project could be considered as part of the project match. Ms. Moore said a potential Decker Creek area acquisition that included the parcel, which was co-sponsored by Capitol Land Trust, could qualify.

Ms. Napier suggested the application should reflect future target sites in the area. Ms. Moore said one of the reasons for not including the other properties was because of funding and securing a match.

Ms. Moore advised against a site visit to the property because most of the area is wetland. A presentation will be provided instead of a site visit because of inaccessibility to the property.

Mark Swartout inquired about the Decker Creek project. Ms. Moore clarified that there are several Decker Creek projects. The second project is a fish passage barrier project.

Chris Stearns arrived at the meeting.

Ms. Moore indicated a potential source of match funds may include remaining WWRP funds from Phase 1. Capitol Land Trust representatives have been discussing the option with Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) representatives.

Ms. Davenport asked about the difficulty of access. Ms. Moore said the site is difficult to assess. There is an old overgrown logging road that could be cleared. However, the landowner doesn't want any activity that would improve accessibility by individuals. After ownership is obtained, it will be possible to improve access. Legal access to the Decker Creek Phase 1 project is through a timber road.

Ms. Davenport commented that many of the grant programs do not question the long-term sustainability in terms of long-term management of sites.

Mr. Swartout reported Thurston County avoids land acquisition because of the inability for maintaining properties. He asked whether there will be a stewardship memorandum of agreement between Mason County and Capitol Land Trust. Ms. Moore affirmed there will be a stewardship agreement between the two entities. There will be limited access to the property with no vehicle access by the public, which is a condition imposed by Green Diamond on the sale of the property.

Discussion ensued on acquiring and protecting surrounding lands. Ms. Hill suggested considering a mapping and discussion exercise next year to determine what wetlands would be worth acquiring because of their value as critical habitat.

Chehalis Basin Conservation Assessment

Ms. Moore reported the project involves conducting an assessment of landowners in the Black, Cloquallum, and Satsop subbasins owning functioning salmon habitat to compile a comprehensive list of willing landowners interested in selling their property or obtaining a conservation easement. Capitol Land Trust was approached by several SRFB project managers suggesting the Trust undertake an assessment of the areas. The Trust believes beginning with the three subbasins is a good starting point to produce a model for other subbasins. The three subbasins were selected because they include acquisition as a Tier 1 action. The Trust is open to suggestions on what other subbasins would benefit from salmon restoration.

Ms. Strong said the Wild Fish Conservancy is doing some work in the Wildcat Creek subbasin, which is a subbasin of Cloquallum. Ms. Moore advised that meetings will be held with all stakeholders to obtain information on available data for the subbasins. A component of the project will include GIS analysis from all data sources on parcel sizes with adjacency to conserved areas to identify high priority sites. The Whatcom and Skagit Land Trusts have completed similar projects in the north area in 2003, resulting in successfully identifying properties that have subsequently been funded by the SRFB and other grant projects. Much work has been completed in the watershed to date in terms of the work plan and recovery plan.

However, work hasn't occurred at the parcel layer to identify properties that should be targeted as well as identifying the property owner.

Ms. Moore reported at the end of assessment of the Whatcom and Skagit Land Trusts, the organizations created a report, which was used by Capitol Land Trust to determine project costs. The assessment will identify functioning habitat segments, identify and contact landowners, survey landowners on interests, and obtain preliminary commitments from landowners who are willing to preserve or sell land for conservation.

Chris Stearns questioned whether the Trust has checked federal sources, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. US Fish and Wildlife is actively purchasing land within the basin and has completed some of the same work. Ms. Moore verified that there is a parcel plan completed by the Nature Conservancy and US Fish and Wildlife Service that identified some parcels. One of the reasons the Black River subbasin was selected was because of the amount of work already completed by a number of entities.

Ms. Davenport pointed out that a skeptical reviewer might question the need for more funds if so much work has already been completed. Ms. Moore said that feedback is important, as it may not be the optimum place to focus an assessment. If there are watersheds with intact habitat and no work has been undertaken, those watersheds could also be considered.

Mr. Stearns commented that the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission is also a good source of data.

Ms. Napier suggested justifying the selection of the Black River subbasin because of the work already completed and existing data to assist in developing a model plan for the other two subbasins. She asked members for comments on the proposed subbasins and other areas of potential acquisition that should be included. Ms. Moore said the subbasins are contiguous, which is one reason for their selection. Mr. Swartout spoke in support of the Black River because the US Fish and Wildlife Service has not completed acquiring property and increasing the reserve. It could be argued that it's a high priority watershed because of the former work. Mr. Stearns commented on additional attributes of the area in terms of spring Chinook using the area as a holding area prior to spawning.

Status of Chehalis Fisheries Restoration Program

Miranda Plumb reported the sunset date of the Chehalis Fisheries Restoration Program is nearing. The program began in 1990 for a 20-year period. There have been some discussions within the US Fish and Wildlife Service about working with the Chehalis Basin Partnership on a possible celebration next summer to recognize the program. Ms. Plumb said she is assuming program responsibility since Brian Sussy left. She is looking at the history and the successes of the program.

Brett DeMond asked whether the program will end after 2010. Ms. Plumb replied that Congress created the Chehalis Fisheries Restoration Program in 1990 as a 20-year program. The program will sunset in 2010. It's unknown whether the program will end entirely or whether the program will be extended. As an employee of the agency, Ms. Plumb advised that she can't inquire about whether the program will continue. Those questions need to be asked by others outside the agency. She suggested it would be beneficial to ascertain whether all barriers have been removed or replaced in one river within the basin or if there has been land acquired in one drainage area affording protection to a corridor. Basically, the question is what the basin looks like after 20 years of restoration work.

Ms. Strong asked whether a summary report will be developed and published. Ms. Plumb said many of her predecessors have completed some summaries through the intervening years, which she will review as part of her task of developing a report.

Ms. Napier said it would be helpful to share information on what the committee and others can do to ensure the program continues. Ms. Plumb said that as a federal government employee she's unable to lobby the federal government to continue the program. Members suggested Ms. Plumb could provide a summary of specific items or details that will help the committee in pursuing lobbying efforts to continue the program, such as the percentage of the need addressed and what still remains to be completed. Mr. Crumbly offered that the Partnership could consider sending letters to local congressional delegates, as well individual groups sending letters.

Ms. Plumb said when the program began in 1990, the funding allocation was supposed to be \$1 million annually, which has since dropped to approximately one-third of that amount.

Ms. Hill suggested the deadline is nearing and the committee should act promptly to begin lobbying efforts. Ms. Napier agreed it would be prudent to plan on a 60-day timeline.

Mr. Stearns referred to documenting progress and the need to obtain some baseline data of the system before the program was implemented. Ms. Plumb said she has access to documentation. Initially, Congress directed the department to partner with the state and both tribes on a two-year study on what was occurring within the Chehalis basin. A report was produced by two fish and wildlife biologists. In 1998, another independent review was completed by a consultant.

Ms. Hill said that for members to promote the continuance of the program, information about the accomplishments and the goals for what is to be accomplished in the future is needed. Members will need to work on developing the information.

Ms. Hill shared that she is meeting with Sarah Crumb, Deputy District Director for Congressman Norm Dicks, and will add the issue to the agenda for discussion. It's an important first step.

Ms. Napier suggested including some form of celebration in recognition of the program's successes during next year's Watershed Festival. Ms. Davenport suggested considering a community tour of sites similar to a farm tour. She suggested including a biologist to assist in pointing out particular successes of projects.

China Creek Restoration

Janel Spaulding reported the restoration project is on a portion of China Creek where it empties into the Chehalis River and up to Interstate 5. The project is located on City of Centralia owned property, near the old wastewater treatment plant off the Mellen Street exit. The site is overgrown with Himalayan blackberries and reed canary grass along the banks along with garbage and sediment within the channel. The project involves removal of the weeds, widening the channel, and placement of gravel in the channel to provide spawning areas for salmon.

Ms. Spaulding distributed some photographs of the project site.

Fish species observed in the creek include Coho and cutthroat. In 2004, Lewis County completed its culvert assessment and observed Coho further up China Creek. The projects ties in with the newly created Centralia Stream Team, which is working on the upper reaches of China Creek. A garbage cleanup is scheduled for May 2 as well as weed removal and riparian plantings.

Mr. Crumbly said the project is not necessarily impactful for fish, but it's a good community education opportunity involving local elementary and high schools. Although the creek meanders through the City, it

is possible to post signs and educate the public about the importance of not dumping oil and garbage in the creek.

Ms. Spaulding reported the stream team recently received grant funds from the Husseman grant from the Department of Ecology for weed and garbage removal, plantings, signage, and outreach to local schools.

Mr. Crumbly noted a concrete structure is present that covers a pipeline and the goal is to build the creek up approximately three feet to ensure passage capability.

Ms. Strong spoke in support of the proposal and the importance of educating local youths. There was a recent incident involving the dumping of oil, which was covered by *The Chronicle* newspaper. The project is important to City residents especially since the creek is located within the City. She referred to a similar project in Ellensburg involving the Wilson Creek, which meandered through the city. When the City was excavating for a storm sewer project, trout were discovered living under the City in culverts. The project is a similar undertaking and promotes awareness and involvement by citizens and students.

Mr. Swartout inquired about the match. Ms. Spaulding reported the City of Centralia is providing the match for the project. Mr. Swartout said the project would rate higher with a higher match. Ms. Napier added that volunteer hours have not been calculated, which will add value to the match.

Ms. Strong commented on an adjacent park restoration project owned by Weyerhaeuser, which includes a section of China Creek. She suggested contacting Weyerhaeuser to see if that section of the creek could be included in the project. The restoration project is a tree planting in the park.

Mr. Davenport suggested sending letters to all landowners upstream of the project site. Ms. Spaulding said letters will be sent to landowners along the creek as an element of the Husseman grant inviting them to participate in the clean-up project. Mr. Swartout suggested the project should be described as part of a larger project to increase its chance to receive funding. Mr. Stearns noted the removal of vegetation may increase stream temperatures. He suggested including information on plantings to control stream temperature.

Members offered that since the project involves a barrier and riparian plantings, it could be classified as a tiered action item. Mr. Swartout noted the Bald Eagle is no longer listed as an endangered species.

Ms. Napier pointed out that water quality in the TMDL implementation related to temperature, pH, and fecal coliform are Tier 1 action items. Large woody debris is considered a Tier 2 action. Additionally, the Partnership's water quality monitoring program could also be considered as a contribution.

Ms. Strong reported a member of the Chehalis River Council is designing a technical field trip to identify all the factors that need attention, as well as characterizing areas of exposure along China Creek. Those volunteer hours could also be considered as a match.

Ms. Spaulding confirmed that she will work on improving the proposal.

Mr. Crumbly described some of the improvements the review team can view during the June field visits.

Other Business

Mr. Swartout reported Thurston County Commissioner Sandra Romero is the South Sound's representative on the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council. She's requested a list of all completed salmon recovery

projects in Thurston County. He noted he is compiling the information through PRISM. However, the difficulty is obtaining information on future projects. He asked members to submit potential projects with approximate costs located in the south area of Thurston County involving the Chehalis basin. For example, any projects not funded by the SRFB would be considered a future project. Commissioner Romero is interested in developing a needs assessment. The Black River assessment by Capitol Land Trust would be a project to include.

Mr. Stearns referred to the Williams Pipeline project and suggest pulling information on the project because Williams transected the river and dumped spoils on the other side creating barriers below Black Lake. The activity occurred in the 1960s.

Members discussed the controversy surrounding the project and how the north end of the lake was dug prior to installation of the pipeline because there was too much variation in the depth of the water in the lake. There have been allegations that the pipeline in the 1960s and 1970s during the development of the berm changed the hydrology of the system.

Ms. Napier said she'll send an email on a call for projects that were proposed and completed projects that are not reflected in PRISM to ensure Mr. Swartout has all the information.

Mr. Swartout added that the three-year work program required from all Lead Entities is a comprehensive way to document projects.

Ms. Napier invited members to attend the next Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership meeting to view the presentation on the Habitat Work Schedule. The Habitat Work Schedule is included in the Lead Entity legislation, which requires the development of a Habitat Work Schedule or plan. The Habitat Work Schedule was created by WDFW and is published on the web. It is similar to PRISM in that information is entered. However the work schedule is organized geographically by Lead Entity. For this region, PRISM projects were exported to the work schedule and populated involving proposed and funded projects through the SRFB. Approximately 65 projects are included on the Grays Harbor site.

Miles reported the website address is www.hws.ecosystem.com. Ms. Napier said there will be a link through the Lead Entity website. Mr. Batchelder said the work schedule is designed as a public portal and to communicate salmon restoration activities to the public. It's designed to be a user-friendly program. Mr. Swartout added that the effort is laborious for Lead Entities, as projects must be continually updated through completion.

Ms. Moore said there are levels of information that might not be accessible to the public because future projects may involve landowners who are not aware of the interest in their land.

Mr. Batchelder said a template was designed to apply the three-year work plan to help track implementation of the plan throughout the entire Puget Sound from the Habitat Work Schedule server. Ms. Napier said she and Mr. Batchelder have access to the information at this time. However, members interested in entering project data would be very helpful.

Ms. Napier said the regional meeting will be held on April 22, 2009 at the Port of Grays Harbor. Mr. Batchelder reviewed the meeting agenda and information on the work schedule presentation. Ms. Napier shared information on monthly user training available through WDFW. There are also different seminars that are available. Ultimately, the Habitat Work Schedule will be a good tool as Lead Entities work on their respective three-year work plans.

Ms. Napier reported the Lead Entity website is transitioning independent of the Grays Harbor website. She said she'll email the link. She asked members to review the site and provide feedback on what's helpful. The transitioning effort includes developing a CBP website with a link from the county. Project photos will also be exported from PRISM to the work schedule.

Ms. Napier reported the RCO Conference is scheduled for April 15-16, 2009.

Ms. Davenport inquired about the status of the Marine Resource Committee (MRC). Ms. Napier said when the MRC concept was first presented she viewed it as a good opportunity to complete the Chehalis watershed. However, some folks involved in the MRC process didn't agree because of different interests between the basin and marine areas. She said she learned much from the process. An exploratory MRC developed a recommendation for the Grays Harbor County Board of Commissioners. Commissioners accepted the recommendation to form a MRC as well as the accepting the report. Currently, work is underway with WDFW on a second contract to form the committee. There have been some discussions on projects with Kathy Greer, Surfrider Foundation, taking the lead and working with a subcommittee. There are some funds for initial projects, which must be completed by June 30. Four counties are participating in the process and each of the counties received funds to explore the possibility of forming an MRC. Depending upon progress, some counties were ready to pursue projects, impacting the amount the remaining counties receive. It appears the county will receive \$25,000 and another \$25,000 to expend by the end of June 2009. The funds will be used for coordination of the MRC and distribution of letters. An article will be developed for the June edition of the *Drops of Water* newsletter.

Ms. Napier described some of the opportunities for projects involving water quality monitoring or purchasing equipment. Other ideas include a student lab as suggested by Surfrider Foundation, fish forage surveys, and outreach tools, such as a public forum. The Southwest Coastal Communities, which is larger than the Grays Harbor MRC has requested some funds for science-based workshops. It's likely Grays Harbor County will be contributing to the project from the MRC funds.

Mr. Batchelder reported on the status of projects submitted for federal stimulus funding. All the invasive species projects were bundled by the Department of Agriculture and submitted through the Governor's Office without an endorsement from the Governor. Preacher's Slough was submitted through the Department of Natural Resources through the efforts of Ms. Davenport involving much work. A project on coastal debris marine cleanup was submitted. A culvert replacement on Beaver Creek was also submitted by WDFW directly to the Governor. Through the region, two projects were submitted for the north coast involving the Quinault Indian Tribe's coastal debris project and a project involving the Hoh watershed. Representative Blake sent a letter in support of the Preacher's Slough project to the Governor. The total project cost submitted for the Coast Region was \$9.5 million not including invasive species projects submitted through the Department of Agriculture.

Members discussed the process, short lead-time, and efforts involved in preparing the proposals for submittal to meet the deadline.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2009 and will focus on five project reviews and the Chehalis Fisheries Restoration Program.

Ms. DeMond suggested the ranking criteria subcommittee should meet prior to the committee meeting. She indicated she'll extend an invitation to Eric Erler to attend the subcommittee meeting.

Adjournment

With there being no further business, Ms. Napier adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

Prepared by: Valerie Gow, Recording Secretary/President
Puget Sound Meeting Services