

**CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP
HABITAT WORK GROUP
Lewis Conservation District Office
1544 Bishop Road
Chehalis, WA
February 13, 2009
9:30 a.m.**

Meeting Summary

PRESENT:

Lonnie Crumley, StreamWorks Consulting
April Boe, The Nature Conservancy
Bob Amrine, Lewis County Conservation District
Frank Staller, Wild Fish Conservancy
Jim Hill, Citizen, Lewis County
Debbie Holden, Creative Community Solutions
Bob Burkle, Washington Department of Fish and
Wildlife (WDFW)
Andy Olson, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis
Reservation
Miles Batchelder, Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon
Partnership (WCSSP)

Valerie Gow, Puget Sound Meeting Services
Janet Strong, Chehalis Basin Land Trust
Janel Spaulding, Grays Harbor College
Jamie Glasgow, Wild Fish Conservancy
Gwendolyn Hannam, US Army Corps of Engineers
Marcia Heere, US Army Corps of Engineers
Brett DeMond, StreamWorks Consulting

Birdie Davenport, Department of Natural Resources
(DNR)
Amy Iverson, Washington Department of Fish &
Wildlife

Welcome, Introductions, and Adjustments to the Agenda

Chair Bob Amrine called the Chehalis Basin Partnership (CBP) Habitat Work Group (HWG) meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. Everyone present provided self-introductions.

Review of the Lead Entity Website: <http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/info/pub-svcs/lead-entity>

Members provided positive feedback on the website. Debbie Holden said she reworked the library page and included the CBP link on top of the page and some information from WDFW. The library includes much information for project sponsors. A possible change involves the ranking system, which may change if there are any changes to the ranking system.

Miles Batchelder questioned the title of the website and whether it should be titled Grays Harbor County. April Boe said the website encompasses the entire Chehalis basin and titling it Grays Harbor County might be confusing. Ms. Holden suggested removing “Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery” and renaming it “Chehalis Basin Partnership WRIA 22 & 23.” Bob Burkle suggested discussing naming options with Lee Napier. Ms. Napier is the Lead Entity Coordinator and by extension Grays Harbor County is the administrator. Lead entities can be conservation districts, tribes, counties, and other entities. He said he likes the inclusiveness of naming it after the basin, as calling it Grays Harbor County excludes the other counties.

Jim Hill arrived at the meeting.

Members discussed the purpose of the website, which is communicating to the public. Members suggested adding, “Administered by Grays Harbor County.”

Ms. Holden offered to have her son, a college student, access the website to determine user friendliness of the site.

Ms. Holden referred to a lead entity fair at the Capitol in March. She indicated she is preparing a poster as well as a lead entity map. She provided an example of the map.

Mr. Amrine advised members who use the website to contact Ms. Napier or Mr. Kleim with any suggestions for improvements. Ms. Holden said the library will not be available until after Wednesday, February 18, 2009. The website can be accessed through Grays Harbor County's website. Mr. Batchelder said a website for the Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership is also under development and will include a link to the site.

Mr. Amrine included an additional item on the agenda pertaining to prioritization of sites for water assessment and water typing.

Priority Sites for Water Assessments

Jamie Glasgow reported on Wild Fish Conservancy's work on water assessment and water typing for groundtruthing regulatory maps for the distribution of fish and fish habitat. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maps have implications for how habitats are protected. Regulatory maps in existence have been shown by many to be inaccurate. The agency received funding to groundtruth the regulatory water-type maps involving 40 miles of the Chehalis River drainages. The entire area will not be covered because of the short window available for the survey, which is based on the state protocol for surveying. However, the agency would like some consensus on where members would like surveying to occur. The agency is seeking basins that will be subjected to much growth in future years to ensure streams are mapped appropriately before development occurs to ensure protective actions can occur. The areas include watersheds, smaller streams, and areas of fish species composition and distribution that are not widely known. Some members have provided feedback to focus along the corridors along highways and Interstate 5. One of the priorities is Wildcat Creek. Ms. Boe said the stream is choked with knotweeds. Mr. Glasgow said another component of the work is correcting the classification of streams and ensuring they are on the map for seeking restoration and protection opportunities. As the surveys are completed, the team photographs and will GPS the area. Surveying work is only conducted in areas where permission has been obtained. However, much work can be accomplished at public road crossings. Approximately 30% of the landowners, who are contacted, provide permission to access areas.

Mr. Glasgow said the application identified Wildcat and Scatter Creeks as areas to survey but also made it clear that the final decision would be recommended by the HWG.

Mr. Burkle said the Black River basin is experiencing growth. Mr. Amrine said the area is mentioned in the application.

Mr. Glasgow answered questions on the window for performing water type assessments, which is from March 1 through July 15. The state doesn't want surveying when streams are going dry. The agency tends to focus on the middle of the window to give time for cutthroat to emerge. Many of the streams begin to go dry by July. The agency efforts tend to occur from mid-April through the end of June. Identifying one or two subbasins, such as Wildcat and portions of the Black River will provide enough area for one season of surveying. The agency will continue the surveys for the next three years.

Prairie Creek in Grand Mound was offered as an area of consideration.

Marcia Heere reported the Corps is using DOE's methodology for watershed characterization. In the process, different elements are considered, such as hydrology. It helps to prioritize areas where restoration

should occur. The Corps is focusing more in the Chehalis basin for a systematic approach, which may fit well with water assessment and typing work. If it's funded, the goal is for DOE to complete the work.

Members discussed strategy and the different tiers which are based on fish, habitat, and priority of restoration.

Mr. Glasgow said the work has been underway since 2005 in north Thurston County. He described the magnitude of the errors and the discrepancies between what's on the ground and the regulatory maps. The agency has typed 60 miles of stream in north Thurston County with 27 miles of those miles not previously included on regulatory maps. It is often the consultant, who's hired by the developer, who discovers a stream. The process of water typing is managed by DNR because it was originally developed to protect streams from forest practices in the 1970s. The maps have since been adopted by most local governments. The maps maintained by DNR are the official regulatory water-typed maps and are used by local governments within Critical Areas Ordinances. The maps are located on the Forest Practice Application Review System (FPARS) at the department's website. The map categories include "S" for shoreline, "F" for fishbearing reach, "N" for non-fishbearing reach, and in those cases where there's more information the non-fishing bearing reaches are further defined into subreaches of "Non-fishbearing seasonal" and "Non-fishbearing perennial." Unclassified represents "U." The model used by the state to develop the maps is based on a topography model, which is too coarse to pick up many of the smaller streams. Because that's the foundation for the model, all the predictions about the distribution of fish throughout the watersheds are underestimated. It was noted that in some cases, there are over-estimations as well. Mr. Glasgow said in addition to the corrections to the maps submitted to DNR, the organization also is building interactive maps to reflect the corrected water type and stream locations and all photographs and data collected during the course of the surveys.

Frank Staller reported the agency also does course barrier assessments and works closely with the state to complete assessments. As work continues on stream typing, some course assessments are also completed.

Mr. Glasgow said that often the team picks up barriers existing between road crossings. Most fish passage inventories are really culvert inventories and most are road-based for the most part. The teams often has the opportunity to walk the stream channel between the roads and are finding a fair number of diversion dams and other manmade instream features blocking fish passage, which are not on any maps. The teams photographs and performs GPS of the sites.

Mr. Glasgow was asked about the protocol the agency is using. Mr. Glasgow said the protocol can be found in WAC 22-16-031 and in Section 13 of the Forest Practice Board Manual. Mr. Amrine commented that the conservation district uses WDFW protocol for habitat assessments and often find dry streams in July, August, and September. Having a shorter window is more beneficial. Mr. Glasgow agreed and indicated that DNR allows during the typing to have a set of physical criteria rather than only relying on the presence of fish. If the channel meets the criteria that reach can be identified as fish habitat even if it is dry when surveyed. That aspect goes a long way in identifying areas. Otherwise surveying could occur above a known barrier culvert for fish and finding none, it could be classified as non-fish habitat, which makes no sense.

Mr. Amrine asked whether the team could type a stream if he submitted information on the stream. Mr. Glasgow said the agency's website includes maps showing areas where water typing assessments have occurred throughout the state. The team can also perform site-specific assessments, which are very useful for protecting habitat. In those instances, the efforts target where the need has been indentified. The

interactive maps are generally reflective of a continuous watershed, such as Wildcat. He said he wants to provide the same service to the basin and identify site-specific opportunities as they are discovered.

Members shared their respective experiences when walking streams for fieldwork and the amount of information not included on the maps. Ms. DeMond said one of the drawbacks of the lower harbor barrier inventory is that it's totally road-based and the ranking criteria doesn't reflect any upstream or other barriers. Mr. Glasgow said it's an issue as investment could occur unwittingly in fixing a barrier that is upstream of an existing barrier that's unmapped.

Gwendolyn Hannam asked how frequently streams are reevaluated and monitored. Mr. Glasgow said the state has a process to accept observations from individuals/organizations qualified to perform water type assessments. Most of the data is from forest practitioners or companies. The effort is not coordinated. Mr. Staller added that Wild Fish Conservancy has been performing the work since 1996. The organization contracted with Weyerhaeuser for stream typing. As the work progressed, information was conveyed to the state. However, it was later discovered that much of the work was not updated on the maps for several years. When salmonscape modeling occurred, protocol was changed. However, as the organization performs the work, the information is provided to DNR. There is no systematic evaluation and revision of the state's water type regulatory maps. When the organization submits findings to DNR, DNR has 30 days to either accept or reject the observations. If the observations are rejected, the organization meets with DNR and justifies the observations. After resolving any differences, the change(s) become official. However, it may be several months or years before the changes are reflected on the official regulatory water type maps available to the public and local governments through FPARBS, which is why the agency elected to build its own interactive GIS maps, so that it can be used in the interim until the changes are posted by DNR. Mr. Glasgow said changes are submitted to each regional DNR office where the watershed is located.

Mr. Glasgow encouraged members to provide information on streams to survey to him by email.

Mr. Glasgow said he will generate a mailing list using county parcel data for any parcel that intersects with a known stream for the Wildcat Creek surveying work. He commented on landowner permission and noted that even without landowner permission, if there is access upstream from that point, fish found upstream would extend downstream enabling water type assessment of the stream.

Mr. Burkle commented on the development process and ways to obtain access during the development process for water typing activities. He commented on cuts to state employees during the current economic downturn and how that will eliminate more opportunities for staff to complete field work. He suggested engaging with Wild Fish Conservancy through a memorandum of understanding for investigative work in the field. It could be a short-term solution during cutbacks in state government.

Mr. Amrine reported the conservation district is holding a technical advisory committee meeting to review the last area of culvert assessment in the Chehalis basin. He said he will discuss water typing to see if committee members have any suggested areas to survey.

Mr. Glasgow said letters will be sent to landowners requesting permission to access properties. The letter describes the organization and the project. The letter includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope for landowners to return. The organization needs to begin work on one of the watersheds soon.

Discuss Project Review Criteria for SRFB Grant Cycle

Ms. DeMond referred to copies of Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) guidance on ranking and prioritizing projects. She displayed old criteria previously used and a list of current ranking criteria that many people found difficult to use last year. Ms. Napier is asking members to review the criteria for potential revisions.

The criteria should line up with the SRFB outline of benefits and certainties and also reflect the basin's plan and tiers. The ranking developed last year is unwieldy and complicated. She suggested reviewing the guidelines to assist members in the review. One issue of confusion is that habitat quality is a subjective determination. Ranking criteria were based on number of species, percent barrier, and amount of habitat opened. That is the initial prioritization. However, it didn't account for habitat quality, which is why the intent is to include a quality component. Ms. Napier believes it is too vague. The issue is determining the values, such as percentage of habitat suitable for spawning, rearing, and complexity. There are concerns about where the information is obtained to make the determination. There are other subjectives, such as outreach plan, monitoring program, and cost effectiveness.

Ms. DeMond said a core group was identified to make recommendations. However, Ms. Napier is requesting the committee review the information to ascertain if any progress can be made to revise the criteria. Core group members included Mr. Amrine, Mr. Burkle, Ms. DeMond, Mr. Olson, Ms. Napier, and Mr. Kuttel.

Mr. Burkle said in Puget Sound, there is the Chinook Recovery Plan. Ranking criteria are built around the core items within the Chinook Recovery Plan that point to specific needs. He said he's unsure if that method can be applied to the basin's process. However, the basin has tiers in terms what tier the subbasin is within and how much habitat in both miles and stream width. The degree of slope could be a component of the criteria for quality.

Mr. Amrine said generally, the conservation district conducts habitat assessment walks from a barrier down to the mouth and up to the next barrier to see how much stream can be opened before submitting an application. As long as funding is available, the district will conduct assessments. For this round, the district has some funding to conduct those assessments.

Mr. Amrine suggested the core group should meet prior to the next meeting and provide suggestions.

Birdie Davenport said her difficulty is that she's only been a project proponent and never a ranker, which might pertain to many of the members. Many of the proponents haven't worked through the tools. She said habitat quality is important for her projects and should be a factor in the ranking.

Mr. Burkle advised that following the SRFB's Appendix E - Benefits and Certainty Evaluation Definitions is likely the best course to pursue. Several other ranking processes in Puget Sound also follow Appendix E. He offered to provide WRIAs 10/12 project ranking criteria as an example for a starting point.

Ms. Heere asked whether the ranking is for prioritizing restoration projects or areas of protection. Mr. Crumley said the ranking is for restoration projects or acquisition. Ms. Heere suggested one of the factors could be the future of the parcel in terms of future development which might not benefit the restoration site. Ms. DeMond noted quality of threat is criterion included for acquisition.

Mr. Olson suggested the core group should work off Appendix E and incorporate information from last year.

Members discussed scheduling a meeting and agreed to meet on Wednesday, March 4, at 9:30 a.m. to noon to review and revise project ranking criteria.

Mr. Amrine referred to the district's Technical Advisory Committee scheduled on February 23 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. The committee will discuss funds that haven't been utilized, which will fund more habitat assessment work for project proponents within the Chehalis basin.

Update from US Army Corps of Engineers

Ms. Heere reported she was recently reassigned from the Alaska region to the Chehalis basin project. She presented a map of the basin and outlined the location of existing and proposed levees. The intent is to set the levees back where possible so that some of the natural flood areas can be retained. Some areas will not enable a setback. In the past, approximately 35 acres of wetland impacts were mapped and 100 acres where hydrology will be blocked. Those areas will be mitigated as well as new wetland delineation as the old one is outdated. The 1996 flood data is also outdated with the 2007 and 2008/2009 floods. One possible area of mitigation was State Route 6 (Schubert Ditch), which is now being used as a water treatment mitigation site by the City of Chehalis. The Corps is looking for a new mitigation site. Part of DOE's study will help prioritize where restoration is best suitable.

Mr. Burkle commented on mitigating fish impacts and the difficulty of locating areas. Ms. Heere said the Corps is open to other areas. After completion of wetland delineation and impacted areas assessment, the Corps will try to follow DOE, EPA, and the Corps regulatory protocol to offset impacts.

Mr. Hill asked whether Lewis County has contacted Ms. Heere with any GIS data as the county completed cost benefit information for the dam. Ms. Heere said it would be a question to direct to Project Manager Laura Orr.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2009.

Adjournment

With there being no further business, Chair Amrine adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.