

Chehalis Basin Partnership Steering/Technical Committee Meeting Summary

April 16, 2002

Study Area Meetings

The committee reviewed the study area meeting held in Montesano and discussed the study area meeting scheduled for this evening at the Black Hills High school. Several groups came forward as a result of the Montesano meeting. They are interested to learn that they have an opportunity to comment and participate. Mason County has designated a different Commissioner and staff person as the county contacts for the Partnership.

At tonight's study area meeting there will be several displays presented by groups that are doing work in the Chehalis Basin. This includes DNR (Dataviewer CD), USFWS, Thurston Conservation District, Thurston County, ABLE (Black Lake). These displays are in addition to the ones prepared by Partnership member groups that have been at previous meetings.

J. Roach has been promoting this study area meeting. He has made presentations to the Thurston County Commissioners, Tumwater City Council and personally invited a number of legislators, local agencies and citizens. The Committee members thanked 'J.' for his tireless work to promote the study area meeting and the work of the Chehalis Basin Partnership.

Water Rights Data by Sub-Basin

Lee Daneker (EPA) has been working on turning the data on water rights, claims, certificates and permits contained in Ecology's "Water Right Application Tracking System" (WRATS) into information that can be displayed by sub-basin using GIS software. Lee shared the results of his work and it resulted in a good discussion of what the WRTS database shows (the number of water rights, claims and permits on paper) and what it can not tell us (how much of that 'paper water' is still valid or how much is really being used). The committee was very pleased with Lee's work and ask him to present the information at the April 26th Partnership meeting so the Partnership can have a similar discussion.

Hydrological Modeling

Kitty Gillespie has been in touch with Thom Hardy from Utah State University and arranged a meeting on May 10th to discuss the strengths and limitations of using computer modeling as the basis for tracking water in the basin. Mr. Hardy is currently working with the planning unit in the Nooksack watershed (Whatcom County).

Committee members suggested that a briefing and discussion on computer modeling should be held prior to the meeting with Mr. Hardy so that our participation can be more meaningful. It was agreed to put this briefing/discussion on the April STC agenda.

Water Quantity Evaluation (Water Balance)

Bob Wheeler (Triangle) reviewed the three approaches under consideration for preparing a water balance that compares how much water is available naturally, how much is already appropriated, how much water is actually used and how much remains available (if any) for future appropriation. The three approaches are to develop a water balance for the whole basin, prepare a water balance for each of the four study areas, or develop a water balance for each sub-basin that has an established minimum instream flow. A basin-wide water balance would be very general due to the time and funding available. Although it would be useful for demonstrating how a water balance works, it would not provide enough detail to be useful for making specific decisions. A water balance based on sub-basins would be very detailed and would provide information needed to make decisions on specific applications to use water or develop very specific plan recommendations, but we don't have the time or resources to develop detailed water balance for each of the 31 sub-basins.

There was general agreement that the best approach would be to put some resources into a basin-wide water balance because the Partnership must understand how the overall system works, but the majority of resources should be focused on a detailed water balance for the highest priority sub-basins. This led to a lengthy discussion of what should be considered in setting priorities among the 31 sub-basins. Specific work assignments were made and a deadline of April 25th was set for completing the work assignments.

Instream Flow Contract

Triangle reviewed the proposal from TetraTech/KCM for monitoring flows and Ecology reported on the status of the contract with the Partnership to fund flow monitoring. It turns out that the Partnership is eligible for more than anticipated. The flow monitoring proposal from TetraTech/KCM clearly shows that \$100,000 will not allow us to gather enough quality data for the number of sites that need to be monitored in order to provide the basic information necessary to evaluate existing flows. A recommendation was made that the Partnership revise its application to Ecology and request sufficient funds to gather the data needed.

Future Meetings and Agenda's

The next regular meeting date of the Steering/Technical Committee falls on April 2, 2002. Agenda items include: an overview of hydrological computer modeling, a proposal to develop an overview of Washington State's laws and regulations that affect how water is managed, applying the sub-basin priority setting system and developing a priority list, the final budget for instream flow monitoring, and an update on the contract for services with Triangle-TetraTech/KCM.

A request was made that several additional people be added to the STC e-mail distribution list and that e-mail addresses for some current members be checked because they are not receiving the information. This will be done.