

Chehalis Basin Partnership Steering/Technical Committee Meetings
November 1st and November 7th, 2002

The Steering/Technical Committee met twice in November. The initial meeting was a special work session devoted to sorting out the various issues that have been identified over the last two years and developing a strategy for becoming informed about the issues and addressing them in the basin watershed plan.

At the November 7th meeting the STC reviewed work products developed based on the work done at the first November STC meeting.

Topics or Issues to be addressed in the Plan

Topical or issue papers will define and analyze the issues that need to be considered in the watershed plan and eventually contain recommendations that will be discussed by the Partnership. They are meant to be short (2-6 pages) and as concise as possible.

John Penberth handed out a memo to the committee he prepared after the November 1st meeting that describes the major elements he felt should be addressed in the plan. John did not come expecting that his suggestions would be directly discussed at this meeting but he wanted to give the committee a preview of his thoughts before he presents them to the Partnership. He remains concerned that the watershed planning effort is really just a screen the Department of Ecology can use to cushion the blow when it implements laws and regulations that are already on the books by saying “we are only doing what the plan recommended.” Ecology’s representative responded by agreeing that the watershed plan by itself will not change any existing laws or regulations, nor would it relieve Ecology of any of its responsibility for implementing those laws and regulations. Ecology’s representative went on to say however, that if the Partnership could agree on what those changes would be the plan certainly could contain recommendations that some laws or regulations be changed.

A draft outline for the Topical/Issue papers was distributed, discussed and suggestions made on revising the draft. Some description of how the Topics or issues discussed in a specific paper fit into the plan outline must be included. So should a brief description of the minimum requirements of the Watershed Planning Act for a particular issue. An updated version of this outline will be handed out at the November 15th Partnership meeting.

An outline of a Topic/Issue paper on Managing Water Quality was distributed as an example. This led to further discussion and clarification about what topics should be included.

The final portion of the discussion focused on what Topics or Issue the papers would address, the contents of those papers and who the authors might be.

Since a considerable amount of work will be devoted to development of these Topical or Issue papers, the Partnership will be asked at it November 15th meeting to authorize this work.

Public Outreach: A lengthy discussion of how to inform the public and planning unit members was held. The STC was reminded that the Citizens’ Advisory Committee has put a lot of time

and effort into developing a public outreach strategy. Clearly there are a couple of steps that are critical to completion and approval of a plan to manage water and water dependant resources in the basin. The first critical step is to make it possible for the planning unit members to wade through the huge amount of complex information so that they understand it well enough so that they are able to identify the highest priority issues and develop recommendations that will result in effective management. The other critical step is to be able to explain the resulting plan so that the general public can understand and support it. At the conclusion of the discussion the committee was in general agreement that how the plan is explained to the public is just as important as what is in the plan.

Watershed Plan Format Options: a number of options for how the plan would actually be organized and look were handed out and discussed.

Scopes of work for the Water Quality and Multi-Purpose Storage Projects:

Grays Harbor County and the consultant team reported on the status of these two projects. The county has requested authorization from Ecology to begin incurring costs for these projects prior to the negotiation of an actual contract. Descriptions of the experience and qualifications of the lead staff from the consultant team for the projects were distributed. The Partnership will be asked to authorize Grays Harbor County to complete negotiation of these contracts with Triangle Associates/TetraTech-KCM at its November 15th meeting.

Future steering/Technical Committee Meeting are scheduled for:

December 5th
January 2nd
February 6th