

**CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP
STEERING TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Building
600 Capitol Way
Olympia, WA
February 7, 2008
9:30 AM**

Meeting Summary

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Napier, Grays Harbor County
Mark Swartout, Thurston County
Christine Hempleman, Department of Ecology
Kahle Jennings, City of Centralia
Terry Willis, Citizen, Grays Harbor County
Glen Connelly, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis
Reservation

OTHERS PRESENT

Lisa Dilley, St. Martin's University
Cheri Lindgren, Puget Sound Meeting Services
Jim Hill, Citizen, Lewis County
Jerry Louthain, HDR
Matt Ely, USGS
Mark Savoca, USGS
Laura Orr, US Army Corps of Engineers

Welcome & Introductions

Chair Mark Swartout called the February 7, 2008 meeting of Chehalis Basin Partnership (CBP) Steering Technical Committee (STC) to order at 9:37 a.m.

Meeting Agenda

A meeting agenda was reviewed.

2008 Legislative Session Updates

Chris Hempleman reported an additional \$9,000 is available for each planning unit. Units will have to spend the previous \$45,000 allocation or roll it over into the next fiscal year. She provided an overview of 2008 Legislature watershed planning activities to include a bill for \$2.5 million to expand and advance the Department of Ecology's (DOE) groundwater monitoring program. Approximately \$1.5 million of the \$2.5 million is to fund two pilot studies. The bill is still alive. However, it appears the pilot projects will be dropped.

Chair Swartout asked whether the remaining \$1 million could be used as a match for the losing and gaining reach study by USGS. Ms. Hempleman replied she didn't believe so.

Kahle Jennings reported he testified at the House hearing on the bill. If funded, the program will duplicate the work completed by Mr. Pitz throughout the state.

Ms. Hempleman said Chehalis could be part of the pilot project, but the focus would have to be another part of the basin. Substitute House Bill (SHB) 6203 will enable counties to use .04% of sales tax for water quality and water quantity projects (Total Maximum Daily Load [TMDLs], 2014 Plans, and marine recovery areas) if counties elect to do so. Funding would be tied to larger planning processes with responsibility falling on local governments.

Lee Napier commented that Grays Harbor County collects .09% of the sales tax through a Rural Distressed Counties Assistance Program reserved specifically for economic development.

Discussion followed on how the Partnership could support SHB 6203, how funding would be collected and administered on behalf of the CBP, and the need to develop a process and standing operating procedures to collect and allocate funds to water quality/quantity projects.

Chair Swartout suggested the STC explore and frame the issues before presenting it to the Partnership for discussion.

Ms. Napier said it's exciting that people are now thinking about how to fund these types of programs.

USGS Proposal – Characterization and Numerical Simulation of Water Resources in the Chehalis Basin

An additional handout was distributed outlining project costs, funding sources, and a proposed project budget for the overall characterization and numerical simulation proposal. Ms. Napier explained approximately \$90,000 remains from the legislative appropriation. Federal fiscal Year (FY) runs from October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009. One issue is whether there are other agencies that can assist with completing the major tasks, how to breakdown the tasks if not fully funded, and how to spend the \$95,000 balance.

Discussion followed about which tasks could be completed with the remaining \$95,000 to produce something useful to inform other tasks that will be completed when funding is available as well as taking advantage of funding opportunities that emerge.

Ms. Napier suggested that USGS and DOE could be responsible for the contracting with the Partnership working directly with the two agencies.

Ms. Hempleman asked whether the Partnership is eligible for its next year of implementation money. Ms. Napier answered yes, but that the majority of the funds is used for staff and meeting support. Ms. Hempleman said she would follow up about additional available funding resources. Mr. Swartout said it would be great if the organization could pick up another \$240,000 (as described in the handout) to finish the FY. He referred to the funding sources matrix on the handout and said an additional \$330,000 is needed for FFY 2009.

Matt Ely, USGS, explained that USGS needs to partner with a taxing agency (DOE, a county, or conservation district) and why the handout refers to "Ecology" as a designated cooperator.

Mr. Swartout said the Partnership should position itself to approach legislators in the October/November timeframe and ask for a \$240,000 appropriation to carry it through the biennium. Mr. Jennings added state funds will be available on July 1, 2009. An additional \$260,000 and \$155,000 are needed for FFY 2010 and 2011, respectively.

Ms. Willis arrived.

Mr. Ely said the proposal is written using October 1, 2008 as the start date. There are some tasks that are time sensitive, such as conducting water level measurements in spring and low flow measurements in August. Matching tasks to funding opportunities should not be problematic. Timelines can be realigned. The remaining \$90,000 could be spent this spring. Logical next steps include tasks 2 and 3 – compile and evaluate available groundwater data and populate databases (\$55,000), and compile and evaluate available hydrologic and geospatial data (\$45,000) - which totals \$100,000. Task budgets could be

adjusted. USGS does not have a problem getting started and pacing activities if the Partnership is confident that additional funding will be forthcoming.

Mr. Swartout said the larger issue is securing \$240,000 between now and October. Mr. Ely agreed. One suggestion is identifying a task to complete that provides value if the others don't advance. USGS can be fairly flexible.

Mark Savoca, USGS, said there are issues the organization needs to consider. Certain tasks can be started and completed whether the overarching project moves on or not that can be utilized when the Partnership moves forward with a watershed study. Other tasks are time critical and once initiated should continue in an uninterrupted manner. USGS staff can complete well defined parts of a future multi-part project as long as everyone agrees that at the end of the time and expenditure there is a deliverable product that can stand alone and be picked up absent more work to inform a future study. USGS is ready to allocate staff resources to complete parts of studies that are ultimately useful.

USGS representatives reviewed major tasks outlined on the handout with members. Mr. Ely provided additional details specific for tasks 2 and 3. USGS could complete the two tasks for \$90,000.

Discussion ensued about local well log information that might be available. Mr. Ely said agencies could forward their databases to USGS for verification purposes. Mr. Savoca explained there are two classes of wells involved with the records search- private domestic wells (6,000-7,000) and public supply wells (significantly fewer in number and very important because more complete information is available).

Dialogue followed about inventorying agricultural wells. Mr. Ely said for water level measurement purposes, the use of the well is less important compared to its location and what aquifer it's tapping. He described the criteria a project geologist uses when selecting wells to inventory. Mr. Savoca said irrigation wells within significant agriculture areas will be part of an inventory. He indicated he is comfortable with USGS working on the program on an incremental basis as funding becomes available. It's important all parties have an understanding about what funds USGS will receive, how USGS will expend the funds, and coming to a mutual agreement on deliverables at the end of the cycle. Mr. Savoca suggested USGS should expand tasks 2, outline what the agency will do, and the products that will be delivered (draft a Joint Funding Agreement [JFA]). The scope of the JFA would include tasks 2 and 3.

Ms. Napier commented that the remaining \$90,000 might be capital money and not tied to a specific timeframe. She indicated she will follow up.

Terry Willis asked what happens to the data and where it's stored in the interim if funding to advance the project does not become available for several years. Mr. Savoca described two options:

- USGS will populate the National Water Information System (NWIS) database with the information. The Partnership has direct access to the NWIS online at no cost.
- A deliverable is an Excel dataset spreadsheet. The CBP will take physical possession of the data.

Specific to the geospatial data, USGS can provide the coverages to the GIS Clearinghouse at Grays Harbor College. Mr. Ely said if directed by the Partnership, USGS could work with Grays Harbor College (or another entity) as the GIS repository.

In response to a question from Mr. Jennings about disadvantages of collecting information now if the program is delayed for a significant period of time, Mr. Savoca said the only downside is supplementing the records with current data.

Jerry Louthain asked whether the inventory includes wells in the upper tributaries. Mr. Ely replied that most of the well logs are in the vicinity of Centralia and Chehalis. A watershed scale approach is used rather than limiting the search for information along the main corridor of the mainstem.

Discussion ensued about the groundwater flow model and building a second watershed model for the proposal. Mr. Ely explained the watershed model will simulate precipitation and flows in rivers into tributaries to determine how much water is entering sediments. The two models will be coupled together.

Members generally agreed and asked USGS to follow up with a SOW for the remaining \$90,000 to outline expectations and deliverables for tasks 2 and 3. Mr. Swartout conveyed that Ms. Napier and Ms. Hempleman will work with USGS on the contracting details.

Discussion followed about a Chamber Clover Creek study where partners have organized themselves into a consortium. Rather than looking for a single funding source, Mr. Savoca said funding could be secured from multiple stakeholders that are vested in a project.

Chair Swartout asked Mr. Jennings and Ms. Hempleman to work together and contact other cities and stakeholders to identify additional funding streams.

Ms. Orr arrived

Glen Connelly advised that he will follow up with the Chehalis Tribe about potential additional funding sources. Ms. Napier added that she will follow up with the Quinault Tribe concerning funding prospects. Ms. Hempleman indicated she'll follow up with the Department of Health (DOH) about engaging in the project.

Chair Swartout asked USGS to forward the proposed SOW and supplemental information to Ms. Napier by March 5, 2008 for distribution purposes.

Role of CBP in Flood Issues

Chair Swartout welcomed Laura Orr, Project Manager/Hydrologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Orr distributed handouts and contact information.

Chair Swartout briefed the STC about the Partnership's discussions on the flooding aftermath. The Partnership views itself as representing a broad base of interests. Members would like to develop a watershed-based approach to the flooding issue. The CBP authorized Ms. Canaday, Ms. Napier, and Mr. Jennings to draft a letter to Keith Phillips with the Governor's Office. Ms. Canaday testified on a draft bill proposed by Senator Dan Swecker. The Legislature intends to help facilitate a collaborative process to promote flood control and mitigation in the Chehalis Basin. Chair Swartout quoted the proposed bill on what the watershed planning unit may do and must do if the Partnership acts pursuant to Section (1). A new section 3 states, "If, by December 31, 2008, Grays Harbor, Lewis, and Thurston counties create a joint flood control district or exercise equivalent flood control authority under Title 86 RCW covering a substantial portion of the Chehalis basin:

1. The Chehalis basin partnership may not act, or must cease acting, under section 2 of this act;

2. The Department of Ecology must redirect subsequent technical or funding assistance provided under section 2 of this act to the joint flood control district or equivalent authority; and
3. The joint flood control district or equivalent authority assumes all authority and associated responsibility provided to the Chehalis basin partnership under section 2 of this act.”

Discussion followed about the current status of the draft bill.

Mr. Jennings said that regardless if the bill advances, one question is what role the CBP has in the broader flooding issue in the Chehalis Basin. Chair Swartout said the outcome of the draft bill will be known when the CBP meets again on February 22, 2008. The proposed legislation does not force the Partnership to do anything, nor does it create a flood district. He said he is familiar with how to form flood districts. A flood district can be initiated in two ways: a petition from property owners living within the proposed boundaries or through a resolution adopted by county commissioners.

The county that has the largest area within the district is the lead entity in forming a district. A legal question is which county would lead the effort if a flood district is established by resolution. Another critical element is the boundary because property owners within the special benefit boundary vote whether or not to form a flood district. A decision is needed by March 28, 2008 to meet a May 20, 2008 special election date. RCW 29.13.020 contains a schedule of when elections occur. Auditors of all four counties need to work together to place the issue on the ballot for all four counties. Each auditor will incur expenses associated with a special ballot measure. The treasurer of the largest county is the treasurer for the district. Funds from any special purpose district are paid with property assessment to the treasurers. The treasurers then pass the money to the special purpose district. Three commissioners are elected to serve on a special purpose district. The commissioners have latitude about how much can be assessed to property owners within the boundary based on annual work plans. Chair Swartout outlined lake management district characteristics. He emphasized that broad authority is extended to flood districts. If a flood district were enacted in 2008, revenues would not be available until April 15 of the following year.

Mr. Jennings said one of the reasons the Corps project didn't advance is because local communities were not willing to take on the responsibility of maintaining the levies.

Ms. Orr announced that the state is willing to have DOE and another agency step forward as a non-federal sponsor. The Governor is willing to allocate \$50 million for the Centralia project. Operation and Maintenance (O&M) involves keeping the levies clean. The Corps will come and assist during flooding, and typically pays up to 80% of the costs to repair levies after flooding. It's up to the community to maintain the levies.

Chair Swartout reviewed RCW 29.13.020 and election dates and how special district boundaries are established. There are many activities that must occur between March 28, 2008 and a May 20, 2008 election date. November is an alternate election time.

Discussion followed about voting nuances for special districts and background related to the Lewis County proposal. Mr. Jennings said there is a push to look at the flooding problem as a watershed-based issue. It should be addressed through a watershed level flood management district.

Ms. Orr said O&M is one concern of the levy. Another part of the project concerns a dam while another is how much protection the levy provides. There are two projects the Corps is working on in the Chehalis Basin: the Centralia Flood Damage Reduction Project and the Chehalis Ecosystem Restoration Project (Grays Harbor County is the sponsor). The latter could also include flood risk management.

Mr. Jennings said the US Corps of Engineers flood control project has become controversial. A question is how solving the problem for I-5 (Centralia, Chehalis) will affect others. Forming a basin-wide flood management district will help people buy into solutions. Ms. Orr responded there is information surfacing that is not correct. She clarified that the model demonstrates the levee assignment plan will not induce damages. If the project does move forward, the Corps will incorporate new data into the model to verify the outcome once again. The Skookumchuck dam takes the peak off of the flood coming down and retains the water longer. The water is not added to the Chehalis. Water is displaced up at the dam allowing the river to flow down. In response to an additional comment from Mr. Jennings, Ms. Orr clarified that the interior drainage issue (China Creek) is not included in the levee project.

Mr. Hill referred to a US Army Corps of Engineer article published in *The Chronicle* that was the first to address displacement. Discussion followed about the constriction at Mellon Street and alternatives (bypass channel) the Corps has evaluated. Ms. Orr said the levee assignment provides better protection to the cities of Centralia and Chehalis rather than a bypass channel. An objective for the Corps with this project was to look downstream.

Ms. Hempleman asked how revising the flood maps affect the Corps' analysis. Ms. Orr said the analysis shouldn't change significantly. Flooding did come from upstream. The levies will provide protection for 100-year flood events. There is a chance the levy could "over top." She explained why the 100-year flood protection threshold was chosen for the levee.

Ms. Willis referred to the 1990, 1996, and 2007 flood events, all of which violated the levy. Ms. Orr said the community supports using a 100-year flood for design purposes. The Corps is able to justify 100-year levies. The design also provides for a contingency for settlement of the levy. There is a 70-year history behind trying to find a flood solution. This is the first proposal with a cost-benefit ratio the federal government can support - 1:3 cost-benefit ratios.

Mr. Jennings commented that the 2007 flood event has not been classified. It's not clear whether the project would have prevented flooding. The 1990 and 1996 floods were 100-year events and the levee would have provided protection. The Long Road levy did not breach. Ms. Orr said the levies have been fixed and the Corps will check to ensure the levies meet standards.

Discussion ensued about flood management practices for the Skookumchuck River dam, US Army Corps of Engineers standards, and materials used to construct levies.

Chair Swartout asked if climate change affects the 100-year flood elevation. Ms. Orr replied the Corps does not project. The agency uses the most current data and adds new data into the flood frequency curves.

Mr. Louthain added that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not map future conditions.

Mr. Jennings acknowledged the plan provides benefits for Centralia. He referred to the fourth bullet point under *Acceptable to the Public* project facts, "Elevate eight residential structures because the project

would increase floodplain elevations (between SR 6 and Centralia) by an average of four inches in a 100-year event.” A concern is not addressing China Creek. Ms. Orr replied that China Creek does not meet minimum criteria related to flow regimes, velocities, or quantity of water to justify a federal project. The levee proposal will not increase China Creek or alter flows. She explained 80% of the benefits from the approved project are to reduce the risk of flooding to the cities of Centralia and Chehalis while 20% are for the protection of I-5.

Mr. Jennings said local measures could be implemented to store flow for China Creek in the upper watershed to prevent flooding; however, “we” can’t prevent it from backing up under the freeway when the Chehalis River floods. Ms. Orr said the Corps will ensure that the project does not cause China Creek to back up more than it does currently.

Ms. Napier said some citizens question the relationship between the Centralia project and the ecosystem project and believe one will build levees while the other removes the levee. Ms. Orr said the ecosystem project does look at removing levies in some locations to open up an oxbow. The relationship between the two projects is the focus on flood damage reduction. The Corps was not able to identify a sponsor for the ecosystem restoration component. The federal government authorized the Centralia project. The project scope could change by 20% (moving the levy slightly would result in a 20% change). The project will be designed and constructed as presented, or it will not.

Ms. Napier asked if the ecosystem project could alter what’s authorized under the Centralia project. Ms. Orr answered the ecosystem project would have to demonstrate that it would not induce damages elsewhere. Several stakeholders outside of Centralia have expressed interest in the ecosystem project. The ecosystem project has been focused on restoration; however, it could look at flood damage reduction throughout the entire basin. Governor Gregoire has said it is up to the communities to make a decision. The community is interested in a basin-wide approach, and it is probable that the same solution would result from a basin-wide strategy. The locals could decide to abandon the Centralia project, or the state will help fund the project that could be expanded to include the entire basin. The state asked the Corps to develop a proposal. The Corps does not have the money to pursue the ecosystem restoration component. She asked if the STC could support using remaining funds to pay for the redevelopment of the work plan for the ecosystem restoration project, or should the Corps pursue the model. Chair Swartout said that’s a question the Partnership, and the project sponsor Grays Harbor County needs to answer. Ms. Orr said the state is waiting for the locals to make a decision about the state’s financial assistance and/or help with a larger basin strategy.

Discussion followed about Ms. Orr attending the Partnership meeting and providing a presentation.

Ms. Napier said a question is the Partnership’s role in responding to the flood event. She pointed out that Lewis County has contacted county commissions and bypassed the CBP. Newspaper articles talk about a citizen effort in Chehalis to take over. As project manager for the ecosystem, she said she doesn’t see the connection at this point based on recent conversations and media coverage. The community needs to have the discussion about what they want to support.

Chair Swartout agreed. The Partnership’s role is not clear. He suggested revisiting the issue at the CBP’s February meeting. A portion of a meeting could focus on the true facts of the flooding event. Ms. Napier said Dave Montgomery has been contacted and might be able to attend the March 28th CBP meeting.

Chair Swartout said a role of the CBP is to provide rumor control.

Mr. Jennings said it's important that all stakeholders attend the Partnership's next meeting to hear Ms. Orr's presentation.

Mr. Hill volunteered to contact Mr. Averill about attending the Partnership's February 22 meeting. He suggested outreaching the community to also attend the meeting to learn more about the Centralia project.

Ms. Napier said she would contact the local newspapers about announcing the CBP meeting.

Ms. Orr reported she is not available on February 22, and she would ask the Colonel to attend.

Ms. Napier asked that Mr. Hill include Commissioner Graham in discussions with Mr. Averill.

Further discussion followed about the STC and CBP roles regarding flood control and ecosystem management and that additional resource would be needed if the Partnership gets involved.

In response to a comment from Mr. Hill about the CBP's identity, role, and mission, Chair Swartout said the Partnership is on track with watershed planning and salmon recovery.

Develop CBP Agenda for February 22, 2008 Meeting

- SHB 6203 discussion
- US Army Corps of Engineers levee proposal presentation
- Revisit the role of the Partnership in the flooding issue

Develop STC Agenda for March 6, 2008 Meeting

- USGS Scope of Work (SOW) for the remaining \$90,000
- Bill Jarocki – *tentative* - organizational structure discussion

Mr. Jennings departed.

Adjournment

With there being no further business, Chair Swartout adjourned the meeting at 12:35 p.m.