

**CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP  
STEERING TECHNICAL COMMITTEE  
Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife  
600 Capitol Way  
Olympia, WA  
January 7, 2010  
9:30 AM**

**Meeting summary**

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**PRESENT**

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

Janel Spaulding, Grays Harbor College  
Julie Balmelli-Powe, Lewis County Farm Bureau  
Bob Burkle, Washington State Department of Fish  
& Wildlife (WDFW)  
Cheri Lindgren, Puget Sound Meeting Services

**Welcome & Introductions**

Co-Chair Glen Connelly called the January 7, 2010 meeting of the Chehalis Basin Partnership (CBP) Steering Technical Committee (STC) to order at 9:43 a.m. He reviewed the meeting agenda. Everyone present provided self-introductions.

**Discuss Work Plan and Funding**

Lee Napier distributed work plan and funding discussion handouts. Effective July 1, 2010, the Department of Ecology's (DOE) Watershed Planning Program is no longer funded in the Governor's budget. Watershed planning was cut 40% in 2009. Approximately \$5.4 million was allocated previously to DOE to manage watershed planning statewide and fund planning units, such as the Chehalis Basin Partnership, with some funding available for projects. The Partnership was provided with the same discussion handouts at its December meeting. Partnership members provided guidance on developing funding strategies.

Bob Burkle advised that an important aspect is identifying the CBP as the citizens committee of the lead entity. That enables him and Amy Iverson to continue participating at meetings and receiving up-to-date information about Chehalis basin flood issues. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) also lost funding from DOE for watershed planning positions. He reviewed a proposal on planning units merging with lead entity citizens groups. There will be some grant funds available to facilitate the merge.

Ms. Napier described her lead entity capacity role. Approximately \$110,000 was allocated during the last biennium funding three components involving a quarter of her time, technical assistance, and \$10,000 for strategy updates and outreach to project sponsors

Mr. Burkle commented that the Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership (WCSSP) is also developing a funding strategy, which the STC could use as guidance in creating local strategy.

Ms. Napier said funds are also needed to update the lead entity strategy, which drives projects and is part of the overall watershed plan. The workload shifts if the Partnership is not engaged in lead entity work and participating in related activities.

Kahle Jennings provided additional information on key issues that are of concern to the City of Centralia in addition to water supply. The City of Centralia is working on securing water rights from the Skookumchuck River. Other concerns include flooding and wastewater permitting requirements over the next 10 to 15 years. Having a basin-wide forum such as the Partnership is a benefit whether supported by the state or not. Entities will want to be engaged. Other communities will face issues similar to those of Centralia.

Mark Swartout referred to conservation from agricultural and municipal perspectives. The issue is what the CBP could do to promote use of reclaimed water to conserve potable water and water rights.

Members commented about water storage options.

Julie Balmelli Powe commented on the mistrust between government and citizens within the basin. The CBP helps bridge that distrust because people are working together to solve problems rather than taking sides.

Mr. Swartout noted local food production will become more important because of climate change. Executing strategies within the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) will position agriculture positively for providing food to local communities. Drilling wells and withdrawing water will benefit both agriculture producers with a steady source of water and increasing instream flows. The DIP also addresses identifying funding sources to assist agriculture for irrigation, such as implementing water banking in the basin. Another idea is identifying resources enabling agriculture to conserve water with technology including soil sensors.

Ms. Balmelli Powe said water storage whether structural or non-structural is an important consideration.

Ms. Napier pointed out that under the current scenario Ms. Hempleman will be unable to attend Partnership or STC meetings. Ms. Hempleman said she is hopeful a DOE representative can attend CBP and/or STC meetings when there's a need for technical expertise. It would be helpful that the same representative attend when needed. It's in DOE's best interest to be engaged with the Partnership.

Mr. Swartout provided additional information on a meeting held at DOE on January 4. An outcome of the meeting pertained to lead entities approaching the Legislature with a common message:

- Continue to fund skeletal watershed planning staff at DOE.
- Establish a blue ribbon panel to identify accomplishments of watershed planning.
- Identify projects currently underway and allocate bridge funding to the end of the biennium. One suggestion is charging charge Group A systems a water use fee up to \$500 annually, which could generate \$150 million annually for watershed planning. Bridge money could help fund the Partnership pending the creation of a nonprofit organization.

Ms. Hempleman said another option is asking the Legislature to tax exempt wells.

Mr. Swartout commented on the link between the Partnership and Flood Authority. It's logical that DOE would participate at both levels.

Ms. Napier referred to the January 4 meeting. Neil Aaland, Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC), is developing common talking points and redefining watershed planning. Further funding

reductions are likely to lead to revising watershed planning because it can't survive without a funding source. One consideration is identifying critical projects underway that simply can't be stopped, which could be a point at which to redefine the program. She outlined potential projects that can't continue if watershed planning is redefined:

- Future outreach could be in jeopardy.
- Funding and time has been invested for data collection by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is contracting with USGS to build a decision support tool (DST). The question is how the Partnership can continue to pursue work by USGS.
- The Partnership has invested in the basin-wide General Investigation (GI) Study since 2000. Previous projects were considered as an in-kind match as well as Ms. Napier's time providing project management. The question is whether this is something that's at a critical point and is important.
- Staff time to coordinate outreach activities, such as the Watershed Festival, stream teams, and the CBP sponsoring future editions of *Drops of Water* are also at risk.

Members offered the following feedback:

- Whether it's possible to reduce the number of meetings over the next few years.
- The agency will not have the resources for funding meeting summaries effective July 1. A reduction in the number of meetings and staff time might provide some funds to maintain a record of the Partnership or STC meetings.

Discussion ensued on the amount of time required to establish a nonprofit organization. Ms. Spaulding reported she is beginning research on how to create a nonprofit. There are few steps; however, the paperwork is significant.

Ms. Napier reported that the Phase 4 Grant ends on June 30. If the Partnership contributes a \$30,000 match of either cash or in-kind services, the organization can apply for additional money for planning unit support. There's also a funding balance from the legislative appropriations.

Mr. Jennings asked whether there are resources available to retain Ms. Spaulding's services through the end of the year. Ms. Napier said Ms. Spaulding's position is funded through June 2011. The time state agency representatives attend meetings can be considered as part of the in-kind match. In-kind services could include representatives from other organizations attending meetings, stream team volunteers, and donated meeting space. The organization can also receive credit for a higher hourly rate for members.

Ms. Hempleman said the Partnership can also consider the time involved in drafting correspondence, Mr. Connelly's time associated with the Flood Authority, and Ms. Spaulding's time working on the Partnership's website.

Ms. Balmelli Powe suggested approaching agencies such as Weyerhaeuser and the Farm Bureau for minimal funding requests.

Mr. Swartout reported that the main job of the executive director of the nonprofit is establishing relationships with organizations and identifying grant and other funding opportunities.

Ms. Napier asked about other aspects of watershed planning for convincing people that the work of the Partnership is important.

Members offered the following comments in response:

- Addressing flooding issues.
- Addressing water supply and solutions particularly as they relate to farmers and interruptible water rights.
- Climate change is real.
- Farmers will not buy into global warming. Farmers will buy into climate change based on scientific research.
- Water banking is likely the least controversial concept. Thurston County cannot transfer water rights out of long-term agriculture areas, which is also available to Lewis, Grays Harbor, and Mason Counties.

Mr. Jennings said his top five priorities for the Chehalis basin include forming a nonprofit that leads to applying for grants and long-term sustainability, local outreach through the stream team process and expanding the program in other communities, developing an agriculture water bank, completing the basin-wide GI Study, and not losing sight of the groundwater study, which is identified as the highest priority in the DIP.

Mr. Swartout provided a historical perspective on the purpose of the groundwater study. The modeling effort is separate from the water banking concept. It's important to understand how much surface water is available in the basin. The model informs mitigation requirements.

Members exchanged views on exempt wells and educating the public about limited water resources within the Chehalis basin.

Ms. Hempleman said it's likely funds will become available in the future to achieve goals in the watershed plan, mitigate flooding, and retaining Ag and forestry.

Ms. Napier suggested that the work by USGS to determine the amount of water available in the basin is the top priority that the Partnership should continue focusing on. The GI addresses water storage. She said she's unsure how water banking fits in the funding picture because it would be a new project. A target is providing the Legislature with a list of projects that will be in jeopardy as of July 1. She shared Commissioner's Willis' message to the Legislature, which is DOE's budget is being cut and there is no way the planning unit can function or manage natural resources within the Chehalis basin.

Mr. Jennings referred to water banking in the context of agriculture and indicated Lewis County's Growth Management Plan was upheld on an appeal. The county designated Ag lands that can now be developed. It might be timely to reopen a dialogue with the Ag community on the basin water issue before land conversions occur and providing water rights to Ag lands that don't have the water they need. The goal is keeping Ag and forestry. However, there is pressure in the farming community to maintain development rights because in most cases the property is a farmer's retirement.

Ms. Napier shared that she spoke to Ms. Willis about the idea of a water use charge for municipal Group A water systems. Ms. Willis responded that there are too many tax proposals that trickle down and hurt the Ag community. Water banking might be a way to help the community or addressing economic development aspects.

Mr. Swartout reported that a farmer can buy a water right from another property owner in an area zoned long term Ag (LTA). Ms. Balmelli Powe commented that a municipality has more funds to purchase water rights than a neighboring farmer.

Ms. Napier said another message to the Legislature could include information about the Partnership forming as a nonprofit sooner than anticipated as part of a long-term and sustainable solution, which reflects more of an action rather than a priority.

Mr. Swartout said the Legislature would likely appreciate the Partnership's plan for creating a nonprofit corporation, but that the organization requires some bridge funds to achieve the goal.

Mr. Burkle suggested a priority should be to continue the citizen committee, which is part of salmon recovery.

Ms. Napier said some examples of outreach include the stream team and the Watershed Festival. Partnership meetings are open to the public and the meetings assist in bringing policy and technical representatives together to vet issues leading to problem solving in the face of adversity.

Mr. Jennings suggested framing the main concerns as the highest priorities in the Partnership's transition work plan as the organization moves forward developing a nonprofit arm of the CBP.

Additional discussion points included:

- The Legislature has not funded what it initiated - local residents and local governments participating in the planning for future use of water.
- The state could allocate resources enabling DOE and WDFW representatives to continue attending Partnership and committee meetings.
- A wish is that the Legislature will continue to make project money available.
- A future vision of member jurisdictions contributing funds to sustain watershed planning.
- Another project to consider as a priority is the Water Quality Monitoring Program, which the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation is pursuing on a smaller scale.
- Water quality standards could impact National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting.
- Water quality data, such as baseline turbidity and temperature, could be useful when it comes to mitigation or designing storage facilities and salmon recovery projects.
- There are several streams in Grays Harbor with water quality issues.

Mr. Swartout reviewed the seven projects identified by the STC as high priorities and in jeopardy if funding is no longer available:

- Creating a nonprofit arm of the Partnership
- Local outreach – stream team
- Developing an Ag water right bank
- Basin-wide Ecosystem Restoration Study
- USGS modeling effort
- Continue citizen committee for salmon recovery; merge watershed planning with salmon recovery
- Continue water quality monitoring

Members discussed researching grants offered by Wal-Mart and identifying a minimum amount of funding to sustain watershed planning efforts for the Legislature's consideration. Ms. Napier advised that it's unlikely the Legislature will allocate funds for capital projects. Approximately \$125,000 is required to sustain a functioning watershed planning unit.

Another suggestion offered by members included assigning dollar values to the projects and asking the Legislature to fund the priorities.

Mr. Swartout said if establishment of a nonprofit is successful, the Partnership could seek funds to continue to implement high priority projects, and then seek funds for staff to continue to advance the projects that have already been initiated.

Mr. Jennings said he is hopeful that Grays Harbor County doesn't walk away from the table just because funding goes away.

Mr. Swartout advised that another priority is identifying a fiscal agent during the transition to a nonprofit to sign contracts.

Members discussed desired funding levels for water banking (\$50,000), water quality monitoring (\$75,000), and merging salmon recovery and watershed planning.

Ms. Napier reported she will forward project language to Neil Allund. Additionally, she and Ms. Spaulding will design a legislative brochure and develop supplemental materials.

Mr. Connelly said he'll speak to Mark White and David Burnett regarding more involvement by the Chehalis Tribe at the legislative level, particularly as it relates to outreach.

#### **Watershed Outreach Activity in the Upper Basin**

Mr. Jennings said he understands there is interest in hosting a watershed festival in the upper basin. An idea is incorporating a watershed-type event focused on basin issues with the City of Centralia's July 4 Summer Fest event. Summer Fest includes various activities including a parade and fishing derby. An area within the park could be set aside for Fin if funds are available to pay for the salmon replica of approximately \$300 each day and to showcase stream team efforts.

Members offered other venue suggestions to showcase basin-wide activities and reach out to the public:

- Taylor Pittman is interested in linking farms and local agriculture with local events, such as a bike ride in the watershed. An option is assessing a registration fee for some activities to generate revenue to pay for staff time.
- There is an annual car show at Rainbow Falls. Ms. Balmelli Powe volunteered to follow up on when that event occurs.
- Lupine Day (4<sup>th</sup> Friday in April) in the Grand Mound area.
- A family day event at Lintott/Alexander Park in Chehalis offers another education opportunity.

Members commented on whether Centralia's Summer Fest draws visitors from the region and the possibility of the Chehalis Tribe entering a float in the parade. Mr. Jennings said he'll follow up on securing information on attendance numbers.

Mr. Jennings shared information on a large gravel borrow pit located on the west side of I-5 Lakeside is proposing to fill over a 20-year period. The land is zoned industrial and could be developed in the future.

The STC agreed to discuss outreach venues at a future meeting.

#### **Basin-wide Ecosystem Restoration Project Update**

Ms. Napier reviewed a tentative work schedule proposed by Corps staff. The organization is assembling a new team. The Corps agreed to complete a draft Project Management Plan (PMP) by January 15. Project managers are conducting an internal review of the draft plan from January 18-28 and will release a draft PMP by January 29. Corps staff is scheduled to make a presentation to the working group on February 8. Comments are due to the Corps by February 22. The first working group will meet on March 15 to review substantive comments. Additional meetings could be scheduled as needed.

The draft plan will be forwarded to the working group. An alternative schedule to the Corps was proposed:

- The working group will meet on February 4 to generate a list of comments. The Corps would like a sense of questions prior to the February 4 meeting to ensure the appropriate people attend the meeting to answer questions. This eliminates the need for a February 22 due date for comments.
- Push the March 15 deadline up. Potential working group meeting dates with the Corps are February 19 or 25, or March 3 or 5.

Members expressed a preference of a February 25 meeting date and March 4 as an alternate date. The STC and BAC meeting planned for March 4 could be cancelled to facilitate a meeting with the Corps and working group.

Ms. Napier said another activity involves the Corps reviewing the interlocal agreement forming the Flood Authority to determine whether the Partnership can receive credit for the work.

#### **CBP Agenda**

- A report from Matt Ely, USGS, on data collected last summer
- A report by Ms. Spaulding on the formation of a nonprofit and draft bylaws
- Input on legislative strategies developed by the STC
- A slide show presentation from Kim Ashmore highlighting the China Creek/Centralia Stream Team clean-up activity

#### **STC Agenda**

- Allocate time to review the PMP
- Legislative update report

#### **Adjournment**

With there being no further business, Co-Chair Connelly adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.