

**Chehalis Basin Partnership  
Water Quality Committee  
Grays Harbor County Forestry Building  
Montesano, Washington  
December 10, 2009  
9:30 a.m.**

**Meeting Summary**

**MEMBERS & OTHERS PRESENT:**

Janel Spaulding, Grays Harbor College/Chehalis Basin Partnership  
Dave Rountry, Department of Ecology (DOE)  
Patrick Wiltzius, City of Chehalis  
Bob Burkle, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
Teri Franklin, Citizen, Grays Harbor County  
Bob Amrine, Lewis County Conservation District  
Kathy Jacobson, Chehalis Basin Education Consortium  
Miranda Plumb, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Steve Hallstrom, Citizen  
Nancy Wood-Siglin, Citizen  
Scott Collyard, DOE  
Linda Orgel, Friends of Grays Harbor  
Louis Farran, Citizen, Grays Harbor County  
Pete Holm, Chehalis River Council  
William Gow II, Puget Sound Meeting Services

**Call to Order, Introductions and Changes to the Agenda**

Patrick Wiltzius called the Chehalis Basin Partnership (CBP) Water Quality Committee (WQC) meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. Everyone present provided self-introductions.

**Review of the 2006-2009 State of the River Report**

Mr. Wiltzius said many people were involved in developing the State of the River Report. The objective is to utilize the report with the goal of providing an overview to re-engage organizations within the Chehalis basin to inform them about the report's existence and to determine what the committee can do to facilitate any efforts organizations are pursuing.

Janel Spaulding said the report represents three years of data gathering efforts by the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation in cooperation with Grays Harbor College by Joel Green and Don Loft. The report is available on the Partnership's website.

Mr. Wiltzius acknowledged the Chehalis Tribe for collecting and managing the data.

Dave Rountry said he's interested in receiving information from the group on how the Water Quality Committee as a group or as individuals might assist in implementing the recommendations that are identified in the report. The report identifies several areas needing attention at some point involving water quality protection or restoration. More follow-up work may be necessary or through visual observations to better understand the problems and the cause of the problems. He said he's interested in ideas on how he might assist in coordinating with individuals or groups to add to the momentum for the water quality protection work already occurring. It's important to acknowledge that much work is underway. As an employee of the department's water quality program in coordinating water quality protection and restoration work, Mr. Rountry said part of his efforts entail accessibility to individuals or organizations to brainstorm ideas or to coordinate access to funding to the extent possible.

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Mr. Wiltzius said the Chehalis Tribe has been collecting water samples along with other partners through funding from DOE. Those funds have been expended. The Tribe is willing to continue water sampling on a limited basis. The report accounts for 95 sites that were routinely sampled. The Tribe is requesting a reduction in the sampling sites based on the resources available to conduct the work. The committee is seeking input from attendees on possibly targeting subbasins in more depth until funding picks up. The committee is also interested in any areas for sampling that targets some of the subbasins in more depth until funding is restored to begin the entire sampling program.

Mr. Wiltzius referred to the report and previous reviews during Partnership meetings. The committee is at a crossroads and is working on determining whether the committee should continue. If the committee cannot assist or engage more organizations; it's likely there is no need to meet on a regular basis. If the committee is to be a viable organization the question is what it can do to help other organizations within the committee's limited resources.

Bob Burkle commented that there are efforts to examine flood issues in the Chehalis system through the Flood Authority. There are things that are being addressed by those working for the Flood Authority concerning issues of water quality and the idea of a dam improving water quality. However, WDFW has different theories regarding the placement of dams. There has never been placement of a dam anywhere in anadromous waters where the fish returns were improved. In the Chehalis, fish returns are basically healthy except in one river, the Wynoochee River where there's a dam, which is experiencing a minus 30% escapement goal. At least two major reservoirs are being contemplated or a suite of other things that will need to be incorporated into the Chehalis system for effective flood control includes rain water capture, low impact development, advance stormwater treatment and infiltration, and off channel and source storage. There's the potential for groundwater storage of floodwater and a good potential for preserving off channel and wetland areas that could help to absorb stormwater. Reconnecting or enhancing some of the factors could go a long ways in mitigating some of the flood issues that are occurring in the Chehalis basin. There is an obvious link with the Corps project management plan for an ecosystem-wide review of all the things that will help to control flooding in the Chehalis system. Currently, there is Corps led project to look at levees in the Centralia/Chehalis areas. The second initiative is a project management plan to look at the system that is under development in conjunction with the Flood Authority and the Partnership through the Steering Technical Committee (STC) of the Partnership. There is a point for insertion of the water quality data and even continuation of the water quality studies to assist and potentially something that could be funded through project coordination.

Mr. Wiltzius acknowledged the comments and the importance of providing the report to the Corps for its possible use. Mr. Burkle advised that Chris Hempleman with DOE is a member of the STC is aware of the report.

Kathy Jacobson asked how the water sampling sites were selected and whether DOE also has ongoing testing as well. Mr. Rounry said DOE's sampling work is very limited in the basin. At the most, there are three sites. The Department of Health's Shellfish Monitoring Program covers six to eight sites in the harbor area. Mr. Wiltzius said as part of the previous discussion, DOE should be able to use the report if the department is performing limited water quality sampling. The committee would like input from DOE if there are areas that should be targeted. The report was submitted as a requirement of the grant, but the question was asked of whether DOE is considering using it as part of water quality evaluation efforts.

Mr. Rounry said the Army Corps of Engineers' work is more related to flood and flow management. He asked if the Corps would include water quality data within the ecosystem restoration study and management planning work. Mr. Burkle said the Corps likely has to because biological information must be included in

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terms of mitigating any impacts from any project that arises from the investigation. Biological covers water quality as well as habitat and species protection.

Mr. Amrine said the Tribe initially identified 83 sites with the committee selecting other sites. The goal was to cover as much of the basin as possible. The Tribe did a very good job. The report provides the first time that turbidity issues have been addressed in the basin. There is no turbidity TMDL study in the basin. He asked how DOE will consider that issue in terms of preventing erosion. Some sites in the main stem of the south fork and the upper Chehalis are pretty severe. He asked whether DOE is considering those issues. The initial cause was the 2007 event, which deposited sediment everywhere. If a person didn't witness it firsthand they wouldn't have a clue about the extent of the devastation. In some areas there was 10 to 15 feet of sediment deposited.

Mr. Burkle commented that another tie-in is the Forests Fish Agreement and the 10-year update that was supposed to be updated in 2009. It essentially evaluates the effectiveness of the agreement in mitigating. One is turbidity. It would be interesting to see if the forestry program has been effective.

Mr. Amrine said from his site visits, the forest zones have improved and water quality is much better. However, with the event there are many areas of problems. Mr. Burkle agreed that there were some landslides of unprecedented nature in the Chehalis system.

Louis Farran said he was born and raised on the Chehalis River and has fished the river his entire life. He said he has three fishing shacks on the river that are fished plunked. For the last eight years, he's fished the river off the computer for the highs and the lows. Ever since the slides, he hasn't fished. He described how when it rains and the river is muddy, it's not possible to fish because fish don't travel through the muddy water. He learned over the eight years of computer fishing that after the second day drop, fishing was the most successful because water clarity would improve enabling fish to travel up the river.

Mr. Farran said during a hunting trip by horseback at Stillman Creek, he discovered the location of the massive slides. The slides were unbelievable and something that he's never witnessed in his lifetime. He's attending the meeting because of concerns and because he hasn't fished since the event. The Chehalis River has been dropping the last 12 days with no rain and no reason for the river to be muddy. He recently visited the south fork of the Chehalis River and walked into Stillman Creek. The slides appear fresh, almost as if it was the same the day it occurred two years ago. There is no revegetation occurring in the area of the slides. At some point, he wants to fish with his grandchild and is concerned it won't happen because the river is too muddy. Until control of the upper watershed occurs, there will be no changes downstream. Water clarity in the river prevents fishing. He disagreed with Mr. Burkle about the healthy fish runs. The fish runs are not healthy in the Chehalis or the department wouldn't have had an emergency closure last year of steelhead. The fish runs are not the same prior to the slides.

Mr. Burkle said he was referencing a 10-year average.

Mr. Farran suggested there should be federal grants for some mitigation or to construct a buffer for containment of sediment. Until issues are resolved in the upper watershed, the lower river will never improve.

Mr. Amrine said it takes time to recover from natural events. Mr. Farran questioned whether the upper watershed would qualify for disaster funding. Mr. Amrine suggested that with the support of DOE and WDFW, it might be possible to target some of the sites.

Discussion followed on the slides and how they occurred in old growth forests and well as logged areas. The slides were indiscriminate in where they occurred. A similar event occurred in the Quinault in 1997 from a

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500-year flood event. A considerable amount of 500-year old timber slid into the Quinault inside the park. Those huge events are the main way large woody debris is delivered to river systems.

Attendees and members discussed possible ways to control erosion. Mr. Burkle noted that with droughts and floods it's not possible to maintain plantings, which may be contributing to negative conditions.

Mr. Wiltzius said an option to consider as part of the water quality monitoring program is to pursue the study of turbidity after-effects. Mr. Burkle suggested a place of focus could include downstream to obtain some baseline data. Mr. Farran said it's possible to visually view the east fork and Stillman Creek. After it begins raining, it's possible to narrow the area of drainage that is dumping the most silt in the river. Mr. Burkle commented that there are already monitored sites with data collected. The areas experiencing turbidity might be the ones to consider for future funding. There are certain places in the watershed that appear to be suffering from turbidity of an unprecedented duration since the event. Identifying those areas and matching them with water sampling sites might be a good triage to employ to derive some continuing benefit from the study as well as provide information on how long it takes for turbidity to return to normal.

Mr. Wiltzius said from the committee's standpoint the goal is not to collect data just to collect data. The committee is seeking input on how the committee can help. Mr. Burkle suggested the main effort is to develop the rationale and ammunition for pushing restoration projects specific to solving the problem. It could be another tool used to prioritize projects.

Mr. Amrine said the District had a project slated for last summer involving erosion. The report already has been used to obtain funding. If more documentation can reveal that conditions are not improving, the data can be used in the future.

Mr. Burkle referred to a meeting on January 6, 2010, on restoration ideas for mitigation to help with controlling flooding. This work could feed into restoration efforts.

Pete Holm said he lives off the Black River, where the issues are temperature and dissolved oxygen. Many citizens encounter the problems when fishing or observing the river. The report is fabulous but what's missing is the translation into terms most people can understand. It's unfortunate that an entire year has been lost because of the difficulty associated with obtaining permits or pursuing restoration. Actions could have occurred months to help alleviate sedimentation. It is very frustrating for people to contend with.

Mr. Farran asked whether the event would qualify as a federal disaster that would entail eligibility for grants that people can obtain. Mr. Burkle said that typically, grant programs require identification of the issue within a specific period of time. The problem in the upper Chehalis is the number of slides.

Mr. Wiltzius asked about the potential of inviting representatives from timber companies to attend committee meetings and discuss turbidity concerns to determine if the companies have any long-term plans for the issue. Ms. Jacobson asked about regulation of timber companies as any time there is logging there is a plan for reforestation. It was noted that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has oversight over logging companies. Several members suggested inviting DNR representatives to a meeting.

Several attendees suggested the report should be reformatted with data interpreted in layman terms.

Mr. Wiltzius suggested the first step is inviting DNR representatives to a meeting. Mr. Rountry offered to contact Birdie Davenport for ideas. Teri Franklin advised that she's invited DNR representatives to previous meetings in the past.

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Members and attendees discussed the responsible agency for water quality. Mr. Burkle advised that DOE's responsibility is water quality. If it's a water quality venue, it's unlikely DNR would be able to justify attendance. All natural resources agencies are operating on a 2/10<sup>th</sup> of one percent of the state budget. Resources are limited to core duties. DNR's job is to evaluate forest practices, which has already been done. The event that occurred was far beyond what anyone anticipated. It's the core of the issue because it wasn't a possibility on anyone's radar screen on the probability of the massive event occurring.

Members discussed DNR oversight, Forests and Fish Rules, permits for buffers, and resolving the issue of response to slides. Mr. Wiltzius suggested considering how to solicit attendance by DNR and DOE representatives to discuss how the issue will be addressed.

Mr. Rountry said one endpoint of the process is turning the data into an action plan for turbidity. It could be a useful pathway to restoration. However, there is more of an interest in human-level conservation where work is accomplished on-the-ground. He suggested working on efforts to solicit attendance from DOE and DNR's timber and fish representatives.

Members and attendees shared information on the impacts slides in the upper watershed have created on the river system and frustration with enforcement action by responsible agencies. Maybe through prodding, actions could occur quicker. Another option is contacting environmental agencies to pressure regulatory agencies for action. It was noted that the issue involves a natural disaster. It will require private timber companies and agencies to meet to resolve the issues. Ms. Jacobson said one reason for the election of the new Commissioner of Public Lands was that the new Commissioner wasn't convinced that all protocol was followed and that some logging was authorized on steeper slopes. There is the expectation that the agencies are in place to enforce compliance. There are concerns and the representatives from those agencies should attend to discuss the issues.

Nancy Wood-Siglin suggested moving the discussion to other areas along the Chehalis. Mr. Wiltzius said there are issues along the Black River involving temperature and oxygen. Mr. Burkle commented that fecal coliform issues are occurring along the urban areas rather than the rural areas where farms are located. Much of it is attributed to impervious surface as well as source control issues. Some education and ordinances would be a good starting point.

Mr. Farran commented on the changes in river quality after laws were enacted prohibiting farmers from discharging liquid manure on farm fields during the winter.

Ms. Jacobson shared that the students test twice a year in the main stem and different tributaries. The students review the data and discuss potential contributors to high loadings and practices to avoid. The teachers involve the students in discussions surrounding fecal coliform and potential sources for high readings. The Henderson watershed is a success story where DNA testing was conducted for several years to determine the source of fecal loadings. The tests revealed that the main contributor was septic systems and dog waste. Some shellfish beds were since reopened.

Members discussed fecal loadings in Grays Harbor and the TMDL investigation for the lower harbor. Mr. Rountry reported on a presentation that was provided relative to seasonal movement of bacteria concentrations in river flows. The presentation was entertaining and informative.

Several members shared information on the Mason Conversation District presentation held at the committee's November meeting with Rich Geiger, Engineer, Mason Conservation District on experimental technology the District is pursuing in Mason County involving fungi media and mycoremediation techniques to filter fecal coliform from surface water.

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Mr. Farran asked whether the use of salt on roadways during the winter will impact river water quality. Mr. Wiltzius said the committee is a subcommittee of the Chehalis Basin Partnership with essentially no authority and no funds. The committee assists in coordinating the water quality monitoring program because of the grant. The committee has many ideas and wants to share them with people pursuing the projects. Salt on roadways is just one of several issues. The committee doesn't have the resources for more projects. It's possible to pursue public outreach and develop a list of potential projects that can be carried out by scouts or through local organizations and conservation districts. The goal is to reinvent the committee to assist others.

It was suggested that the committee could take the report and have groups work on identifying the areas that are not meeting water quality standards and take the next steps through a collaborative approach.

Scott Collyard said he hasn't had a chance to review the report but that it will be used when he develops the TMDL follow up. As part of the TMDL, monitoring occurs in those cases where there are still issues. The department focuses on those issues and makes recommendations based on data received. Because the department has TMDLs in other areas, the department knows what likely will work. The information from around the state will be used to make recommendations on the watershed.

Mr. Wiltzius said many of the problem parameters occur during the summer. Part of that is caused from low river flows. The City of Chehalis is required to remove flows from the river and produce reclaimed water, which is Class A water. At some point, it will be better to return the water to the river to help with dissolved oxygen and fish.

Mr. Burkle commented on hydraulic cycles and the impacts of impervious surface, which sends water into the river during the winter and decreases flows during the summer. There are solutions through design by storing water in the winter and releasing it during the summer. Mr. Wiltzius indicated that many jurisdictions have the systems. The problems communities are beginning to have are with issues with water quality as far as water rights. Many communities are producing reclaimed water for various purposes. Because of the shortage of water, reclaimed water is a product. However, DOE is looking at regulating that and mitigating for the water rights. There appears to be conflicts on all sides with DOE trying to regulate it.

Miranda Plumb referred to the Chehalis Fisheries Restoration Program and will use the report to focus on where restoration activities should occur and to assist in prioritizing projects.

Mr. Amrine asked whether he could represent the committee when he contacts Harry Pickernell about the water quality monitoring sites in terms of monitoring for turbidity. Mr. Wiltzius affirmed that he can represent the committee.

Discussion followed on the availability of turbidity data. Ms. Spaulding said the data is in the process of being downloaded to the DOE database. Mr. Collyard noted that the water quality monitoring program didn't begin with a focus on turbidity but that he will include turbidity data in his analysis.

*Several attendees left the meeting.*

Ms. Jacobson inquired about obtaining the Google earth presentation of the watershed by Randy Lehr. Ms. Spaulding offered to contact Mr. Lehr.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is on January 14, 2009. The meeting will include direction on the monitoring sites to maintain for sampling by the Tribe. It was noted that it's important to maintain as many of the sampling sites

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as possible. The Tribe is willing to fund the effort until June. The issue was discussed at a Partnership meeting, which involved a limited discussion with members refocusing discussions on flooding. There is concern with losing momentum. Ms. Plumb said there is no dedicated person within the Partnership who is seeking grant opportunities. NOAA has community based and restoration grants which have been mentioned by several members of the Partnership, which could be pursued by the Partnership. The Chehalis Basin is the second largest basin in the state and there are some large grants that could be pursued. There are funds available. The issue is having a dedicated person submitting grant applications. Mr. Wiltzius asked Ms. Plumb to collect some of the information for discussion at a future meeting to determine the appropriate person to lead the project.

Mr. Farran offered that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation might be willing to work with the committee on developing grant applications.

**Adjournment**

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

Prepared by: Valerie Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
Puget Sound Meeting Services