

Habitat Work Group , Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

March 4, 2024

~ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm ~

Chehalis Tribe Community Center

Ann Weckback - <i>Lewis County Public Works</i>	John Stepanek - <i>Grays Harbor CD</i>
Anthony Waldrop - <i>Grays Harbor CD</i>	Karen Adams - <i>WDFW</i>
Alex Gustafson - <i>Trout Unlimited</i>	Kathy Jacobsen - <i>LE Education Coordinator</i>
Alice Rubin- <i>Recreation & Conservation Office</i>	Kelly Verd - <i>Lewis CD</i>
Ben Amidon - <i>Chehalis Tribe</i>	Key McMurray - <i>Pacific County LE</i>
Bill Teitzel - <i>Port of Chehalis</i>	Kim Figlar-Barnes - <i>WDFW</i>
Brett DeMond - <i>CBFTF Streamworks</i>	Kirsten Harma - <i>LE Coordinator</i>
Chenele Holbrook - <i>Dept of Ecology</i>	Mack Hunter - <i>Grays Harbor CD</i>
Cindy Wilson - <i>Thurston County Citizen</i>	Martin McCallum - <i>Thurston Co Rep</i>
Drew Mealor - <i>ASRP Implementation Mgr</i>	Megan Tuttle - <i>WDFW</i>
Garret Dalan - <i>The Nature Conservancy</i>	Ned Pittman - <i>Coast Salmon Part/Fdn</i>
Greg Green - <i>Ducks Unlimited</i>	Sarah Watkins - <i>Grays Harbor Citizen Rep</i>
Lee First - <i>Twin Harbors Water Keeper</i>	Travis Casey - <i>ECY Water Quality</i>
Jacob Murray - <i>Mason CD</i>	Victoria Knorr - <i>WDFW</i>
Jennifer Lewis - <i>Office of the Chehalis Basin</i>	

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

2. **Minutes**

There were no corrections noted to the minutes.

3. **Organizational Business**

1. **Outreach Updates**

Kathy Jacobsen shared that she, Travis Casey (WA Dept. Ecology), Kenna Fosnacht (LCD) and Karen Adams (WDFW) presented a Newaukum PowerPoint presentation to nine classes at Orin Smith Elementary, which was followed by a river table demonstration. Following that, four of those classes participated in a student-led activity to create ecologically-conscious river table designs. Karen Adams and Travis Casey also shared thoughts on the activities. Kathy shared that she is also looking to get Napavine schools involved with the activities as well.

Kathy also shared that on Saturday March 23rd, Kylie Smith will be hosting an event at Schaefer State Park on the importance of native species, and issues with the invasive plant Herb Robert. This event will be followed by a weed pull. Similar events will be taking place in the coming months - hopefully monthly. In April, Sarah Watkins will host an event at Ocean City State Park highlighting successes in removing Scotch Broom from the park.

Kathy then shared a calendar of similar upcoming events to be carried out in partnership with Washington State Parks. This calendar will be posted to the Lead Entity website.

Finally, Kathy shared that Onalaska Middle School has invited her to join on their outdoor school program to participate in classes on macroinvertebrates.

Anthony Waldrop shared information on an open house that Grays Harbor Conservation District is holding on March 28th at the Olympic View Grange in Montesano. The district will be presenting the early assessment from their Lower Chehalis River Resilience Study, and the event is open to the public.

Lee First, Twin Harbors Waterkeeper, then shared a slideshow of her 3-day river float from Centralia to Porter. She highlighted issues with river-dumping by landowners along the float, as well as trash collected - including four mannequins. She also shared a positive interaction with law enforcement while camping which highlighted the right of public access to land within the bank-full width of the river.

2. Cloquallum PWR

John Stepanek then shared an update on the Cloquallum work group. The group just finished the second of nine meetings that will take place over the year. They are focusing on the Cloquallum Watershed on the eastern edge of Grays Harbor County. In this most recent meeting, the group compared the limiting factors identified by the Lead Entity with the priorities listed by the ASRP's EDT model. Commonly identified issues were fish-passage barriers, impaired riparian processes, and lack of riparian habitat. Areas of difference included the roles of sediment/erosion issues, streamflow, temperature, water quality and LWD. The group then discussed conditions across the basin tributary by tributary. In the coming weeks, the group will work on putting together a riparian model as well as an in-stream wood model. In the following months, they will look to put all this information together to plan for the stated goal of 20% habitat restoration, a threshold which has been shown to lead to an improvement in salmon populations.

Kirsten reminded the group that these meetings are open to any members of the HWG.

4. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (9:45)

1. SRFB Conceptual Project Presentations

i. Bernier Creek Wood Placement Field-Fit (Alex, Trout Unlimited)

Alex Gustafson presented on Trout Unlimited's proposed Bernier Creek Wood Placement Field-Fit project. She described the watershed's locations and features, including that it is lacking in large woody debris, doesn't hold gravels well, and that it is and the streambed is sediment-heavy.

Alex then shared specific upstream locations for hand-placed wood, and potential downstream locations for machine-built wood installations. These placements would enhance wood accumulation, sediment sorting, re-engagement of flood plains and pool formation, and would slow bank erosion. Spawning and juvenile coho would benefit, as well as steelhead and coastal cutthroat. Fall and Spring Chinook are also present just downstream of Bernier on the South Fork Newaukum.

Alex provided a background for the development of the project, which came out of the Newaukum River Prioritized Watershed Restoration Plan. The project would have a total cost of \$474,000, with a \$350,000 ask from SRFB. This field-fit project would be subject to adjustment

as it goes out for construction, when the field-fit design would be engineered to on-the-ground information.

ii. Newaukum Headwaters Wood Placement Assessment

Alex Gustafson presented on Trout Unlimited's Headwaters Wood Placement Assessment project proposal. Along with her former presentation, she noted that this project has also been developed as a part of the Newaukum Pilot Watershed group's work.

She shared that the project proposed would assess the subbasins of the upper Newaukum watershed not addressed by the above Bernier project. These remaining three subbasins would be field-verified and assessed for prioritization of restoration work.

Issues seen in these subwatersheds are mostly consistent with the identified issues in the Bernier watershed: stream scouring, reduced channel complexity, degraded stream habitat, and degraded water quality. They also all exhibit a general lack of instream wood.

Project actions include field-verification of 20 miles of the Newaukum headwaters; development of conceptual designs/generalizable typical guidelines; and prioritize 10 miles for restoration. Directly benefiting species would include coho, steelhead, fall chinook, and cutthroat, with fall chinook occurring downstream of all area reaches.

Alex then presented the budget for the project, which would total \$260,000. Trout Unlimited's ask from SRFB would be \$200,000. She also shared how the project's goals align with both the LE's strategy and the ASRP's priority GSUs.

iii. Wynoochee River RM 12.5-18 Riparian Design

Anthony Waldrop presented on the Grays Harbor Conservation District's Wynoochee River Riparian Restoration Design project proposal. The project location is on 5.5 miles of river just north of the town of Montesano. Anthony noted that the middle portion of this reach is an early action reach from the ASRP, and that there are many opportunities here for synergy.

He then shared a number of project opportunities in discussion within the project area:

RM 12.5 - 13.5: Riparian buffer, silvopasture, engineered logjams, floodplain reconnection work

RM 13.5 - 15.0: Site of early action project - Landowner interest in additional erosion reduction through bioengineering to improve existing restoration work

RM 15.0 - 16.0: Conifer underplanting in existing deciduous riparian forest

RM 16.0 - 18.0: Engineered logjams and bioengineering to strengthen previous restoration work, and silvopasture.

Anthony then shared a budget for the project, which would total \$303,000, with a \$243,000 ask from SRFB. The proposed project would begin in September of 2024, with final preliminary designs completed by May of 2025.

iv. Mox Chehalis Creek RM 5.3-6.3 Riparian Restoration Planting Update

John Stepanek shared an updated map for the Grays Harbor Conservation District's Mox Chehalis riparian project. The project involves 19.5 acres of riparian planting on the south side of Mox Chehalis Creek, directly opposite a 2017 CREP planting.

2. 2024 –Grant Round

i. Summary of Grant Round as of application deadline

Kirsten Harma shared a SRFB update, with a map of eight proposed projects across the basin. Project costs for regular SRFB proposals total \$1,642,831, and riparian SRFB proposals total

\$734,361. Lastly, Kirsten shared a proposal to adjust project budgets to better leverage available ASRP funding. Doing so, she noted, could allow all of the proposed projects to be funded this year.

Alice Rubin then noted that the funding management for the Chehalis Basin Strategy is being transitioned from RCO to WA Dept of Ecology. With this change, ASRP and SRFB funds will not be combinable into a single contract. She emphasized that while this doesn't prevent Kirsten's suggestion from being an option, the logistics will be different than previously.

Brett DeMond asked for clarification on whether Ecology (ECY) will provide cash advances. Alice replied that while there is not an answer yet, this is a high priority issue that ECY is working out.

ii. Review of Schedule

Kirsten noted that site visits will be taking place for two days between April 9 - 11. She also shared that Grays Harbor College students will also be joining this year.

5. Chehalis Surge Plain Acquisition Opportunity

Carlo Abbruzzese, manager of DNR lands in SW WA, shared information about a project in the works in the surge plains of the Chehalis River between Montesano and Cosmopolis. He stated that Cosmo Fiber, a company in Cosmopolis, is interested in selling a part of its property to DNR, which owns a large portion of the surrounding area. However, this parcel is outside of an administrative boundary that DNR is bound to, and so the logistics of purchasing the parcel are prohibitive. Additionally, there is a potential dump site on the parcel, as well as fish passage barrier. DNR may be able to take on the parcel in the next couple of years, but the landowner would like to sell the property. As such, this property presents an opportunity to other Chehalis conservation groups to open up fish passage and protect surge plain.

Additionally, he shared two other opportunities that DNR has found in conversation with other landowners in this area outside of their boundary: one 17.5 acre parcel and one 87 acre parcel.

The group shared information with Carlo from their knowledge about the site, and discussed considerations and opportunities for DNR or any group interested in purchasing the property going forward.

6. Associated Program Updates

1. Fish Barrier Removal Board

Alice Rubin shared a short update for FBRB, stating that they are currently reviewing applications. Any applications with issues will be notified, and will need to resubmit their applications by the beginning of May.

2. Coast Salmon Partnership

Ned Pittman shared that the WCRRI grant round is open until March 14th for preapplications. The technical review panel is assembled for this year, and has 13 participants. He also noted that sponsors on the supplemental list received an email from Mara Zimmerman regarding options going forward with funding that is up in the air pending the possible voter-initiative repeal of the Climate Commitment Act (CCA). Those sponsors should be sure to read that update.

Garrett Dalan provided further clarification regarding the pending funding. He shared that in the coming week, the legislature should finish the budget, which includes funding for those

supplemental-list projects. Second, for the CCA vote to be relevant, the language in the budget would have to describe this supplemental funding as held to January 2025, and as subject to the potential repeal of the CCA. In the next two weeks, that language in the budget should be clear. Garret then shared that in the case that this funding is not available, then those projects would be included in the next WCRRI ask. Unfortunately, however, the WCRRI applications for the next grant round are due before the November initiative. Mara's email to sponsors outlines the best ways to go forward with these variables in consideration.

Secondly, Ned shared that the Targeted Investment grant round is open. He and Mara are working to put together a regional technical team for this round, which will be the first group to review the applications.

3. Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

Drew Mealor shared that the ASRP has gotten more projects funded so far in 2024 than in all of 2023 - things have gone smoothly. Projects have been widely distributed through the basin, as well. He also noted that while it is positive that the ASRP has been able to fund a higher number of smaller projects this year, it is an inconvenience regarding the RCO to Ecology funding switch. Finally, he shared that a good amount of development projects have been funded, with about half a million dollars obligated for those projects.

It was also noted that the ASRP symposium is coming up in April.

Victoria Knorr also shared that the ASRP will soon offer an update regarding the Estuary Region, which will be a new ASRP priority area.

7. Other Business

Martin McCallum took a moment to thank the group for the presentations today, as he found them very clear and helpful. He also called out examples from the meeting that highlighted the strength of the group's position to be able share and exchange information across entities and institutions across the basin.

8. Closing