



Chehalis Basin Collaborative
for Salmon Habitat

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MINUTES

December 8, 2025

9:00 am- 12:00 pm

Chehalis Tribe Community Center Class 1b

461 Secena Rd, Oakville, WA – Classroom B

Zoom

Alex James - *Capitol Land Trust*
 Alex Bradberry - *CSP Outreach*
 Alex Gustafson - *Trout Unlimited*
 Amelia Schwartz - *Thurston County*
 Anthony Waldrop - *Grays Harbor C. Dist*
 Ben Amidon - *Chehalis Tribe, CBCfSH Chair*
 Bob Russell - *Lewis County Citizen*
 Brandon Carman - *WDFW*
 Brian Combs - *Mason Conservation Dist*
 Brett DeMond - *CBFTF Streamworks*
 Caprice Fasano - *Quinault Indian Nation*
 Daron Williams - *WDFW*
 Donna Albert - *Chehalis River Basin LT*
 Drew Meador - *ASRP Implementation Mgr*
 Elena Fernandez - *Thurston Co Public Works*
 Jane Atha - *Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn*
 Jacob Murray - *Mason Conservation Dist*
 Jane Atha - *Coast Salmon Foundation*
 Jeff Mach - *Grays Harbor CD*

Jesse McMahan - *Chehalis Tribe*
 John Stepanek - *Grays Harbor CD*
 Julie Grobelny - *WDFW*
 Kathy Jacobsen - *CBC-fSH Outreach*
 Key McMurray - *Grays Harbor Citizen Rep*
 Kirsten Harma - *CBCfSH Coordinator*
 LeeAnn Frank - *Lewis County Public Works*
 Mack Hunter - *Grays Harbor Conserv Dist*
 Martin McCallum - *Thurston Co Citizen Rep*
 Molly Paige - *Non-Point, Ecology*
 Neina Chapa - *American Rivers*
 Omroa Bhagwandin - *Lewis County Citizen*
 Olivia Williams - *USFW*
 Phillip Stielstra - *Propagation Nation*
 Sarah Longacre - *Non-Point, Ecology*
 Sophia Sherman - *Chehalis Tribe*
 Tina Neils - *Grays Harbor Conservation Dist*
 Vanessa LaValle - *Conservation NW/CSP*
 Victoria Knorr - *ASRP Program Manager*

1. **Welcome, Introductions**

2. **Minutes – November**

Minutes were approved without comment.

3. **Organizational Business**

a. **CBC-fSH Outreach**

Kathy Jacobsen shared about an upcoming New Year's Day Hike sponsored by WA State Parks, Friends of Schafer and Lake Sylvia State Park (FOSLS), and the Collaborative, which will take place January 1st at 11AM.

Kathy also shared that Lynda Mapes, an environmental reporter, who has written a book on the connection between our NW Forests and Salmon, will be giving a presentation and talk at Centralia College in January or February.

Additionally, Kathy shared that Tina Niels with the Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force facilitated a number of school field trips with local hatcheries for kids to do stream surveys. Bob Russell reaffirmed that this was a great event. Kathy also shared that she has reached out to Cloquallum-area schools about water table outreach opportunities.

She asked for suggestions for the group on local volunteers and conservation workers to highlight in her watershed heroes series.

Lastly, she reminded the group that after today's meeting, she would be hosting a "Lunch and Learn", to share some of her learnings from the summer on Orcas, Salmon, and the Salish Sea.

Bob Russell shared that Lewis County has just finished writing their comprehensive plan. He noted that the "critical areas" ordinance is a particularly relevant issue discussed - this regulates development in proximity to water recharge areas, steep slopes, type F streams, etc. He shared a couple particular points of interest:

that the county is clear about regulations regarding type F streams; and

that the City of Chehalis has incorporated its urban growth area (UGA). He noted that this means areas that were previously under the jurisdiction of the County are now under the jurisdiction of the City of Chehalis, whose regulations are not as robust.

Bob and Kirsten then reminded the group about the CBC-fSH salmon reporting webtool, which has been highlighted by the Chronicle, is up and running, has been a great tool.

Key McMurray shared that the Beaver Collaborative was a great first meeting between WDFW, USF&W, and other nonprofits. She noted that the group of around 40 folks discussed many issues including urban beavers, culverts, and dam exclusion fencing. She will share out a summary from the event with the group.

Alex Bradberry shared that the WCRII deadline is tomorrow, that she is working on the final stages of a report from the October Chinook Symposium, that they are kicking off a fundraiser with a limited-run of Strong Salmon Futures hoodie, and that Annual Report will begin to be put together come January.

Donna Albert of the Chehalis Basin River Land Trust shared that they will have their holiday party on December 27th at the Fairfield Inn in Grand Mound at 6:30PM, which will be a meet-and-greet time, as well as an opportunity to learn about the CRBLT's work.

Julie Grobelny shared that she participated in an outreach event with WF West High School, giving a general overview of the salmon lifecycle, keying those into how restoration work is supporting those lifecycle elements. She also asked the group to reach out to her with volunteer opportunities for high school students, as this was an area of need for students. Further, she asked for input on field trip opportunities to Chehalis River restoration sites for these students.

b. Cloquallum Work Group

Kirsten noted that the Cloquallum Work Group is meeting again this coming Thursday morning, with their report nearing completion.

4. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)

a. RCO Updates

Jane Atha shared that at the SRFB meeting, they will be discussing the targeted investment grant round, and that site visits will be taking place on the 10th and 11th of March. She also reminded the group about the WCRRI deadline, and that RCO will be going through the eligibility checks for the projects submitted. She also shared that there are at least 18 preapplications.

Kirsten noted that the SRFB grant round will launch the press release in two days.

b. Project presentation: Vance Creek Trib @ W. Main St. 3 Fish Passage Design

Jeff Mach presented a proposed barrier correction design project on a tributary to Vance Creek at W Main Street in Elma, WA. The project would correct three priority 2 barriers, which are on a single landowner's property, and just upstream of one of the large WSDOT projects on highway 12. He also noted that these corrections would address a tier 1 limiting factor for its GSU, and that while the creek has been known to be ephemeral, but has been more perennial in recent years. Jeff further noted that these corrections would improve access to 5 miles of Coho habitat, and 2.8 miles of Steelhead habitat, though he noted that much of the habitat is not currently high quality. He noted that this is a good opportunity for further collaboration on that front with the landowner. Caprice Fasano shared that DOT contractors for the Highway 12 project observed adult Coho at the outlet of the old culvert before it was replaced, and also that a full WDFW habitat survey for this stream should be available as a result of that project. Brett DeMond noted that the site acquired a PI (Priority Index) of 14, which she characterized as a pretty middling score. She further noted, however, that the assessment did describe about 5 miles of coho habitat as well.

Jeff described the designs as replacing a 33% passable, multi-culvert barrier; a 67% passable multi-culvert barrier; and a single 33% passable culvert barrier. The estimated project budget cost presented was \$356,785.

Finally, Jeff noted that there is high visibility of the project area from the highway as well as throughout town. He noted that while this site isn't ideal because of its in-town habitat, it is a good opportunity to engage the local community for that reason.

Q (Key McMurray): Who is your contact at the city? Do you have further description of that kind of habitat that is being opened above the barriers?

A: We will need more information to know the specifics of the habitat beyond the described 5 miles. Rick Eadon has been our contact with the city.

Q (Brett DeMond): Are there more upstream barriers?

A: There are some 'dark green' barriers, so I will look into the details of those.

Q (Bob Russell): What are the classifications of the stream, and what are those fields in this site mapped/zoned as? Is there possibility of the area being developed to the advantage of city

after the state pays for these barriers to be corrected? We don't want to pay for culverts

A: I don't know the listed Type of this stream or the zoning, so I will follow up on that. That's all good insight, and is helpful.

Comment (Brett DeMond): It's zoned as it's zoned, and we have a willing landowner. I don't think theoretical development is necessarily a good reason to pass on this project. I would also suggest that costs could be brought down by eliminating crossings as possible.

Comment (Sofia Sherman): Is there habitat work, remeandering, livestock exclusion under consideration for this? That would be helpful.

Comment (Caprice Fasano): There have also been juvenile coho observed above one of the culverts upstream.

Comment (Kathy Jacobsen): There is potential for this area to be a good place to talk about the larger system of Vance Creek. We used to have kids work to clean where Vance Creek ends in Vance County park - so this project could be a part of a larger story of landowners and community members coming together around Vance Creek. Kirsten Harma also noted that while the project isn't strong on a lot of habitat measures, it is an exceptional opportunity for this kind of outreach and community access.

5. Requests for Letters of Support

a. Salzer Creek at Proffitt Rd Fish Passage Design (25-1347) – FBRB Grant

LeeAnn Frank of Lewis County Public Works presented a request for a letter of support for Lewis County's fish passage design project on Salzer Creek at Proffitt Road in Centralia. This project would design a replacement structure and riparian planting for a 33% passable culvert on Salzer Creek at Proffitt Road, restoring unimpeded access to 2.62 and 1.9 linear miles of habitat to Coho and Winter Steelhead respectively. Current processes that are impaired include sediment load, fish passage, and poor riparian buffers. Further, she noted that this correction would restore access to 395 acres of emergent wetland and 172 acres of riverine wetland. Replacement crossing would involve an at least 15' wide box culvert, and would cost approximately \$486,514, all of which would be requested from the FBRB.

i. Discussion; Vote

Comment (Bob Russell): I would suggest including synergy with further work going on at Coal Creek, particularly the work being done by American Rivers with the City of Chehalis. He also noted that getting four landowners to sign off on this project is no small feat.

After discussion, a vote to provide a letter of support for this project was unanimous.

b. West Fork Hoquiam Dam Removal Construction – WCRRI

Kelsey Mach of the City of Hoquiam presented a request for a letter of support for construction funds for the West Fork Hoquiam River Dam Removal project. NOAA has supported funding previously for the project's feasibility and predesign; WA Ecology provided funding for the design of the project. The current grant is a \$2M request for construction from WCRRI, paired with a \$1M request from WA Ecology. With this grant, construction would begin in 2027,

removing the number 2 priority fish barrier in the Chehalis Basin to the benefit of Coho, Chinook, Chum, and Steelhead.

i. Discussion; Vote

Q (Bob Russell): By construction, you mean destruction, yes?

A: Yes, destruction of the dam and restoration of the site.

Q: What is the plan for the sediment behind the dam?

A: The plan is to remove the silt - we have a sediment disposal site setup, but that's as much as I know. Future presentations will provide more detailed engineering information.

Q (Martin McCallum): What was the resolution for replacing this dam's role as a water source for the community?

A: NOAA funded a feasibility study to determine if installing groundwater wells could replace this water. Currently, the city uses WF Hoquiam as a backup water supply for their main source at a diversion from Davis Creek. Just very recently the study concluded that groundwater wells are not viable. As such, the city is now considering installing a lower-impact, fish-passable non-dam reservoir solution at a different location, or a secondary water diversion site.

After Discussion, Bob Russell moved to approve the letter of support, which Key McMurray seconded. The motion to provide the letter of support passed unanimously.

6. Presentation: Propagation Nation

Philip Stielstra of Propagation Nation provided a presentation on his nonprofit which advocates for use of Sequoia and Redwoods to improve the economic and environmental viability of forests throughout the Pacific NW.

Philip began with a short video, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8G7dgUix5g> featuring Steve Stillelt from Humboldt State University.

Following the video, Philip emphasized that redwoods and sequoias have been in North America for 20 million years, much longer than many species currently present in the PNW - additionally, he noted many different adaptations for resilience in a changing climate not present in other evergreen trees. He advises that redwoods can provide robust resilience and risk mitigation in restoration work throughout the region, sharing data on over 16,000 trees the nonprofit provided to area restoration entities from 2021 - 2024. Further, Philip noted that the propagation nation website has information on planting and maintaining redwoods, and shared information with the group on using redwoods for riparian planting.

DISCUSSION:

Comment (Online): The efforts of this nonprofit seem like a good, small place to start, but we should be careful about a large scale initiative to replace native forests with these species, which would in turn replace the entire soil and fungal systems of our forests. Careful strategic initiatives should be informed by forestry and ecosystem science.

A: Redwoods do use a different fungal system, but they also grow really well locally. Further, they coexist well with doug-firs and hardwoods where they are currently native. We encourage that these be interplanted with those native species, and take advantage of the fire-, climate-, and disease-hardiness of them.

Q (Online Comment): How do redwoods effect groundwater and hydrology?

A: They do love water, and are a good fit for all the coastal sites along the coast and throughout the Puget Sound.

Comment (Brett DeMond): They also absorb a lot of their water from their canopies.

7. Associated Program Updates

a. Office of the Chehalis Basin

Drew Mealor shared that at the most recent board meeting, the OCB discussed the draft EIS for the dam proposal; more information is available on the Ecology website. He also noted that the focus of OCB's members are currently on weighing and comparing the wide ranging options that have been for the wider strategy.

b. Coast Salmon Partnership

Jane Atha shared that the CSP is in the process of coordinating WCRRI, and in the midst of hiring a program director. She also noted that the CSP is working with the state - at the request of the governor's salmon recovery office - on doing a statewide inventory of fish monitoring data. The task is to confer with all the fish monitoring folks up and down the coast on fish population, status, and trends. This will involve coordinating with fish managers and local biologists, with the goal of also updating the Sustainable Salmon Plan. This work will be getting underway in early 2026.

Q (Martin McCallum): Are you in contact with John Hagan and his eDNA work?

A: Yes, he's part of the North Pacific Lead Entity, and so we interface up on the Olympic Peninsula. We're coordinating with him as well, yes. The Coast also has an eDNA volunteer program with WDFW currently taking place.

c. Aquatic Species Restoration Program

Drew Mealor shared that an RIT meeting is coming up on December 18th, where they will continue discussion of a new meeting structure for 2026, which will involve a quarterly regional restoration strategy meeting. This next meeting - in January - will be focused on Spring Chinook. He also shared that the December meeting will discuss kicking off the process for revising their technical review team, which will involve reaching out to other programs' technical review teams for input and insight.

d. Chehalis Basin Weed Collaborative

Sofia Sherman shared that the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) meeting took place last November, and the next meeting will be in February. She also shared that she is working with the Grays Harbor Noxious Weed board to apply for an ASRP grant to remove Elodea from the mainstem Chehalis. She also shared that there are two new invasive weeds of note in the basin: false brome, a grassy species; and Ventenata, a true grass species that is a common invasive on the East Side, but that has recently been seen locally. Finally, she shared that the Grays Harbor Noxious Weed Board has a great storymap that shows different treatments, projects and landowners they've worked with in 2025.

e. USFWS National Fish Passage Program

Olivia Willaims shared that the National Fish Passage program for 2026 is now open for applications.

8. Meeting Closing

9. Lunch and Learn

Following this meeting, Kathy Jacobson shared lessons learned from working in the San Juan Islands during summer of 2025 -- - salmon, Southern Resident Killer Whales, and other orcas, and traditional fishing practices -- our shared history and our shared waters.