



Chehalis Basin Collaborative
for Salmon Habitat

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MINUTES

January 5, 2026

9:00 am- 12:00 pm

Zoom Only

Alex Gustafson - Trout Unlimited
Ann Weckback - Lewis County PW
Ben Amidon - Chehalis Tribe, CBCfSH Chair
Bob Russell - Lewis County Citizen
Brandon Carman - WDFW
Brian Combs - Mason Conservation Dist
Caprice Fasano - Quinault Indian Nation
Drew Mealor - ASRP Implementation Mgr
Elena Fernandez - Thurston Co Public Works
Farley Youckton - Chehalis Tribe
Jane Atha - Coast Salmon Partnership/Fdn
Jacob Murray - Mason Conservation District
Jakeb Hoyle - Chehalis Tribe
Janet Strong - Grays Harbor Audubon
Jeff Mach - Grays Harbor Conservation Dist
Jesse McMahan - Chehalis Tribe

John Stepanek - Mason Conservation District
Julie Grobelny - WDFW
Katrinka Hibler - Thurston Conserv Dist
Kathy Jacobsen - CBC-fSH Outreach Coordin.
Kelly Verd - Lewis Conservation District
Key McMurray - Grays Harbor Citizen Rep
Kirsten Harma - CBCfSH Coordinator
Lee First - Twin Harbors Water Keeper
Mack Hunter - Grays Harbor Conserv Dist
Martin McCallum - Thurston County Citizen
Molly Paige - Non-Point, Ecology
Sasha Medlen - RCO
Sofia Sherman - Chehalis Tribe
Tara Livingood-Schott - Chehalis Tribe
Tina Neils - Grays Harbor County Citizen
Vanessa LaValle - Conservation NW/CSP
Victoria Knorr - ASRP Program Manager

1. **Welcome, Break-Out Rooms**
2. **Minutes – December.** Only sent out day-of. Just small name corrections.
3. **Organizational Business**
 - a. **CBC-fSH Outreach** (Kathy, others)

Kathy Jacobson shared that approximately 100 people attended the First Day Hikes event at Schafer State Park. She also shared that she would be meeting with WDFW, Friends of Schafer and Lake Sylvia State Park (FOSLS), Mason CD, WA State Parks, and others to plan events for 2026. She shared that in 2025, these shared events had a combined attendance of 1,000 participants. Kathy then shared a draft list for CBC-fSH outreach events for 2026.

Next, Kathy shared that she would be shifting toward updating and restructuring the lead entity website, noting that she would be reaching out to group members for information and media for this update.

Bob Russell suggested that Kathy shared her 2026 calendar of events with the Chronicle, and Kirsten suggested that she also reach out the Daily World in Aberdeen, as well. Further, Jan Strong of the Grays Harbor Audubon Society suggested that Kathy reach out to the Audubon Society with this information, too.

b. Cloquallum Work Group

John Stepanek of Grays Harbor Conservation District shared that the work group had a meeting in December, in which they received feedback on the early draft of their Prioritized Watershed Restoration Report. They then spent time talking about how to address prioritizing reaches that were outside of the modeling effort carried out by CSP last year. John further shared that they would be meeting in the next week to discuss the process of continuing to draft the report.

c. Field Trips

Bob Russell shared with the group an opportunity to visit a Chinook fry fish trap out on the Skookumchuck, to be planned some time between January and April.

Kirsten also shared with the group an opportunity being planned to visit completed SRFB projects.

Lee First shared that through Twin Harbors Waterkeepers, she has funding to take the visitors on van tours to contaminated sites throughout Grays Harbor sometime toward the beginning of the year.

4. Presentation: How to identify and report pollution!

Lee First, Twin Harbors Waterkeeper, shared a presentation with the group on how to identify and report pollution. She shared that through a Department of Ecology grant, she has a funding to raise awareness about contaminated sites, pollution, and source control.

First, she shared a number of photos of local pollution issues, starting with sediment pollution, which she noted is the most common source of pollution in the country. She noted that sediment is particularly harmful to aquatic life, including suffocation of eggs, inability to seek refugia, etc. She further discussed: the over-abundance of vegetation, which causes low dissolved oxygen issues; nutrient pollution from livestock, chemical application, and loading of products onto ships; water temperature; fecal coliform bacteria; biological material; stormwater pollution; microplastics; creosote; and derelict vessels. After discussing sources of pollution, Lee discussed methods of source control to prevent pollution. These methods discussed include: shrouding of bridges during maintenance; stormwater discharge permitting; livestock fencing; stormwater treatment; and rain gardens.

Lee then asked the group for suggestions on further audiences for her presentation, and shared resources for reporting pollution: swroerts@ecy.wa.gov 360-407-6300

Lee can be contacted at leef@twinharborswaterkeeper.org

DISCUSSION:

Comment (Key McMurray): Since you mentioned it, the concerns about fecal coliform from the farm you mentioned have been studied rigorously, and it has been well established that that

pollution is from the several elk herds in the area. And with regard to the creosote ties, DNR and other parties have studied all the creosote piles in the harbor determining which are creosote and which are old cedar, and a detailed map of that information is available.

Q (Jane Atha): With regard to sedimentation, how does one determine what can just be expected sedimentation from rain events, and what sedimentation is due to negligence?

A: The vast majority of sediment is coming from eroding banks. The Satsop, for example, has enormous amounts of forestry. So construction, etc, are perhaps a smaller source of this kind of pollution, but it tends to be finer sediment - but in any case these projects are subject to the regulation of their permits, and it is still important to hold them to those.

Comment (Kirsten Harma): There is a team we are working with at UW looking to monitor how effectively stormwater best management practices (BMPs) are filtering out 6-PPD quinone. They are looking for BMP stormwater treatment ponds that drain into natural water bodies to study, and if you know of sites, these would be helpful to map and pass on to them.

5. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)

a. RCO Updates

Sasha Medlen shared that she has accepted a new position as a water resources grant manager for the Columbia River with WA Dept of Ecology, and will no longer be with RCO. We will be assigned a new grant manager after January 15.

b. SRFB Grant Round Updates

Kirsten reminded the group that the new SRFB grant round is officially in swing. The next deadline is the coming conceptual project deadline on February 10th. Following that, February 24th is the deadline to submit those projects to the state in PRISM. She noted that the present meeting and the next (February) meeting are the last opportunities to present SRFB grant projects. Following the February 2nd CBC-fSH meeting, the RCO grants manager will be facilitating an application workshop.

Then, Kirsten discussed members who would be on the site review team for this coming grant round, asking previous members to consider whether they would be available for this season. That team will be established in the February meeting, will perform site visits on March 10th and 11th, and then rank projects on May 4th during the CBC-fSH meeting timeslot.

c. Project Presentation: Scatter Creek SE Headwaters, Riparian Restoration, Phase X

Katrinka Hibler, of Thurston Conservation District, shared a presentation on a riparian restoration project in Cozy Valley, at the headwaters of Scatter Creek. The project would work to slow and spread stream flows; restore forested wetlands; and document Coho use of the area using eDNA. Most of the land to be restored is owned by Creekside Conservancy, and a portion of the land is owned by a willing private landowner. The district has received assistance with eDNA planning from both the Wild Fish Conservancy and the Chehalis Tribe. Katrinka shared photos of the creek as it currently stands, which is mostly an incised channel in open fields.

Katrinka reminded the group as well that SRFB previously funded the planning of this project. Then she listed the impaired processes this project will address, which include riparian, channel floodplain connection, hydrology, and erosion. The project will accomplish this by installing beaver dam analogs (BDAs); installing large woody debris; restoration plantings of native trees and shrubs; and eDNA sampling of Scatter Creek.

Finally, Katrinka shared a draft budget for the project, which would be approximately \$280,000.

DISCUSSION:

Q (Caprice Fasano): It looks like there's not an eDNA site in your restoration area. Why is that?

A: We did some sampling there last year, and while it's worth noting it wasn't an ideal time of year, we didn't get any hits. And so this season, we're just planning on starting as low downstream as we can afford, and move upstream. We feel that if we can document that they're in North Craft Creek, they will definitely be accessing the site location. So if the fish are in that creek, we want to document it.

Comment (Caprice): Yeah, I would recommend adding at least one eDNA sampling to the site itself, maybe even one both before and after.

Comment (Brian Combs): One strategy for managing Reed Canary Grass is to convert it to other grass species. If you want more information about that, I could help connect you with that.

Q (Brian Combs): I was confused by the modeling images you shared. It looks like some parts of the stream would lose surface hydrology, and that other parts won't experience that much of an improvement.

A: We're focusing on getting the upper portion of the valley wetted, and the reach downstream that you're noting is private land that is being grazed. In increasing surface hydrology upstream, that will also decrease the surface hydrology downstream. And so while that's not ideal for habitat in that particular downstream field, it does improve grazing opportunity on that land, which is helping with buy-in from those adjacent landowners. That may change if land ownership ever changes, but we're currently really focusing on that upstream area.

6. Requests for Letters of Support (10:55)

a. **Dry Creek at West Beeville Fish Passage Construction** – FBRB Grant (Alex Gustafson, Trout Unlimited)

Alex Gustafson shared a presentation requesting a letter of support for Trout Unlimited's (TU) grant request to the Fish Barrier Removal Board (FBRB). She described the project which would construct a fish passage correction at the West Beeville Road crossing on Dry Creek, near Matlock, WA, noting that the barrier is ranked 3rd overall in the Chehalis Basin. She also noted that the current squash culvert is a 33% passable slope barrier. Correction of this barrier would open up approximately 7 miles of habitat with quality gravels, and though it does run dry in the summer, it has significant water through the winter months. Alex further noted that Coho, Steelhead, and Sea Run Cutthroat will be benefiting directly from this correction, and that nearby tributaries also have had Chum and Chinook, as well.

Finally, Alex described the replacement as a modular steel bridge with MSE walls, and with a 70'

length and 47' span. With installation, TU also will do riparian planting, and deploy large woody debris. Total project cost estimation is \$5.472M.

DISCUSSION:

Comment (Sofia Sherman): This is a great project, a lot of gain for just one culvert.

Q (Kirsten Harma): With the creek running dry in the summer, is there over-summering habitat in the cooler head-water area?

A: I'll have to check in with WDFW about how high up water goes in the summer, but there is definitely habitat up there.

Q (Jane Atha): With regard to public outreach, this is a site with good potential for visibility of educational signage. Do you have funding to do more than just a construction sign?

A: Yeah, that's something we're considering, definitely will be looking into this as a part of the proposal process.

Q (Drew Mealor): Is the full \$5.5M ask from FBRB?

A: Yes, there is a lot of synergy and supporting work around this, so we think that makes for a strong case. If we're not funded for the full amount, we will seek alternative funding.

Q: You said the creek goes dry. Do you know when that happens?

A: Usually in late July; it's always dry by August. It starts flowing again late September or early October.

Q (Kathy Jacobson): How did TU become involved with this project? Who owns the property? Last, what does PALS stand for?

A: The project has a long history, but in 2021, we got put in contact with Mason County, as they wanted to replace the barrier. Mason County Public Works owns the property. Last, PALS are Post-Assisted Log Structures.

- i. ACTION: Bob Russell moved that the collaborative strongly support the above project and submits a letter doing so. Martin McCallum seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

7. Coast Salmon Partnership – Draft Comment Letter on Chehalis Dam Draft EIS (11:15)

- a. Presentation of draft letter, review and input by CBC-fSH

Jane Atha presented a letter she drafted on behalf of CBC-fSH in response to the Chehalis Dam Draft EIS. The letter would need to be commented on by CBC-fSH before the CBP board meeting on January 22nd.

Kirsten made the letter available to the group, who reviewed it to provide comment. First, Jane provided some background, stating that the CBP commented on the first EIS draft in 2021, for which there were many comments.

Jane then noted that one of the main issues in this relatively brief letter was the lack of mitigation plan.

Kirsten then provided a brief summary of the letter, stating that it agrees that the dam would result in a significant environmental impact; and that CBC-fSH doesn't believe that the dam would meet the long term needs of the people or fish in the Chehalis Basin.

If CBC-fSH voting members have comments or edits, they should reach out to Kirsten, and she will pass those comments on as a bundle.

DISCUSSION:

Comment (Bob Russell): As a citizen of Lewis County, I would say this is a well-written letter, and a fair representation of a significant segment of the local population.

8. Associated Program Updates (11:25)

a. USFWS

Olivia Williams shared that USFWS's National Fish Passage notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) is out, and approximately 100-200K will be available to entities in Western Washington. She also noted that if you're planning for construction in 2026, the timing of this funding will probably not work out.

b. Ecology – Water Quality – Non-Point Program updates

Molly Paige shared that ECY's higher-ups are reassessing their letter schedule, and how they contact site owners for technical assistance and enforcement. As such, things are moving slowly as they are not currently taking on new sites or contacting new site owners. She also noted that there is a dumping site in the Chehalis basin that ECY is currently working on that will be receiving an enforcement action, and which may involve a second penalty as well. When more detail is available, she will share with the group. Folks can also reach out to her directly or to Sarah Longacre.

c. Coast Salmon Partnership

Jane Atha shared that CSP is underway with their WCRRI grant round, with presentations occurring early February. January 22nd is the next board meeting, in which the above letter will be addressed.

d. Aquatic Species Restoration Program

Drew Mealor shared that things are active with ASRP currently, with the steering committee coming up on the coming Wednesday, and then the RIT meeting will happen on January 15th. This will be a part of the new RIT schedule, where each of four focal topics will have a special RIT meeting focusing on it through the year. This coming Thursday meeting will be focusing on Spring Chinook in the upper basin.

Drew also shared that the ASRP is doing a thorough review and revisioning of their technical review process. An active form is live for feedback from anyone who has gone through the ASRP technical process at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7a1ba8fcae694f4c87a4626f70c5f785>. Input is desired by late January.

Finally, he noted that there will be no board meeting in January, so the next one will be in February.

e. Chehalis Basin Weed Collaborative

Sofia Sherman shared that the winter cooperative weed area management meeting will be taking place the second or third week in February, TBD. She also asked anyone who wants to be

but is not yet on her mailing list reach out to her. Sofia also shared that the Brazilian Elodea project she presented is going to the technical review team soon. She also shared is planning on giving an update on that project at the March meeting.

9. Other Business

Drew Mealor noted that there is a Centralia open house for the draft EIS tomorrow on January 6th.

Bob Russell shared that he is meeting with a young man who is looking to get into this field of work, and that he would appreciate hearing about any job opportunities members may have or be aware of.

Kirsten noted that the Salmon Day on the Hill is coming up, on the same week as the February CBC-fSH meeting, on February 4th.

10. Meeting Closing