



Chehalis Basin Collaborative
for Salmon Habitat

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Minutes

August 3, 2026

9:00 am- 12:00 pm

Alex James – <i>Capitol Land Trust</i>	Kelly Verd - <i>Lewis Conservation District</i>
Ann Weckback - <i>Lewis County PW</i>	Key McMurry - <i>Citizen</i>
Anthony Waldrop – <i>Grays Harbor Cons. Dist.</i>	Kirsten Harma - <i>CBCfSH Coordinator</i>
Bella Padgett - <i>Ducks Unlimited</i>	Kim Figlar-Barnes – <i>WDFW Region 6</i>
Bill Teitzel – <i>Port of Chehalis</i>	Luke Donaldson – <i>Port of Grays Harbor</i>
Bob Russell - <i>Lewis County Citizen</i>	Marcus – <i>Thurston County Public W.</i>
Brandon Carman – <i>WDFW Region 6</i>	Molly – <i>Ecology Non-Point</i>
Chris Sutherlin – <i>Lewis Conservation District</i>	Maya Rommwatt – <i>Twin Harbors Waterkeeper</i>
Daron Williams - <i>WDFW</i>	Olivia Williams - <i>USFWS</i>
Donna Albert– <i>Chehalis RB Land Trust</i>	Paul Ceregino – <i>Thurston Cons. Dist.</i>
Drew Meador - <i>ASRP Implementation</i>	Sarah Longacre – <i>Ecology Non-point</i>
Ian Mann – <i>Evergreen State College</i>	Sofia Sherman - <i>Chehalis Tribe Noxious Weeds</i>
Jane Atha – <i>Coast Salmon Partnership</i>	Philip Adams, <i>Thurston County</i>
Janet Strong – <i>Grays Harbor Audubon</i>	Vanessa LaValle - <i>Conservation NW/CSP</i>
Jesse McMahan - <i>Chehalis Tribe Fisheries</i>	

1. **Welcome, Introductions**

2. **Minutes – July**

Minutes approved by the group without discussion. Sofia Sherman has agreed to continue to write-up the minutes to avoid the use of AI.

3. **Organizational Business**

Ben Amidon has stepped down from his role as Chehalis Tribe's Restoration Coordinator and therefore as CBC-fSH chair.

Motion: Bob Russell motioned to open nominations for a new chair and close them in September, Kelly Verd seconded, motion passed.

1. HWG Membership Updates (Kirsten)

Luke Donaldson with Port of Grays Harbor provided a verbal interest statement to fill a vacant Business/Port/City Representative seat in CBC-fSH. He conducts environmental permitting and compliance for the Port and is personally interested in floodplain reconnection. Bob and Jane expressed appreciation for Port of Grays Harbor having a representative on this committee with an environmental background.

Motion: Bob motioned for Luke to represent the Port of Grays Harbor on the CBC-fSH board, Paul Ceregino seconded, motion passed.

2. Coast Salmon Partnership – Nominations for Chehalis Reps

Coast Salmon Partnership is looking for a new representative on the partnership's board. The current representative, Cindy Wilson, is frequently travelling and unable to attend meetings. An additional representative from this watershed would be beneficial to the partnership.

3. Cloquallum Subcommittee Update (John)

John was out sick. Olivia stated that at the last subcommittee meeting they discussed maps and that Grays Harbor CD and Mason CD are in the process of designing field surveys.

4. Barrier Subcommittee – Scheduled for September 30th

Vanessa stated that the tools for the Chehalis Basin barrier mapping tool are still being run, it takes some time due to the size and number of barriers in the Chehalis, results are still pending. Jane provided context about this mapping tool: a culvert prioritization tool for WRIAs 22 and 23 (lower and upper Chehalis Basin) that looks at habitat, upstream barriers, and other factors to score each culvert and provides a ranked prioritization list. It is being updated to migrate the tool from ESRI to ArcPro. Barrier subcommittee meeting is scheduled for September 30th.

5. Planned Fall Tours

Kirsten has sent out two calendar holds for two potential tours, one on the Mox Chehalis/Wildcat Creek to see John's project installing BDAs and in-stream woody debris. The second would be to tour Lonnie's final barrier correction site on Kirkpatrick. Timing is

somewhat contingent on a ribbon cutting in Grays Harbor that will have several legislators present who staff are hoping can attend the CBC-fSH tour at Kirkpatrick.

Jane has conducted outreach with representatives and state senators for a potential tour on September 24th. These legislators seem to have most interest in the upper basin so the tour will focus on the Newaukum. These projects highlight a variety of funding sources and collaboration between multiple organizations, including Lewis CD, Lewis County Public Works, and Trout Unlimited. The emphasis going into the next legislative session is to educate new members and staff on the importance and multifaceted benefits of this work.

4. BOR WaterSmart Grant:

1. Request for Letter of Support –“Steven’s Creek Tributary Restoration Project” (via Caprice Fasano, QIN). Discussion / Decision.

Caprice with Quinault Indian Nation, though not present, requested a letter of support for her Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart Grant proposal: “Steven’s Creek Tributary Restoration Project”, in the Humptulips basin. This is a reiteration of a previously requested, and provided, letter of support. This project was chosen based on a larger strategy that has prioritized reaches for coho habitat improvement in the Humptulips, including this area. It builds on two USFS barrier corrections on Humptulips tributaries and the GHCD mainstem Humptulips riparian restoration efforts, including at the confluence with Stevens Creek. The Stevens Creek Tributary Restoration Project addresses water quality, fish passage, sediment, riparian, and floodplain issues through berm removal, collapsed stream crossing and failing log-timber bridge, and placement of 20 engineered log jams.

Motion: Alex motioned to provide a letter of support, Kelly seconded, motion passed.

The collaborative agreed that building on priority restoration strategy, project synergy, and considerable historic splash damming should be highlighted in the letter of support.

5. Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB)

1. **State Review Panel Process & Decision**

Kirsten provided a reminder of the SRFB grant round timeline:

July 24—SRFB Review and Final Designation,

August 12—Coast submits project list,

September 15—SRFB Funding meeting.

2. **Coast Salmon Partnership Process & Decision**

Coast Salmon Partnership approved a project list last week which needs to be finalized by August 12.

State review team provided final status designations for the Chehalis Basin projects (see chart below). Scatter Creek Headwaters Riparian Restoration has been cleared after initially being flagged as a Project Of Concern. Vance Creek Trib 3 Fish Passage Design was changed from Needs More Information to POC. Anthony said they would look for alternate funding options for this project. The Coast region decided not to defend Vance Creek POC, in line with not appealing other Coastal Lead Entity's POCs. Chehalis Basin is left with \$38,480 which will go to Quinault. Coastwide there is \$22,000 riparian funding remaining that coast projects can't use for now.

PRISM	Project Name	Status
26-1191	Lower Chehalis Basin Riparian Assessment	Cleared
26-1145	Scatter Creek Headwaters Riparian Restoration	Cleared!
26-1144	Chehalis RM 9-19 Purple Loosestrife & Knotweed	Cleared
26-1012	Independence Cr. At Backman Rd FP Design	Cleared
26-1219	Garrard Creek RM 4.4 – 5.0 Final Design	Cleared
26-1143	Vance Creek Trib 3 Fish Passage Design	POC!

3. Final status of funding swap with other Lead Entities

i. Yakima funding swap: Discussion/ Decision

Similar to funding swap discussed at July meeting, Yakima Lead Entity has requested a similar funding swap; they will provide us with riparian funding they can't use for regular funding we can't use. Their project is a culvert replacement on Salmon Creek (in the Yakima basin) that will open up nearly 2 miles of salmon habitat. Specifically noted are the benefits to chinook and steelhead, including providing cool summer rearing habitat as this creek is over 2 degrees C cooler than the mainstem Yakima River.

Motion: Anthony motioned to approve the funding swap with the Yakima Lead Entity. Kelly seconded the motion.

Final Chehalis Basin Project budget breakdown is seen in the chart below, with green being riparian funding and red/brown being regular funding.

Project	Grant Request	Award
Assessment	\$ 187,500	\$ 187,500
Scatter	\$ 340,631	\$ 326,683
		\$ 13,948
Loosestrife	\$ 206,401	\$ 206,401
Independence	\$ 135,000	\$ 135,000
Garrard	\$ 85,583	\$ 85,583
Vance	\$ 80,871	\$ 38,480

6. The Chehalis Basin Strategy: Models and Decision-Making. Ian Mann, Master's Student, The Evergreen State College

Ian Mann (they/them) presented on their Master's Thesis "The Chehalis Basin Strategy: Models and Decision-Making" in which they explored regulatory modeling, incomplete information, and building trust in models. Their research question was "*Using the Chehalis Basin Strategy as a case study, what is the role of simulation models in environmental governance?*".

(For full transcript – see attachment)

Paul Ceregino, who has previously worked in the regulatory modeling world, noted this research and Ian's conclusions are a fundamental issue across a variety of contexts, including resource damage assessments and legal negotiations over scaling. He is curious how model literacy can be used to help make models a durable repository of what we believe to be true and as a way of transferring that knowledge between bureaucratic generations. He's seen that typically models are reinvented every 5-10 years as staff and best available science change. This undermines our ability to build science over time and becomes a substitute for collecting empirical evidence rather than using consisting models and building this repository of knowledge.

Vanessa was curious if Ian got a sense of if OCB is still trying to make the dam feasible or are starting to pivot to protect their budget and any other insights they had. Ian noted that it seemed like the Flood Control Zone District felt the mitigation plan and non-dam alternatives (LAND) hadn't been included in the analysis. In their opinion, there is information lacking, but that is not the whole story.

Jane recommended talking to Professor James Quinn at Evergreen State College who helped write WDFW's science and policy interface recommendations. She appreciated the idea that more folks from outside the 'modeling world' should be brought in to discuss the model inputs and outputs and ensure all groups agree on them. Policy makers need to tell the modelers what scientific information they need to make a decision. She feels that the bureaucratic structure of these systems allow policy makers to use scientists as scapegoats for a lack of decision because they lack sufficient information.

Donna, as a civil engineer, thought she understood the modeling when she was looking at it and thought it was a good decision-making tool in that you could see the changes it would make to flooding in cities like Chehalis and Centralia. However, she felt that the model didn't flesh out the non-dam alternatives nearly as extensively. She is in favor of leaving room for the river, which, historically, hasn't been done and has led us to the situation we are currently in. She agrees that, like her, most of us don't have the time or expertise to understand and run queries through the model, so we are reliant on those whose job this is.

Drew mentioned that something he often brings up in Steering Committee meetings is that there isn't necessarily an option to not make a decision; even choosing to circle back is making a decision.

7. Comment Letter – Centralia Warehouses. Discussion/Decision.

Sofia updated the group that a Centralia citizen had reached out to her and Kirsten about concerns regarding a potential development of several large warehouses in Centralia, on the banks of the Chehalis River. As part of this potential development, they would have to revise the size of developments that would be allowed within the City of Centralia UGA. She attended the Centralia City Council meeting two weeks ago, providing public comment, as a private citizen, regarding her environmental concerns of a development like this. Kirsten and Sofia determined further group discussion was required before providing an official letter of concern; those present in-person and online broke into small groups to discuss.

Jesse suggested reaching out to Brinn Marri with the Chehalis Tribe's Cultural Resource division. He also noted that this area is already degraded from a salmon habitat perspective and a development like this, and reduction in the riparian buffer, would only make it worse, while simultaneously halting any potential large-scale restoration in the future.

Daron noted this development came up on his desk for SEPA review. The area is on a terrace which elevates it above the floodplain, in many models. Lewis County's map of the 2007 flood map does not extend into the potential development site. He notes that there is a relatively large stand of Oregon white oak that would be severely impacted by such a development. The mitigation requirements for these oaks sometimes dissuades developers from building in these areas.

The small group discussions brought forth the following points:

Olivia noted her group discussed the importance of ensuring the potential letter is salmon focused in its wording of concerns.

Vanessa discussed her group's concern about stormwater runoff coming off the development and funneling into the river. Development in this area fragments the basin in terms of restoration efforts, and to Jesse's point earlier, limits any potential for future improvement of this habitat. This site is also on the City's aquifer recharge site and the oaks are likely helping this this.

Bella noted her group discussed the need to address the gaps in regulatory framework that allows development in the floodplain-this is a policy need. These types of development comply with no net rise requirements by raising buildings and excavating areas for stormwater management. This poses risks to stream health due to runoff. While economic resilience is an important consideration in development, unsustainable development like this does not ultimately support the community if these buildings will be impacted by erosion, flooding, etc. and negatively impact the ecosystem services on which we all rely. Consideration should also be given to climate change and its current and projected effects on the frequency and severity of flooding.

Anthony's group discussed what the role of HWG is in this regard to providing a letter of concern. He was concerned that HWG hasn't issued statements as a group like this, more often do letters of support, rather than letters of concern, and wants to look at best route for doing this. This is something he would have to get approval from his Board of Directors before agreeing to support a letter like this. HWG has provided letters of concern in the past for river-adjacent developments so there is precedence. He wanted to ensure the tone of the letter is appropriate for our Lead Entity.

Alex B. brought up concern that the developers of this site have also built data centers and ICE facilities, how would we ensure this does not become that. This is relevant as data centers are known to use enormous amounts of water and our region frequently is under drought restrictions in summer months.

Kelly noted this area is on the city's aquifer recharge area and the City of Centralia has been trying to shut down a pheasant farm that has been there since the 1950s because they are partially on the aquifer recharge area while simultaneously pushing for this development in the same area.

Participants indicated their feelings regarding their support for a letter on a scale of 1-5, overwhelmingly there was support for a letter of concern with several people stating that they would help with the process. Kirsten will send out a poll to set up a time to discuss the letter further.

8. Request for Match Waiver: Thompson Creek at RM 3.5 Habitat Design. (Joey Burgess, Thurston Conservation District)

Joey's Thompson Creek RM 3.5 Habitat Design project is currently funded by SRFB. In the application he included a match component of \$12,000 for the Professional Engineer Grant through WA Conservation Commission. It allows CDs to utilize engineering services from a Mason CD engineer to do topographical and drone surveys. This has become a bureaucratic issue to report on and isn't adding much to the project in terms of the match component. He is proposing to scrap the match component from his application. This work will still happen it is just easier to pay for and track payments without having it come in the form of a match. Josh with RCO notes that this request requires a cost change amendment which requires a letter of support from the lead entity.

Motion: Kelly motioned to approve a letter of support to remove the match requirement, Jesse seconded, motion passed.

9. Associated Program Updates

Due to time constraints, staff didn't provide associated program updates during the meeting. Updates were provided via email.

1. Aquatic Species Restoration Program
2. Coast Salmon Partnership
3. Chehalis Cooperative Weed Management Area

10. Meeting Closing

Appendix:

The Chehalis Basin Strategy: Models and Decision-Making. Ian Mann

Models are becoming increasingly common in contemporary governance and environmental decision making, especially with the analysis of large data sets and uncertainty of climate change. However, for those not directly involved with this process it

can often be a ‘black box’ that is not well understood and thus can lead to lack of trust in these tools.

Ian collected information through key informant interviews, attending OCB board meetings, and analyzing documents from the Chehalis Basin Strategy (CBS). In the CBS, models inform decision support tools, predictive scenario analysis, and filling data gaps, but are also tools for collaboration and negotiation. From research and interviews, three questions emerged, one: how does modeling inform environmental governance and decision making, two: how does politics inform and shape the modeling process, and three: how do models themselves as technologies shape the boundaries and social fabric of governance. These processes are all deeply intertwined and happen simultaneously.

The Chehalis Basin Board’s vote to delay making a decision on the Chehalis dam due to lack of information prompted Ian to ask how policy makers decide when they have enough information and who determines the information is sufficient. This also led to a discussion on how to separate objective science-based decisions from subjective political decisions. In the era of models, which inherently provide incomplete information, these questions become increasingly relevant.

There are multiple ways incomplete information manifests, usually from an uncertainty within knowledge or a disagreement over knowledge. The former is unavoidable, as an inherent aspect of both modeling and ecological processes. ‘Best Available Science’ is often characterized by uncertainty, but the uncertainty is largely agreed upon by relevant experts. This contrasts with the latter, where there is a lack of consensus on the ‘best available science’ which leads to delays in the decision-making process. This led Ian to the question of whether more information on its own will solve political disagreements? Often policy makers shift the problem from lack of consensus, a social issue, to lack of information, a technical issue, that can be solved by having more information or better modeling. There seems to be an overall lack of trust in models from many in the CBS.

Peer review is an important aspect of many scientific fields, acting as a standard to establish trust and credibility of scientific knowledge. In model-based governance, there isn’t an agreed upon standard for the peer review process; in the CBS, it often comes in the form of public comments. The lack of trust in models can devolve into questioning of the entire process. In the Chehalis Basin, it seems like scientists are perceived as taking sides, potentially based on their employer or specific discipline, which differs from the norm of objectivity associated with hard science. The good news is that policymakers seem to trust in their scientists.

This leads to the question of how to generate impartial information for policy when scientists aren’t perceived as neutral parties. For CBS, models as a form of technology become generators of impartiality, not as pieces of code, but as both a social and technical

process. The flow chart below shows what Ian called a linear process of regulatory modeling.

In the Chehalis Basin, Ian noticed that we seem to be stuck in a loop of the first three, particularly in the EIS and modeling processes, which has led to a lack of political decision-making (as seen in the delay to make a decision about the Chehalis dam/LAND alternatives). This is complicated by the lengthy process requiring updated data and surveys, revamped design and mitigation plans, and staff turnover. This has led Ian to consider how we can make the modeling process less of a 'black box', build more trust in them, and apply them in ways that are seen as objective and implementing best available science. The graphic below shows one way this could be achieved, particularly important is building agreed-upon incomplete information.

With any governance, representation matters. who has seats at the table directly impacts who has hands on the model and vice versa. Modeling is a social process, not just a technical one. Those who are not involved in the modeling process may feel disenfranchised leading to increased distrust in the process and lack of representation for certain groups. It is also important to consider different types of knowledge, as equally valid and important, not just scientific knowledge, but local and traditional ecological knowledge.

In conclusion, successful regulatory modeling relies on trust in models, but not blind trust. This trust must be built by including a diversity of representatives in the modeling process, utilizing it as a means of a space for negotiation and collaboration, and opening up this 'black box' that has contributed to distrust in these tools. While this process doesn't ensure environmentally just outcomes, it opens the door for them, and is likely a prerequisite for any decision to be made.

Some potential strategies for this becoming a reality include: a formalized process for creating working groups, ensuring selected experts have a diversity of backgrounds, building confidence in a certain model by testing different assumptions and creating a streamlined single-variable sensitivity analysis, though this can be costly and time-consuming. This will help policymakers understand and have trust in the model and members of the public feel as though their interests and concerns are represented in the modeling process.