



## **CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP**

**Chehalis Tribe Lucky Eagle Casino, Eagles Landing Hotel Conference Room  
Rochester, Washington**

**February 19, 2016**

**9:30 am – 12:00**

### **Meeting Summary**

#### **MEMBERS\* and ALTERNATES' PRESENT**

Brian Thompson\*, *Lewis Co. Farm Bureau*  
Chuck Caldwell\*, *Port of Grays Harbor*  
Chuck Turley\*, *DNR*  
Chris Stearns, *Thurston PUD*  
Cindy White', *Thurston County*  
Dustin Bilhimer\*, *Dept. of Ecology*

Glen Connelly', *Chehalis Tribe*  
Kahle Jennings, *City of Centralia*  
Lee Napier', *Lewis County*  
Lyle Hojam\*, *Citizen*  
Mark White\*, *Chehalis Tribe*  
Patrick Wiltzius', *City of Chehalis*

#### **GUESTS**

Garret Dalan, *The Nature Conservancy*; Jan Robinson, *Chehalis River Basin Land Trust*;  
Theresa Julis, *Grays Harbor Council of Governments*; Kelly Croman, *Chehalis Tribe Office of Tribal Attorney*; Helen Saunders, *Chehalis Tribal Member*; Curtis De Puis, *Chehalis Tribal Member*;  
Harry Pickernell, *Chehalis Tribal Member* ; Cheryle Starr, *Chehalis Tribal Member*;  
Farley Youckton, *Chehalis Tribal Member*; Ralph Wyman, *Chehalis Tribal Member* ;  
Calvin Bray, *Chehalis Tribal Member* ; Devon Tiam, *Chehalis Tribal Member* ;  
Fred Shortman, *Chehalis Tribal Member* ; Dan Penn, *Chehalis Tribal Member*;  
Jason Gillie, *Chehalis Tribe DNR*; Theron Shisler, *Chehalis Tribe DNR*; Mark Mobbs, *Quinault Indian Nation*; Julie Balmelli-Powell; Carol Cloen, *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*; Chrissy Bailey, *Department of Ecology*; Penny Mabie, *EnviroIssues*; J. Vander Stoep, *Governor's Work Group*.

#### **STAFF**

Kirsten Harma, *Chehalis Basin Partnership*

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- Presentation slides from this meeting are available on the Chehalis Basin Partnership website: <http://chehalisbasinpartnership.org/february-19th-cbp-meeting/>
- More information about the Chehalis Basin Strategy, the topic of today's meeting, are available on the website: <http://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/>

#### **MEETING**

##### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Vice Chair Mark White welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members and guests provided self-introductions.

Kahle Jennings provided the guests and presenters with an overview of the Chehalis Basin Partnership and its accomplishments. He mentioned that coordinated work in the Chehalis actually started after the 1996 flood, so today's meeting topic is relevant to issues that people in

the basin have been thinking about for a long time. Local people in the Chehalis Basin have been wrestling with issues related to managing water for people and fish since 1998. The work of the Chehalis Basin Partnership culminated in writing the Chehalis Basin Watershed Management Plan.

## 2. Member Updates

- No updates

## B. Presentations & Discussion

### 3. “Chehalis Strategy Overview” – Presentation by J. Vander Stoep, Chehalis Basin Governor’s Work Group.

Mr. Vander Stoep provided an overview of the history of flooding in the Chehalis Basin, and the formation of the Governor’s Work Group. Governor Gregoir formed the Work Group to address catastrophic floods and the decline of the fisheries in the basin. She hand-picked members who could likely find a way to work together on these issues. Vander Stoep mentioned that it took effort for the individual members of the Work Group to agree that flooding and fish habitat were related, but they eventually agreed that efforts to address one of those issues could not take place without the other. The Work Group’s 2014 recommendation to the Governor was to start local projects and evaluate alternatives through a Programmatic EIS. Their recommendation includes considering the option of constructing a dam in the upper watershed.

#### Q/A:

Q) *How many acre-feet of flood storage were lost when Chehalis etc. built Home Depot, Walmart etc. in the floodplain?*

A) Walmart is only about 50-acres. Maybe 200-acres for the whole development. I’m not saying they don’t matter, but that really isn’t a big percentage of the 300,000 acre-feet that come during a flood. It’s not a significant impact in terms of flood impact. Yet every time something is built in the floodplain it takes away flood storage. That is not wise policy.

Q) *The Walmart construction area and Mellen Street bridge led to the river being constricted, and the ponding area was taken away. That’s why I-5 flooded.*

A) The hydrologists hired in the last biennium are learning a lot and some of these scenarios (like removing bridges) have been modeled. It has an impact, but projects like the Mellen St. bridge only have a small, localized impact. There is no significant impact by the time flood waters get to Oakville.

Q) *How much water comes out of the Chehalis vs. Skookumchuck and Newauckum? How much do the other tributaries contribute to mainstem flooding?*

A) That was one of the many questions the Work Group wanted to answer through research. The mainstem contributes the most flood waters to Grand Mound during peak flow events. Maybe 60-70% of total flood water contributions. You can have a flood on the Skookumchuck or Newauckum, but you’re not going to have a catastrophic flood that gets all the way to Oakville or Cosmopolis. A major contribution to flood reduction would be on the mainstem, not one of the tributaries.

Q) *Isn’t there a correlation between the timing of the development (in the Chehalis area) and the timing of these catastrophic floods?*

A) That hypothesis doesn’t explain what’s happening upstream at the Doty gauge. The flows in those places are going up. The amount of water coming to the developed area is higher. The development didn’t cause that amount of water to increase. Floods are increasing because of the

higher amount of water coming down in these big storms.

Q) *Is anyone in the Governor's Group considering a moratorium on development in the floodplain?*

A) That was part of our recommendation. Land use is a piece of this problem and part of the solution. Centralia has been taking a lot of action and I think Chehalis will get there as well.

(Commissioner Schulte added that Lewis County isn't allowing fill in the floodplain)

Q) *Forests are not being considered as part of the problem. When forests are cleared, trees aren't doing the work of putting water into the air anymore.*

A) The State is analyzing forestry practices as they relate to flooding right now. So far, no one has been able to make a connection between flood levels and forestry practices. There isn't a measurable contribution. This is because during storm events, the ground is already saturated. One tree on a storm day isn't sucking up a lot of water. The reason flooding is worse is that there's more water coming down during big storms.

#### **4. "Programmatic EIS" – Presentation by Chrissy Bailey, Washington State Department of Ecology**

Ms. Bailey summarized the Department of Ecology's efforts in conducting the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). The PEIS is a high level comparison of alternatives to 1) reduce specific conditions caused by a major flood event (threats to human health and safety, flood damages, damage to agriculture and crops, disruption of transportation, disruption of industry and business) and 2) protect and restore aquatic species habitat function (improve natural floodplain function, increase aquatic species abundance, increase healthy and harvestable population of salmon and steelhead and protect tribal rights). Ecology is working to figure out the costs and benefits of each different alternative.

-Alternative 1) Governor's Work Group recommendation – Dam ("flood retention facility") and raised levees around the airport and in Aberdeen/Hoquiam, as well as local scale flood-proofing, local projects, land use management, flood warning system, as well as aquatic species habitat restoration.

-Alternative 2) Governor's recommendation without the dam.

-Alternative 3) Non-structural options. Includes local scale projects and aquatic species habitat restoration

-Alternative 4) Restorative flood protection and aquatic species habitat restoration (option recently proposed by the Quinault Indian Nation)

All options will be evaluated against a "no-action" alternative.

For "Alternative 1", two dam types are being considered. One (FRO) is like a run-of-river and only operates when the flood flows are predicted to exceed a major flood at the Grand Mound gage. It stores floodwater in a pool during storms. The other is a flood retention facility with a permanent pond (FFRA). The idea on that second model is that it would release flow in spring/summer/fall to augment instream flows and potentially cool temperature.

The Quinault's proposal is being evaluated to see if it can achieve the same level of flood reduction as through the structural methods.

Ms. Bailey stressed that none of these options will eliminate flooding. There will be trade-offs with each option.

Once the draft PEIS is ready, there will be a period where people can comment on the proposal (currently 30 days, trying to extend to 45 days). Whatever option the Governor decides on in the fall of 2016 will be considered the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS that comes out next summer.

Q/A

Q) *What about forestry impacts?*

A) Hydrologists, in coordination with the DNR, are looking at forest practices today and how that might affect flooding. That information will be incorporated into PEIS.

Q) *Why don't these presentation materials use the word "dam"?*

A) Ms. Bailey tried to correct that in her verbal presentation.

Q) *Is there an alternative which includes lifting I-5?*

A) The Department of Transportation considered that in the last biennium. There is a report by WADOT on the Chehalis Strategy web-page ([www.chehalisbasinstrategy.com](http://www.chehalisbasinstrategy.com)). They found that raising the freeway would make flood damage worse on the upstream side of the highway. They concluded that they didn't want to do it as it would be too expensive.

Q) *Has anyone done a sediment study? The pool behind the dam will just fill up with sediment.*

A) They are doing a sediment transport study now. One of the dam alternatives (FRO) would pass the sediment downstream since it would only hold back flow for a couple of days maybe every couple of years.

## **5. "Aquatic Species Restoration Plan" – Carol Cloen, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Chehalis Strategy Restoration Plan Manager.**

Ms. Cloen explained the details of the aquatic species aspect of the Chehalis Strategy. The Department of Fish and Wildlife and consultants are conducting a lot of research. This represents a huge investment in terms of research in the Chehalis Basin. The research is serving to help address some of the questions brought up earlier (sediment transportation, forestry impacts, etc.).

The Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) is a comprehensive watershed restoration plan. It doesn't seek to restore just a single species or just salmon. The goal is restore, maintain and improve habitat and ecosystem function. The research currently taking place by WDFW staff will inform both the PEIS and the ASRP. WDFW is researching aquatic species abundance, diversity, movement, and distribution. Another major part of this work is development of an Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment computer model (EDT). It will show the impacts of different actions in the watershed on salmon populations (since EDT is specifically designed for anadromous salmonids). Scenarios that can be examined with the model include the impacts of a dam and the impacts of climate change. NOAA Science Center is doing a watershed assessment which looks at landscape change across time in order to determine where restoration could restore historic functions. This will serve as a way of verifying the results of the EDT model. Both of these assessments will be used to determine where different restoration actions will produce the most biological benefits. In March, they will be soliciting input from local experts on the draft strategies. The goal is come up with a draft final restoration strategy complete by the end of 2016.

Q/A

Q) *We don't have a lot of pre-development, pre-European settlement data. These are looking at what is there today and what the potential could be with more restoration, is that correct?*

A) With the exception of the watershed assessment, yes. For the watershed assessment they're using Platt mats to try and craft a pre-European settlement baseline.

Q) *When are the local expert input workshops going to take place?*

A) Anchor QEA should be putting those dates together soon. It's a tight timeline and we know that.

Q) *It looks like a lot of these data are from just one year, and that was a drought year. Are you looking at how that affects these results?*

A) A lot of the research has actually been going on for three years and will continue to the end of the biennium. We recognize that this is not as robust a dataset as would be ideal.

Q) *Replacing small culverts with big ones actually increases the flow of water which increases the amount of water that can be transmitted downstream. Isn't that creating impacts counter to what the Flood Authority wants to see happen (preventing the flashy nature of our floods)?*

A) From a biological perspective, allowing water to move is always better.

Q) *Why aren't you looking at freshwater muscles and benthic macroinvertebrates?*

A) We're trying to!

Q) *What about lamprey?*

A) We just know more about salmon so that's why more work is taking place with salmon. WDFW is also researching and considering potential impacts of the Strategy on other fish, including lamprey, Olympic mudminnow, sculpins, etc.

## **6. "Engaging the Community on the Chehalis Basin Strategy" – Penny Mabie, EnviroIssues**

Ms. Mabie, a consultant with the firm EnviroIssues, explained her firm's role: helping involve the community in the Chehalis Basin Strategy. What they're trying to accomplish is getting the people in the Chehalis Basin to understand and embrace whatever plan is ultimately supported by the Governor. They are working to inform the public about the PEIS, and to keep engaging people between public comment periods. They are also measuring people's willingness to participate – implement restoration on private property. The local people are the ones that are going to have to live with the results of the Chehalis Basin Strategy, so they need to be involved in shaping it. Her firm's work will also help consolidate comments from the public and provide that information to the Governor. They will be holding six habitat restoration "focus groups" consisting of people who have property along the river starting next week. They will also host informational booths at community events, fairs and festivals, and put together a traveling display and video. They plan to talk with groups already doing similar or complementary work in the basin and support them (Conservation Districts, Lead Entity, etc.), with the goal of encouraging them to put out clear and consistent information. Ms. Mabie shared the key things they think people need to know about the Chehalis Basin Strategy.

### **Q/A**

Q) *The "key message" about making a Strategy based on sound science should also include local traditional knowledge from indigenous communities.*

A) Absolutely. That's a great comment.

Q) *It seems like the river restoration focus groups are targeted at people living along the river. You need to get people on the hills together, too, as they still have to pay their share (of taxes)*

A) Good comment.

Q) *How are you contacting people who live in the basin? The Farm Bureau hasn't heard anything about this. And they are an affected community since they are using most of the bottomlands.*

A) The Conservation Districts have heard this and have been involved. We'll try to give as much notification as we can and get it out there more broadly.

### **Q/A, Discussion, and Break-Out sessions**

Q) *How can the public get specific information about local projects, like raising the airport levee?*

A) The Flood Authority's website has information about the levee projects and other "local projects". The Chehalis Basin Strategy website has some information, too. This has WASDOT's

report from the last biennium the details the I-5 analysis. Chrissy Bailey can provide any additional details.

*Q) Is rerouting Dillenbaugh Creek part of this?*

A) I don't believe it is.

*Q) How is the public supposed to know about what's going on?*

A) We will go to where people are – fairs, festivals, and the meetings of different groups here in the basin. We'd rather meet them where they are than expect them to come to other meetings.

*Q) Is social media part of the plan?*

A) We don't know how much this is used here in the basin yet. One thing we're going to ask people is where people get their information. If you're running a blog or social media site we'd love to know about it. (one mentioned by the audience was "Rochester what a great place to live.")

*Q) Are their environmental engineers from the Office of Dam Safety working on the dam?*

A) Yes. There's a new hydrologic model for the basin and new LiDAR data. This is an update and improvement beyond the FEMA maps. Portland State University is building an updated water quality model of the river. State geologist is also keeping an eye on this.

*Q) You want to spend a billion dollars to fix a few million dollars in damage (as cited in J. Vander Stoep's presentation - from the FEMA pay-out). Wouldn't we be better to just buy people (living in the floodplain) out?*

A) Our roles are to look at alternatives, evaluate science, etc. We (at the agencies) aren't in a position to answer this. Part of the PEIS and technical work is doing economic analysis relative to the Work Group's recommendation. That will help us understand the economic side, as well. The direct and indirect costs of flood damage will be included in the economic analysis. The Quinault's alternative may address some of what it will cost to reduce flood damage without a large structure.

*Q) You have to do mitigation work as part of putting in the dam– how do we know that it's going to get done? The State has already defied court order on the Culvert Case. How do we know there is going to be budget for this and that this is going to get done?*

A) If a dam is going to be the preferred alternative, it will be unlikely that anyone will permit the dam unless the money is there for the mitigation.

Money dedicated to the ASRP is separate from mitigation. It will be funded in any of the alternatives except the "no action" alternative.

*Q) Who makes the decision about which alternative to go for?*

A) It isn't finalized at this point. Ecology "owns" the PEIS. But it does not have statutory responsibility to implement anything in of the document. The public comments, state agency recommendations, etc. go to the Governor. The decision may also include legislators. I (Chrissy Bailey) don't know how the Governor is going to make the decision.

*Q) So the governor is going to use more than this PEIS to make a decision?*

Correct. He will also receive the results of the technical studies, public comments, recommendations from other groups, etc. Another things to point is out is that there will also have to be a project level environmental analysis that would have to evaluate whatever the preferred alternative is, so this isn't the end of this process.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With there being no further business, Vice Chair Mark White adjourned the meeting.

## **NEXT MEETING**

**April 22<sup>th</sup> 2016.**