***CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP***

**Fairfield Marriott Inn, Rochester, Washington**

**September 27, 2019**

**9:30am – 12:00pm**

**Meeting Summary**

**MEMBERS\* and ALTERNATES’ PRESENT**

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| Alissa Shay’, *Port of Grays Harbor* Brian Shay\*, *City of Hoquiam (phone)*Jan Robinson\*, *Chehalis River Basin Land Trust*Wes Cormier\*, *Grays Harbor County*Mark Cox’, *Grays Harbor County*Phil Papac\*, *Port of Grays Harbor*Kaitlynn Nelson’*, Thurston County* Mike Noone\*, *Ecology Water Resources*Terry Harris\*, *City of Chehalis*Paula Holroyde\*, Citizen, *League of Women Voters Thurston County*Amy Spoon’, *WDFW* | Brian Thompson\*, *Lewis County Citizen*Chris Lunde\**, Port Blakely, Business Representative*Dave Windom\*, *Mason County*Kim Ashmore*\*, City of Centralia*Rick Eaton’, *City of Centralia, wastewater*Brian Shay\*, *City of Hoquiam*Jaron Heller\*, *City of McCleary*Nick Bird\*, *City of Ocean Shores (phone)*Bobby Cox\*, *Town of Pe Ell*Lauren McFarland’, *Quinault Indian Nation* |

**GUESTS**

Karin Strelioff, *Thurston Conservation District;* John Kliem, *Lewis County contractor;* Bob Amrine, *Lewis Conservation District;* Kevin Hansen, *Thurston County (phone);* Garrett Dalan*, TNC (phone)*

**STAFF**

Cynthia Carlstad, *Facilitator, NHC*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

* Meeting summaries are available on the Chehalis Basin Partnership website: [www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org](http://www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org)
* PowerPoint presentations from this meeting are available on the Chehalis Basin Partnership website: [www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org/presentations](http://www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org/presentations)

**MEETING**

1. **Welcome, Introductions**

The Chair convened the meeting and participants introduced themselves.

**Approval of August Meeting Summary**

All were in favor of the meeting minutes as no changes were needed.

Ms. Carlstad passed around an attendance sheet and meeting handouts to everyone. Ms. Carlstad introduced Mr. Mike Noone as the speaker for the first agenda item.

1. **Net Ecological Benefit**

Mr. Noone introduced himself and his presentation on Net Ecological Benefit (NEB). He discussed the Ecology’s new guidance for determining NEB, how Ecology defines NEB, and how the guidance will be applied to the Watershed Plan Addendum.

* The NEB Guidance describes Ecology’s interpretation of the term Net Ecological Benefit used in RCW 90.94. These are the standards Ecology will apply when reviewing watershed plans.
* The guidance was developed through public workshops. Ecology incorporated review input to its Interim Guidance in June 2018 and to its draft guidance in summer 2019 resulting in the final guidance released at the end of July 2019.
* The guidance is intended to help local groups develop plans to offset water use from future permit-exempt wells. Ecology is looking for reasonable assurance that NEB will be achieved through these plans.
* NEB is not JUST offset water, and there is also no guaranteed funding for projects.
* There is no requirement that offset actions be completed by the plan due date (2/1/21).
* Required elements from the legislation include the following:
	+ Quantify expected consumptive water use from new permit-exempt wells over 20 years
	+ Identify where it is possible to offset. First priority is water for water in the same time and place as impact. Second priority is water for water not in the same time and place and impact AND projecs that enhance fish and aquatic environment.
	+ Finally, Ecology must evaluate: Does this plan have a net ecological benefit.
* Required plan elements are the following:
	+ Document assumptions and methods
	+ Delineate subbasins
	+ Estimate new consumptive water use from projected permit-exempt wells
	+ Evaluate impacts from new consumptive water use
	+ Describe and evaluate offsets from projects and actions. This includes:
		- Project and action description
		- Offset estimates
		- Benefit summary
		- NEB evaluation
		- Adaptive management
	+ Example offset project types include water right acquisitions, non-acquisition water projects, habitat projects and regulatory actions.
* The WRIA’s (Partnership’s) role is to develop a plan that meets NEB and approve the plan.
* Ecology’s role is to determine NEB and adopt the plan if NEB met.

Questions/Answers

How is adaptive management factored in? Ecology is viewing this as the WRIA’s preparedness to adapt if obstacles emerge. Ecology is learning from Nisqually implementation and will apply that learning to new plans it evaluates.

Where are we if the WRIA approves the plan, but Ecology doesn’t adopt it? Having Ecology and DFW staff working alongside the WRIA group is insurance against this. Mike is providing the policy guidance, and Tom Culhane, Jim Pacheco (Ecology) and Tristan Weiss (DFW) are providing technical guidance and consultation. If these agency staff don’t raise red flags along the way there is good indication that plan will be adopted.

Does Ecology require monitoring, and is the agency funding monitoring? Monitoring is not required, but Streamflow grants include points for monitoring. Good projects can demonstrate benefits. It was noted that demonstrating benefits requires monitoring.

Mr. Noone also gave a presentation on Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants. Ecology is preparing to solicit for grant applications under this program. He covered the five “w’s” of Streamflow Restoration grants:

* “Why” is to encourage and support local implementation of projects and actions that restore streamflows to level necessary to support healthy sustainable salmon population.
* “What” is a competitive grant initiative designed to support and encourage local implementation of projects and actions. $300 million total is expected for this grant program over 15 years, with this round anticipated to be $30 million. Eligible project types include water rights acquisition, water storage, altered water management or infrastructure, watershed function, riparian and fish habitat improvements, environmental monitoring, and feasibility studies.
* “Where” is statewide, but priority is the WRIAs identified in RCW90.94 (which includes the Chehalis).
* “Who” is eligible includes state agencies, local governments, quasi governments, federal agencies, tribal governments with reservation lands or treaty rights in Washington, and non-profits. Out of state and for-profit companies are not eligible.
* Lastly, the “When” is the following anticipated schedule:
	+ October 2019 – grant guidance publication
	+ November 2019 through March 2020 public workshops
	+ February through March 2020 – Grant RFP open
	+ August 2020 - grant award announcements. It is not guaranteed that any project will be funded. There is more demand than there is funding.
* Funding priorities will be the following:
	+ Project location in RCW 90.94.020, 030, or 040 defined areas (7%)
	+ Plan or rulemaking – Included in Ecology adopted plan or through a rulemaking process to meet the requirements of RCW 90.94.020 or 030. (7%)
	+ Project benefits – improves streamflows or enhances instream resources and watershed functions which benefit threated and endangered salmonids (higher preference) or other native fish and aquatic species of concern.
	+ Other scored criteria are
		- Additional benefits (13%)
		- Budget (10%)
		- Durability and resilience (17%)
		- Scope of work (10%)
		- Monitoring and applicant readiness (7%)
		- Additional project considerations (10%)
* Other important considerations are recognizing that funds will be limited and demand high. Ecology may divide large projects into phases, and this does not guarantee funding for future phases.

Questions/Answers

Challenges of funding subsequent phasing – for example land acquisition, but then no follow-on funding to implement project. This is a good point, but this is also a safeguard against implementing bad projects – take one step at a time.

Any consideration for having funding targeted for smaller, disadvantaged communities? Ecology crafted guidance to level the playing field as much as possible to acknowledge this

How can a private landowner plug into this program and participate? Have a quasi-government sponsor your project, such as a land trust. For example, the Partnership could support projects with Grays Harbor County as fiscal agent.

What is role of the Chehalis Basin Partnership and other WRIA Planning Units going forward? Post-plan adoption, WRIA Planning Units can play role of sponsor and fund their role through these grants. It was noted that support money is critical for the Planning Units to continue to implement the plan; funding through project grants is one avenue, but a stable funding source would be better.

The $500 fee on new permit-exempt wells can also be used to fund ongoing CBP work. $350 of this for each well goes to Ecology for this program and could potentially be used for CBP support. The program is not set up this way now, but it is possible.

Is there a limit on number of projects one entity can submit? No, and no limit on grant ask either.

$30 million – when will that be confirmed? When grant guidance published.

For Chehalis – grant round will happen in the middle of our planning process, so these would be early actions. Individual entities can submit, or they can submit with formal support from the Partnership. Ecology will give preference to submitting with support from the Partnership. Individual members can also support each other’s projects separate from the Partnership support.

Are there match requirements? No, but preference points for matching funds.

Is monitoring considered operations and maintenance for these grants? No.

Partnership has some resources through the planning process to help members with grant proposals within the context of helping craft the plan so that it will be more assuredly adopted by Ecology. These projects could come to the Partnership for early approval as well.

Priority for projects in approved plan – does that cover the current planning process? No, it would have to be in the adopted 90.94 plan.

1. **Permit-exempt Well 20-Year Projections**

The goal of this agenda item was to review the projected permit-exempt well scenarios developed from different available data sources and consider the proposed scenario to be used for the Watershed Plan Addendum. Ms. Carlstad reminded the group that these projections bring together three plan elements – considering population growth projections, available developable lands where new permit-exempt wells could be located and organizing the projections geographically into subbasins.

To put this into the context of developing the estimate for offset water needed for the Chehalis, she showed the graphic below which illustrates the following workflow:

1. Project new permit-exempt wells by 2040. We are at this step.
2. Estimate consumptive water use from these new wells.
3. Determine the streamflow impact from the new consumptive water use.
4. Add a safety factor if desired by the Partnership to account for assumptions in the above estimates and ensure that streamflow impacts are offset.
5. The result of these steps is the quantity of water to be offset by the projects that Mike described in his earlier presentation.



Data sources for permit-exempt well projections include Office of Financial Management (OFM) population projections, annual single-family residence building permits, Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) population and housing projections, Group A water system data, sewer system extents, county parcel data and county statistics for average number of people per house. The TRPC data is best for Thurston County where the model used is very detailed to the parcel-level. For other counties it is likely to be less accurate because it relies on older OFM data and the model is far less detailed.

Ms. Carlstad shared that the past building permit data provides the best insights into where development has been occurring. Because we have it on an annual basis, we can also evaluate whether there are trends, such as an increase or decrease in building permit activity. The OFM data is provided at the county-level, so NHC had to make judgements about where to place the new population. We did this based on past building permit proportions between Chehalis basin and other county areas, between urban and rural areas, and based on building permit distributions. Group A water service areas are excluded, and these estimates do not include data for Chehalis Reservation.

Looking at the tables and maps provided as handouts, the projected new permit-exempt well connections for each subbasin are shown. The table includes the following scenarios:

* Past trends (based on building permits)
* OFM – low, medium, high
* TRPC – for Thurston County areas only.

The “Proposed Projection” column and the numbers shown on the map are the highest of the OFM or Past Trends scenarios. For subbasins within Thurston County, TRPC projections are proposed, and for subbasins split between Thurston and other counties, the proposed projection adds the TRPC estimate and a fraction of the OFM or Past Trends for the Lewis or Grays Harbor County areas. The group also viewed the proposed projections on the map handouts.

Questions/Answers

OFM data is for population and that was converted to homes? Yes. TRPC does that population-to-homes conversion as part of their modeling.

Is this just for permit-exempt wells? Yes. Other users should be operating under a water right, although they may be drawing off the same water source.

It was brought up that groundwater availability is limited in many areas of Lewis County due to geology of the area - clay soils that do not yield water well. Deeper wells get salt water. It was noted that this is pretty prevalent in Lewis County.

Have we looked at well data? No. It was noted that many people in the North Fork Newaukum are hooked up to City of Chehalis water.

What is the differences between low and high in OFM projections? Low and high are error bars. Clarification on how non-Thurston County projections were derived in split basin – OFM values were prorated based on subbasin-wide building permit activity.

Ms. Carlstad stated that this is the first reading for these proposed permit-exempt well projections. She asked that everyone consider these projections within their organizations and be prepared at the October meeting to decide whether they are ready to approve or amend the proposed projections.

Lastly, Ms. Carlstad introduced participants to the next steps which is calculating consumptive water use for these new permit-exempt well connections. This includes both indoor and outdoor usage. Indoor is about 60 gpd per person, while the outdoor irrigation practices need to be mapped. One member noted that 60gpd per person is a lot. Several members raised concerns that outdoor irrigation may be overestimated because their experience is that many people do not irrigate their yards or only irrigate sporadically. Livestock use is not included in this because the law allows for livestock watering with permit-exempt wells without quantity limits. Detailed information on the assumptions and judgements that go into the outdoor irrigation analysis was requested. More on all this at the October meeting.

1. **Watershed Plan Addendum Progress Reports**

Ms. Carlstad brought up the possibility of merging the two project groups: The water projects and habitat work groups. The habitat group wants to focus on developing projects for the grant program, with key watershed for flow improvement including Black, Scatter and Newaukum, followed by Skookumchuck, Cloquallum and Satsop. Mr. Weiss described some of the data sources he is researching for guidance on priorities and needs, especially related to future climate. The goal for this is to have a solid foundation for offset projects to support a reasonable assurance that projects will provide benefit. It was confirmed that projects can be submitted for grants prior to plan approval.

There will be an Offset Project work session after the regular Partnership meeting on October 25.

There is no updated Work Plan this month – no changes to the schedule at this point.

1. **For the Good of the Order / Public Comment**

Chair Harris stated that this is time for public comment and member announcements. The group provided updates in a round-robin fashion.

Ms. Holroyde – Thurston County League of Women Voters is updating its water study to make sure it is current when the Streamflow Restoration plans are done.

Mr. Windom has completed a deep population study focusing on what does it look like now, and what will it look like in 20 years. He emailed this to group. Chair Harris noted that the Growth Management Act is causing population to concentrate people into urban areas rather than rural areas.

Mr. Ashmore announced that the City of Centralia is working on final plan documents for the China Creek Phase 2 project. The project should be constructed starting May 2020, and they are envisioning solid results in fish habitat and flood reduction.

Ms. Nelson announced that Thurston County scheduled a general project work session Oct 3 with Kelsey Collins to stimulate project ideas and bounce ideas off Kelsey.

Mr. Mobbs announced that the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) will be released in November.

Ms. Carlstad announced a field tour to Ohop Creek project, from the Nisqually plan. This is a good demonstration project showing habitat improvements.

**AJOURNMENT**

With there being no further business, Chair Terry Harris adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.

**RECORD OF DECISIONS:**

1. June 28, 2019 – Members voted by full consensus to review the Charter Addendum as edited at this meeting within their organizations and be prepared for a second reading and approval at the July 26, 2019 meeting.
2. July 26, 2019 – Members voted by full consensus to approve the Charter Addendum to the 2004 Operating Procedures. The Quinault Indian Nation voted “Formal Disagreement, but Willing to Go with Majority” and will provide a written statement to include with the final charter.

**NEXT MEETING:** October 25, 2019