



CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP

Zoom

January 28th, 2022

9:30 am – 12:00

Meeting Summary

MEMBERS* and ALTERNATES' PRESENT

Alissa Shay*, *Port of Grays Harbor*
Andy Olen', *City of Centralia*
Bob Johnson*, *WA DNR*
Brian Thompson*, *Lewis County Farm Bureau*
Chris Stearns*, *Thurston PUD*
Colleen Parrot*, *Chehalis Tribe*
Jan Robinson*, *Chehalis River Basin Land Trust*
Jason Walter*, *Weyerhaeuser*

Lee Napier', *Lewis County*
Megan Tuttle*, *WDFW*
Paula Holroyde*, *League of Women Voters*
Phil Papac*, *Port of Grays Harbor*
Rick Eaton*, *City of Centralia*
Suresh Bhagavan', *Grays Harbor County*
Terry Harris*, *City of Chehalis*
Tye Menser*, *Lewis County*

GUESTS

Alex Gustafson, *Trout Unlimited*; Angela Johnson, *Department of Ecology*; Bob Amrine, *Lewis Conservation District*; Emily Dick, *Washington Water Trust*; Jill Van Hulle, *Aspect Consulting*; Kevin Hansen, *Thurston County*; Lauren McFarland, *Quinalt Indian Nation*; Lee First, *Twin Harbors Waterkeeper*; Mark Mobbs, *Quinalt Indian Nation*; Nat Kale, *Department of Ecology*; Rachel Stendahl, *Chehalis Basin Education Consortium*; Stacy LaClair, *Chehalis Generation Facility*, Sarah Moorehead, *Thurston Conservation District*
Jane Hewitt, *Grays Harbor County*, Dave Heimer, *WDFW Invasive Species*.
Joel Massmann, *Consultant to QIN*,
Chanele Holbrook, *Citizen*

STAFF

Kirsten Harma, *Watershed Coordinator*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Meeting summaries are available on the Chehalis Basin Partnership website: www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org
- PowerPoint presentations from this meeting are available on the Chehalis Basin Partnership website: www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org/presentations

MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Terry Harris welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members and guests provided self-introductions and went into breakout rooms for individual updates.

2. Review of July Meeting Minutes

A quorum was present. All minutes were approved.

A. Presentations & Discussions

Presentation- Twin Harbors Waterkeepers Grant Application - Lee First

Ms. First presented a project idea and requested a letter of support for a NOAA Basinwide Education and Training Grant (B-WET). The money would be used to encourage capacity building and support field trips for high school students. The first year of the education program will focus on how climate change, resource extraction, and urban development affect watersheds where kids live. The second year will take students on field trips out to different parts of the watershed. Twin Harbors Waterkeeper also hopes to bring in tribal leaders and orca experts to speak with the students. The focus will be on Aberdeen schools, schools of the Quinault and Quileute Tribes, and others to be determined.

Discussion

Mr. Stearns brought up that herring are spawning in the tidal zone in Grays Harbor near John's River. Twin Harbors Waterkeepers will be asking for about \$80,000 but they have not determined the final number yet. \$120,000 is the maximum that can be applied for. The grant is due at the end of next week. Ms. Stendahl mentioned that she has received this grant before for the ESD 113 program and is willing to review the application and provide comments. Ms. First stated that the Waterkeepers want to get input from as many experts as possible and act as partners. Mr. Harris invited Waterkeepers to come back to the Partnership throughout the project to provide reports on the projects' activities.

Ms. First stated some of the field trips are to visit farms in the mid Chehalis Basin that have a history of flooding. Mr. Walter suggested including large-scale timber owners and adjacent land owners as experts to provide education, . Ms. First will work with Don Schuh from Weyerhaeuser as they have already worked together and visited a restoration site (Marker 18 oxbow). Mr. Thompson asked if there might be conflict with the Global River Environmental Education Network (GREEN) program in terms of overlap of programming. Ms. First stated the South Sound GREEN is not in the Chehalis; there is another youth education program in the Chehalis but just for elementary students. The Waterkeeper's program seems to be the only program targeting high school students.

Decision

Mr. Stearns, Mr. Menser, Ms. Parrot, Ms. Robinson, Mr. Harris, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Hewitt, and Mr. Bhagavan voted in favor of providing a letter of support to the project. Ms. Tuttle, Mr. Walter, and Mr. Papac supported with further points of clarification. No oppositions were noted.

Presentation- Cooke Aquiculture Water Right Feasibility and Purchase Kevin Hansen

Mr. Hansen presented on Scatter Creek Cooke Aquaculture Water Rights. The project would be a partnership between Thurston County and Washington Water Trust (WWT), with WWT as lead sponsor applying for one of Ecology's Streamflow Restoration grants. The team is seeking a letter of support from the Chehalis Basin Partnership, The proposal for purchase of some of Cooke Aquaculture's water rights would include multiple uses, including part of the right being retired. This water right has been considered non-consumptive, but the County can provide justification that about ½ is consumptive. This means they would have to buy twice as much water as what they need for the project. The team envisions the rights being put to multiple uses, which would be vetted during the project's feasibility phase. Rights could be returned to support the flows of Scatter Creek and Prairie Creek if a "pump and dump" arrangement is feasible, and possibly support the Grand Mound water system and seed a water bank. Mr. Hansen stated that this grant application is for a feasibility study. Acquiring these water rights would be a one-time opportunity because not many of these water rights exist. It's important to act fast before water right is sold to someone else.

Discussion

Mr. Massmann asked why the consumptive rate is so high. Mr. Hansen stated that their modeling seems to show that vertical hydraulic conductivity is so low that once the water is pumped out of the aquifer, it can't infiltrate back, so it discharges to Chehalis River via Scatter Creek. Ms. Van Hulle added that these rights probably shouldn't have been issued as non-consumptive.

Ms. McFarland asked how likely it is that the water right will be purchased for another use. Mr. Hansen replied that when water returns to the open market, they believe there will be other interested parties. He also added that models show 2,500 to 2,800 acre-feet discharged when the plant was running. It's not running now, so the clock is ticking. Ms. Van Hulle stated there's a discrepancy between actual use and what the water rights say, but that difference is not known. Ms. Harma added that This project is in the WRIA plan, so it should score well through Ecology's grant program. In the plan it is listed as a high-benefit project, with low certainty of implementation. The grant will increase the certainty of implementation. WDFW and QIN's proposed study of gain/loss in Scatter Creek would extremely helpful for this proposal.

Decision

Mr. Stearns, Mr. Menser, Ms. Parrot, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Tuttle, Mr. Papac and Mr. Bhagavan voted in favor. Ms. Tuttle, Mr. Walter, and Mr. Papac supported with further points of clarification. No oppositions were noted. QIN and Mr. Walter abstained. Ms. Harma will send out the draft letter of support next week for CBP member review, before forwarding it on to the applicants.

B. Updates

Chehalis Basin Membership Departures and Arrivals

Ms. Harma updated the group with member statuses. Nick Bird is no longer with Ocean Shores as he is working for Aberdeen now. Jaron Heller, McCleary councilman, also has left. McCleary needs a new representative and they are aware of needing to find a replacement. Tye

Menser has been reappointed, and is staying on as representative of the CBP. He stated that since he is no longer Board Chair, he may have more time.

Ecology Funding Request Update

Ms. Harma updated the group on the status of the request the Partnership's made for funding from Ecology to support administration and coordination of the Partnership as it implements its Streamflow Restoration Plan. The funding was requested from a specific pot of money being collected from counties for the purpose of streamflow restoration and implementation in the WRIA in which they were collected. At the Partnership's last meeting, Angela Johnson from Ecology presented the department's response, which was a rejection of the request. Ms. Harma subsequently set up a meeting with Mary Verner, head of the Water Resources Department, to justify the request. She reported on the meeting, which was that the overall meeting was positive. Ms. Verner was receptive and very complimentary of CBP and agreed that the purpose of the fund was to support work like what CBP does. She stated that Ecology's barrier is that there is no active grant mechanism to funnel the money through. Ms. Verner stated that the competitive grant program is the only way to get funding to organizations right now. So far, \$90,000 in permit exempt well fees has been collected in an account at Ecology from the Chehalis Basin. The outcome of the meeting was that Ms. Verner and Mike Gallagher were going to work through options for funding. Mike Gallagher called back 1-2 weeks later, and stated that the only way for the Partnership to get the funds was through a competitive grant round.

Mr. Harris thanked Ms. Harma and expressed frustration about the lack of support with funding and roadblocks. Mr. Menser asked if the Partnership can access grant funds even though our request is not specific "shovel-in-the-dirt" projects. Ms. Harma stated she is putting in a grant proposal through Grays Harbor County, but that's not likely to be competitive because the criteria of that program emphasizes location-specific "shovel-in-dirt" projects.

Ms. Johnson encouraged the Partnership to tack on administrative funds to an individual competitive grant request. An application for group facilitation and planning on its own is not likely to be competitive, but tying it to a specific project might make the request more competitive. Mr. Hansen noted that while this may be a possibility, we need to pass a "red face test" and only ask for funds for tasks that relate to the associated grant project. This doesn't necessarily pass for an effort to implement a basin-wide restoration plan. That said, he stated Thurston County has two grants moving forward in Scatter Creek basin and will be incorporating a request for CBP facilitation support in them.

Ms. Harma has requested, via our fiscal sponsor Grays Harbor County, funding through Ecology's competitive Streamflow Restoration grant program. She has worked with Kevin and others to add project facilitation to their grant requests as part of the Scatter Creek bundle.

Ecology will get in contact with the Partnership if a different funding mechanism becomes available.

Mr. Shay noted that there is a state budget surplus, and we should organize a campaign to contact legislators about this request.

Chehalis Generation Facility Update

Ms. Harma presented on the Chehalis Generation Facility's water needs and their offer to the CBP. The City of Chehalis has two water intakes; one on the NF Newaukum River and one on the Chehalis River. The Chehalis Generation Facility (CGF) powers approximately 400,000 homes per year. The CGF has a permit to acquire water, but when the Chehalis River level drops below 165 cfs at Grand Mound they have to stop taking water. In the summer of 2021, CGF was able to use water reserves for most of their needs and only had to pull water 1 day last year when it dropped below 165 cfs. There is a clause in their permit that allows them to continue to draw water if they fund water conservation through the CBP and the City of Chehalis .

Late summer 2021 North Fork Newaukum flows were <7 cfs, which is the baseflow required to support fish. Chinook salmon need water over the summer to make it to spawning season. One possibility to improve streamflow is to relocate the City of Chehalis intake away from the north fork Newaukum taking more water from the Chehalis River intake. The CBP has the opportunity to help the CGF find other options to offset summer water use and improve fish habitat in the watershed.

Ms. LaClaire stated that in 2021 there were complications with City of Chehalis accepting funds from CGF, because there wasn't something specific for them to do. The City of Chehalis had trouble figuring out how to create a meaningful mechanism for such a small amount of money because there wasn't anything set up ahead of time. Mr. Harris added that when he was on the City Council for Chehalis, he didn't hear those concerns. The Chehalis Council was worried about the levels in the Chehalis River at that time because water right users were being shutdown.

Mr. Stearns asked if this is the natural gas plant or the the coal plant . Mr. Harris confirmed that it's the natural gas plant. Mr. Stearns noted that the Chehalis basin has had a lot more farmers transition into row crops. The Port of Chehalis has gotten into malting barley, for instance. That transition has led to higher consumption of water, and tight water rights. Mr. Thompson retorted in the chat responding to Mr. Stearns, "small grains like barley do not require irrigation. In fact, the loss of cannery contracts has reduced the use of irrigation in the area." Ms. LaClair noted that CGF has 2 diesel fuel tanks; one has been repurposed for stormwater; the other, they need funding. Knowing that water rights will remain tight helps to make the argument to retrofit the second one.

Ms. Parrot, Mr. Harris, Mr. Kale, Ms. Harma, Ms. Van Hulle will meet separately to help find ways to use the CGF funding.

Roundtable Updates

Mr. Harris stated that the 2022 flooding felt different because it felt like the tributaries were inundated, but not so much the Chehalis River. It looked like the water sort of rose from the outside in, rather than bottom up. Only one lane of I-5 flooded and it only shut down for a few hours. He added that the Skookumchuck flooding projection was overestimated. It ended up being three feet lower than projections. Mr. Amrine added that livestock pads were built 2 feet above the 2007 event. They didn't see a huge amount of use during this latest flood, but some did. At least one farmer is interested in expanding their pad. There was no Lewis County animal mortality noted in this year's event.

Ms. Parrott added that even with rain and warmer temperatures, there was still snow on top of Baw Faw ridge. The flood impacts could have been worse, but even so, the Chehalis Tribe was cut off for 2 days because there is one main road going into the reservation. South Thurston

County was hit worse than in recently recorded history. Scatter Creek flooding caused flooding in Rochester where it hasn't been seen before. Ms. Moorehead stated in the chat that the Chehalis Basin Conservation Districts are coordinating to pull together damage assessments and find recovery funding.

Ms. Harma stated that Amy Booth is coordinating a tour of restoration sites: write to Ms. Booth if you want to attend.

Ms. Harma noted that without new funding coming in from Ecology, the CBP is out of options for administrative funding to run these meetings. She asked for volunteers to participate in a meeting to develop other funding options. Mr. Harris stated the Flood Authority will receive funds and asked if maybe we can get funding through them. Since the Flood Authority was an offshoot of CBP, we might be able to partner with them. Mr. Harris, Mr. Stearns, Ms. Parrott, Mr. Kale, and Ms. Tuttle volunteered to discuss further the funding mechanisms.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business, Chair Terry Harris adjourned the meeting.

NEXT MEETING: February 25, 2022