



## **CHEHALIS BASIN PARTNERSHIP**

**October 28, 2022**

**9:30 am – 12:00**

**Montesano – Commissioners Hearing Room**

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

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

Alissa Shay\*, *Port of Grays Harbor*

Andrea Dahl\*, *City of McCleary*

Brad Murphy', *Thurston County*

Bob Johnson\*, *DNR*

Dave Windom\*, *Mason County*

Jan Robinson\*, *Chehalis River Basin L.Trust*

Jill Warne\*, *Grays Harbor County*

Kim Ashmore\*, *Centralia*

Sean Swope\*, *Lewis County*

Marshall Reed\*, *Ocean Shores*

Megan Tuttle\*, *WDFW*

Paula Holroyde\*, *Thurston Co. Citizen*

Suresh Bhagavan', *Grays Harbor County*

Terry Harris\*, *City of Chehalis*

Terry Willis\*, *Grays Harbor County Citizen*

Tye Menser\*, *Thurston County*

#### **GUESTS**

Angela Johnson, *Ecology Water Resources*; Nat Kale, *Department of Ecology*; Mark Mobbs, *Quinault Indian Nation*; Lauren MacFarland, *Quinault Indian Nation*; Clayton Franke, *Daily World*; Max Ross, *USGS*; Joel Massmann, *consultant to QIN*; Laura Garza, *Washington Water Trust*; Alex Gustafson, *Trout Unlimited*; Rachel Stendall, *Chehalis Basin Education Consortium*; Lanita Grice, *Citizen*; Kathy Tennyson, *Citizen*; Kianna Sinner, *Thurston Conservation District*; Lee First, *Twin Harbors Waterkeeper*.

#### **STAFF**

Kirsten Harma, *Watershed Coordinator*

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- Meeting summaries are available on the Chehalis Basin Partnership website: [www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org](http://www.chehalisbasinpartnership.org)

#### **MEETING**

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

Chair Terry Harris welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members and guests provided self-introductions.

##### **2. Review of September Meeting Minutes**

A quorum was present. All minutes were approved.

##### **3. Vice Chair Appointment**

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair to be accepted at the October CBP meeting. Terry Willis was

nominated to serve as Vice Chair. Terry Harris was nominated to serve as Chair. No discussion. All in favor. The slate of candidates was unanimously accepted by the membership.

## **A. Presentations & Discussions**

### **4. Update on Streamflow Restoration Act grant round.** Kirsten Harma, Coordinator

Ms. Harma presented the list of projects that applied to Ecology for their Streamflow Restoration grants program, as well as which were approved for funding and which denied.

Hoquiam Dam Removal and Water Right Source Switch – City of Hoquiam lead. Would include testing groundwater source wells, background work to switch water right from surface water to groundwater, feasibility, scoping of dam removal. -- DENIED

Lower Creekside Conservancy land Thurston MAR Assessment – Creekside Conservancy Land, Thurston County as lead. Was feasibility study to divert 3% of streamflow from an unnamed tributary into a Managed Aquifer Recharge site in the headwaters of Scatter Creek. – DENIED

Assessment of Groundwater-Surface Water Exchanges in Support of Maintaining Scatter Creek Baseflow – WDFW lead with USGS as a major partner. Evaluates location of groundwater-surface water interaction. Study. Hopes to inform project siting. – APPROVED

Cooke Aquiculture Water Right – Washington Water Trust lead, Thurston County as partner. May result in part of the 1,600 af/yr water right being placed in Trust Water Right program/ potential augmentation of streamflow. CBP requested funding for “Scatter Creek bundle” work as part of this. – partially APPROVED (feasibility only)

Stillman Creek Tributaries Streamflow Improvement – Lewis Conservation District lead. Improve alluvial water storage in three tributaries to Stillman Creek through in-stream wood placement. – DENIED

Beaver Dam Analogue Implementation – Wild Fish Conservancy lead; WDFW partner. Permitting, construction and monitoring of BDAs in 3-5 stream reaches (focus in Watershed-Plan addendum priority basins) – APPROVED

Chehalis Basin Partnership Streamflow Plan Implementation – CBP lead with Grays Harbor County as fiscal agent. Request to fund our group for plan implementation. Would have provided a mechanism for Ecology to provide funding from the funds collected by Counties from building permits in our basin. -- DENIED

Ms. Shay was surprised that more projects weren't funded given that the state has streamflow restoration as a priority. She asked about the distribution of projects funded statewide. Ms. Harma responded that the distribution was fairly balanced, and having 3 of our 7 projects approved looks like about the same proportion as other parts of the state. Ms. Johnson noted that Ecology received 57 applications and awarded \$35 million.

Ms. Harma presented the Chehalis Basin Partnership draft budget. The City of Centralia will be considering a donation of \$10,000 – thank you Centralia! The \$100,000 request to Ecology was not approved, significantly reducing the hoped-for budget. Ms. Harma presented income received in 2021 and 2022 from partner organizations and potential expenses for the 2022-2023. Members suggested that the budget be split out into 2023-2024 and workplan developed conservatively. Ms. Harma was asked to confirm which donations are renewable vs. one-time donations.

Ms. Harma provided an update that an intern from the University of Washington will be working with the Chehalis Basin Partnership for spring quarter 2023. Mr. Harris noted that Ms. Harma's time allocated to the CBP is limited.

## **5. Presentation: TransAlta Water Right Acquisition study – Joel Massmann and Lauren McFarland– Quinault Indian Nation.**

QIN has been working on this update for the past year. Ms. MacFarland provided background on TransAlta's water right related to the Streamflow Restoration Plan. The Generation Facility will fully shut down in 2025. This leaves 51.6 cfs of its water right that will no longer be used. The Chehalis Basin Partnership in its work for the Streamflow Restoration Act came up with a list of projects of offset consumptive use through permit exempt wells through 2040. Purchase of a portion of the TransAlta water right was one of the projects included in its plan. QIN received a SRA grant to explore feasibility of purchasing TransAlta water right in 2020. The funded tasks include: extent and validity; evaluation of the effectiveness for instream flow, and appraisal of fair market value.

Mr. Massmann started with an overview of the TransAlta water bank and what it means. Water banks are relatively new in Washington (approved by Ecology in 2003). There are currently 46 water banks. TransAlta's bank is the second largest in the state – the value of that water right is estimated at \$80 million. Water banking works by the state giving out rights that allow different entities to use water. TransAlta's water right was obtained in 1970. It withdrew water from the Skookumchuck River which lowered river levels. 2003 legislation allows that when TransAlta stops using the water, it will go back into the river, but TransAlta is still legally allowed to control (sell or lease) that water. Future withdrawals purchased through the water bank can't legally be larger than historic withdrawals during TransAlta's operation, meaning that instream flows need to stay the same as during TransAlta's operations. All water rights purchased from TransAlta would keep its priority date of 1966, so are not as subject to water rights curtailments.

Water right is divided into primary reach (between location of withdrawal and location of any return flow), and secondary reach (entire Chehalis mainstem downstream of return flow near Bucoda).

Amount of water withdrawn during TransAlta operations: Metering data on how much water withdrawn from river since 2002 helps answer this question. Power generation data 1972-2002 gets at earlier use. Historic Average ~19,000 af/yr. Ecology determined past water use as 28,000 af/yr – year of maximum withdrawal. They were able to use that year of maximum withdrawal because of a “determined future development” based on an agreement with the City of Centralia. Return flow based on type of consumptive use (literature review by Massmann) would be about 20%. Ecology estimated 5% return flow when set up water bank. This is a high value compared to other similar facilities. Note that TransAlta shut facility down for 3-4 months at a time during 2014-2020, meaning that its return flows would have been much greater at those times.

Amount of water that might be withdrawn during future operations: Likely most use will occur in summer. Maximum *allowable* 3,000 af/month (based on single year withdrawal of 28,000). Massmann concluded that these values are more than twice what was actually withdrawn by TransAlta in the past. This means that if all water in bank gets sold, more water could be withdrawn from the river than ever has been before!

Buying 10% of water bank and “putting it back” for instream flow is the project being investigated by the QIN. Considering that bank that would sell 40% more water than was actually ever used, buying just 10% of it won’t allow streamflows to be as good as they were in the past.

Next Steps: QIN will be looking at current and historical streamflows, current water right permits, future water release options from reservoir, and climate impacts.

Q) *Who owns the water in bank?*

A) TransAlta does. If you want to buy a water right, contact TransAlta. Ecology approves whether or not they can sell or lease the water. Ecology does the paperwork.

Mr. Kale noted that TransAlta can sell “mitigation” for purchasing a new water right. This isn’t “mitigation” in terms of how we think of things ecologically. Someone wanting a new water right would have to go through Ecology’s full water right permit process, and work with TransAlta to buy “mitigation” credit.

Q) *My understanding of what you’re saying is that the way the calculation was done on how much can be banked is essentially subverting the goal that purchasing this water is a mitigation for exempt wells??*

A) Buying some of that water and putting it back in stream would make things better in the future, but not as good as historically. “The train has left the station” - No one can change the current water bank set up – which allows for more than historically withdrawn.

Q) *Does this mean there is a flaw in Ecology’s method of water accounting?*

A) For this one, yes. The issue is mostly specific to this example.

Q) *Isn’t the bank water less than their original water right?*

A) It is less in the primary reach, but not the secondary reach.

Comment: We can’t change what they’re doing in terms of the bank. Our focus should be on keeping some water in the river. **If you wanted to keep streamflow as it was before bank was set up, you would need to get 40% of right, which is about \$32 million (Harma noted this is equivalent to Ecology’s budget for the entire state for Streamflow restoration.)**

## **6. Presentation: Soils as part of Watersheds – Max Ross, USGS**

Mr. Ross provided an overview of how soil and water interact in a watershed. Soils play a role in water cycle. They act as a water filter. They play a role in nutrient cycling. Different soil types have different properties. Mr. Ross provided an overview of soil formation and soil properties.

Soil health is highest in natural systems. There are issues with soil health in managed areas. Erosion is the biggest problem. This has three parts -dislodgement, transportation, and deposition. Erosion occurs mostly where there is no vegetated cover. Agriculture and forestry are associated with erosion/sediment pollution, and are known as the most prevalent sources of non-point pollution. Sediment pollution effects the environment through – turbidity prevents animals from navigating and finding food; reduced sunlight penetration inhibits vegetation growth; degradation or loss of aquatic habitat; interference with fish respiration and digestion. Economic effects on a watershed including filling of stormdrains, increasing flooding potential; increased cost of water treatment, and impact on fisheries.

For managing erosion, prevention is best. In agriculture this can be done through cover crops, in forestry, through slash mats and use of light weight equipment. Follow BMPs for agriculture. Complete soil health management emphasizes soil microbial and fungal communities, and nutrient cycling. This is done through maximizing continuous living roots, maximizing vegetation cover, and also maximizing biodiversity.

Know your soil: The USGS's soil survey map is available online and being continuously updated. It's free to use! <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.hmt>.

For more information, contact Max at [max.ross.usda.gov](http://max.ross.usda.gov).

*Q) What do you do with this information at USDA?*

A) I make soil surveys and update maps. Conservation planners with USDA use these data to aid in conservation planning practices. I can provide some technical assistance if needed.

*Q) How does sediment pollution relate to the other types of pollution, how big a piece of the pie is it?*

A) Stormwater runoff from urban areas is the other piece of the pie, but this is very small when you think of the landcover in the whole state. Sediment pollution is generated from most of the used land in the state.

*Q) What would you recommend to determine if the soil is going to support a change in land use? (eg, from agricultural to restored/forested)*

A) The most limiting factor for tree growth is water. Do site analysis to see where water table is coming to. Note species that are sensitive to hydric soils and don't plant them in areas with high water table. A soil test will show you where "redox" features indicate saturation.

## **7. Partner Updates/ Share you Water News**

-Terry provided an update on the Satsop erosion control project.

-QIN has been having staff changes. Ms. MacFarland is now an environmental protection manager, and will still be a participant in the CBP. The QIN is hiring a wildlife biologist and filling her old position.

-Ms. Shay – the Port has just completed a project on the Chehalis River, along their haul road. The project helped prevent erosion on the river. Was permitted and completing quickly – before the winter. Used slash for mats over the bank to protect the soil. A nice innovative approach! They have requested Flood Authority funds for a mid-term approach.

-Mr. Ashmore reported that the City installed a new gauge in China Creek! There is no flow yet to measure. Council approved purchase of a sandbag machine, that will allow filling sandbags faster and help in flood situations. 2,000 bags an hour! Centralia will share with Chehalis if they fill enough of their own bags. Mr. Ashmore can share information with the CBP next month.

-Mr. Kale provided an update on CBB meetings – next week's meeting has been cancelled. The regular meeting, Dec 1, will go forward. The Office is currently working on budgets. Anchor QEA is working on a draft report on their Skookumchuck Committee. This will be done by the end of November. The final report will be presented at the February CBB meeting.

-The McCleary aquifer study is ongoing. They are checking wells. One of the wells was found to be dry last month.

## **For the Good of the Order/Public Comment**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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