

# Chehalis Basin Local Actions Program • Implementation Advisory Group

## MEETING 1 SUMMARY

**Date:** Monday, November 16, 2020

**Time:** 1:00 – 4:00 PM PST

**Location:** Zoom online meeting

### Purpose of Meeting

- Review Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) work plan and schedule.
- Review the Chehalis Basin Board-approved Local Actions Program outcomes.
- Review Chehalis Basin sub-area flood damage map and highlight the extent of changes in the mainstem Chehalis River floodplain for 100-year flow conditions predicted for 2080.
- Review past floodplain land use recommendations and discuss other recommendations that could be considered.

### Meeting Notes

These meeting notes are intended to be a public record of key points, questions, and discussion topics raised during the meeting. They are not intended to be transcripts. The meeting was recorded on Zoom.

### Implementation Advisory Group Work Plan and Schedule

Andrea McNamara Doyle (Office of Chehalis Basin [OCB]) thanked members for their participation on the Implementation Advisory Group and the expertise that each member brings. She encouraged members to take a creative, problem-solving approach to this work, given the difficulty of finding solutions that satisfy all interests. Jim Kramer (meeting facilitator) reviewed the anticipated schedule and topics for upcoming IAG meetings (see Table below), as well as the topics and areas of interaction with the Technical Advisory Group. In later meetings, the IAG will likely have additional interactions with both the Chehalis Basin Board and Technical Advisory Group to respond to questions and follow-up issues.

### *Anticipated Schedule and Topics for Future Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) Meetings*

| IAG Meeting      | Date              | Topic(s)  |
|------------------|-------------------|---|
| <b>Meeting 2</b> | December 16, 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highlight areas of significant flood damage and discuss where existing environmental justice populations and communities are located</li><li>• Panel discussion on regional/national programs using structure relocation, acquisition, and retrofits for flood damage reduction</li></ul> |
| <b>Meeting 3</b> | January 11, 2021  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Future floodplain (i.e., 100-year flood in 2080), including structures at risk</li><li>• Implications and feasibility of land use management actions (e.g., relocation, acquisition, floodproofing, and land use regulations)</li><li>• Priority areas/projects</li></ul>                 |

| IAG Meeting      | Date              | Topic(s)  |
|------------------|-------------------|---|
|                  |                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bank protection strategies/approaches and implications to communities</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Meeting 4</b> | January 13, 2021  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implications and feasibility for potential structural (e.g., levees, floodwalls, etc.) or non-structural projects and actions</li> <li>Continue discussion and follow-up from meetings #1-3</li> </ul> |
| <b>Meeting 5</b> | January 21, 2021  | Discussion and follow-up from meetings 1 - 4  |
| <b>Meeting 6</b> | February 11, 2021 | Discussion and follow-up from meetings 1 - 5  |
| <b>Meeting 7</b> | February 22, 2021 | Discussion and follow-up from meetings 1 - 6  |

**Local Actions Program Outcomes**

Andrea McNamara Doyle reviewed three overall planning assumptions from the Board for the Local Actions Program—a 30-year implementation timeframe, the use of the 100-year floodplain in 2080, and the condition that any projects must be designed, implemented, and mitigated so they do not make flood damage worse in other areas. These planning assumptions will guide the IAG’s work and discussions on implementation feasibility for the Local Actions Program. She also reviewed the set of approved measurable flood outcomes for the program and noted that the Board did not specify what types of actions could be used to achieve these outcomes (e.g., protecting critical facilities could involve elevating, floodproofing, and/or relocating those facilities).

Comments and discussion items included:

- The Chehalis Basin Board has chosen to focus on the 100-year flood predicted for 2080 for the Local Actions Program and has not decided to look specifically at strategies for bigger (e.g., 500-year) or smaller events. Since terms like “major” and “catastrophic” flooding can have specific interpretations, a group member suggested that it would be helpful to define any terms used.
- One participant noted that environmental justice issues are broader than simply whether actions cause disproportionate harm to communities that reside in the basin. Environmental justice issues are also important for the Quinault Indian Nation, which does not inhabit the basin, but has treaty rights in the basin. It is also important to consider that flooding could have both negative and positive impacts to fish (e.g., hazardous wastes released in floods are harmful, but other instances of flooding may be beneficial after some temporary impacts).

**Current and Projected Future Chehalis Basin Flood Damage Areas**

Andrea McNamara Doyle provided an overview and highlighted visual examples of how different subareas of the Chehalis Basin may experience flood damage differently. She noted that OCB will use a multilevel screening process, informed by the Technical and Implementation Advisory Groups, to identify technically feasible and programmatically sound options to bring to the Board for consideration. Jim Kramer then described analysis that had been completed to estimate and rank potential flood damage risks. This analysis considered the acreage of zoned agricultural land, acreage of developable land, and the number of structures in the 100-year floodplain for different flooding areas. The prioritization of tributaries for flood protection is not final and is expected to evolve through further discussion; OCB has already received preliminary input from the TAG and the community on the prioritization.

Following the overview of current flood damage areas, Larry Karpack (Watershed Science and Engineering) presented information on hydrologic and hydraulic modeling to predict future increases in 100-year flood depths by the year 2080. The maps depicted how much flood depth is predicted to increase in sections of the mainstem river as well as significant portions of tributaries. The modeled maps of future flood damage showed the effects of a 26% increase in flood depths, which was based on the Environmental Impact Statement, but Watershed Science and Engineering will also model a 50% increase for comparison. It is important to note that the 100-year flood levels predicted for 2080 (both 26% and 50% levels) will not have the same boundaries as the current regulated FEMA floodplain, which has implications for landowners and how to communicate information about future flood areas.

## **Floodplain Land Use Recommendations for Local Jurisdictions**

Jennifer Tice (Ross Strategic) provided an overview of floodplain land use recommendations from the 2010 Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan and 2016 recommendations from the Chehalis River Basin flood Authority and an update on a survey of local jurisdictions on their implementation status. The recommendations covered planning and data (e.g., use of flood of record), zoning to limit new development in the floodplain (e.g., low-density residential zoning), requirements for new developments (e.g., freeboard for commercial properties), requirements for renovations (e.g., non-conversion agreements, substantial improvement tracking), and measures to protect water quality, shorelines, and critical areas (e.g., adoption of Stormwater Manual).

Ten of 15 local and tribal jurisdictions in the Chehalis Basin have completed the survey OCB distributed on the status of adopting the floodplain land use recommendations. OCB and OCB consultant staff plan to follow up with the jurisdictions to learn more about the implementation status, including partial implementation status, and the rationales for why jurisdictions have or have not adopted individual recommendations. OCB plans to share this information with the IAG at a future meeting.

IAG members used [Jamboard](#) to share their comments on the existing land use recommendations and their ideas for new or modified recommendations. Takeaways from the discussion included:

### *Questions about the Meaning, Applicability, and Extent of Implementation of the Recommendations*

- Several of the comments asked about how specific land use recommendations would work and/or their effectiveness at flood damage mitigation/protection. There was also interest in the extent of adoption of the recommendations (as is planned with follow up to the survey), including receptivity of the Board and local municipalities.
- It is important to recognize that some parts of the Basin have developed in different ways (for example, some areas are mostly infill at this point) and this affects how the recommendations may apply. For example, one implication is that the recommendation for street elevation in Centralia might require 6 ft grade elevation on Long Road.
- It would be useful to clarify which recommendations apply to retrofits for existing structures vs. new development. When redevelopment occurs, there is generally a need to bring buildings up to code. The “substantial improvement” recommendations are for retrofits.

### *Challenges with Implementing/Adopting Recommendations*

- One of the issues with implementing the recommendations is that developers complain to local council members about the increased costs of compliance and that creates pressure against

change. Another common occurrence is that property owners remodel properties and do not get building permits.

- The City of Hoquiam adopted many of the strict standards, but properties can be valued differently at different places in the Basin. There are “ghost houses” where the economics are not there to support the property’s sale; FEMA might be contributing to that issue. It’s an “economically challenged” area.
- In Centralia, the floodplain is where much of the low-income population lives, including low-income rental properties (about 50% of the housing stock is rentals, and close to 100% of grade school children qualify for free or reduced-price lunches).
- Given the economics of these localities, economic assistance programs may need to be combined with flood-protection programs.
- The Community Flood Assistance and Resilience (CFAR) program could assist with rentals and non-occupied homes in economically depressed areas in floodplains; several million dollars are available this biennium for CFAR projects. Community action councils could be another avenue that could help local jurisdictions.
- Group members expressed an interest in more information on funding structures and options, which will be a topic of a future IAG meeting discussion.

#### *Ideas for New or Modified Recommendations*

- The group identified several other floodplain management land use recommendations, as well as principles for how the recommendations might apply across the basin:
  - Have the same regulatory requirements across the basin, rather than minimum standards.
  - Determine thresholds when the recommendations would occur (e.g., when to build to a higher standard or retrofit).
  - Use FEMA guidance and prioritize land use actions that achieve the highest Community Rating System (CRS) rating.
  - Require consideration of the future floodplain in the Growth Management Act and Shoreline Management Act implementation.
- Other recommendations included purchasing development rights to protect areas from development, building flood storage capacity through land acquisitions and easements in strategic areas, and focusing on flood damage reduction more than flood depth or extent.

## **Next Steps and Summary of Follow-Up Actions**

The next Implementation Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 16, 2020, at 1:00 PM PST. Below is a summary of follow-up actions identified during the meeting:

- OCB will send a short survey to IAG members to ask for input on the relative importance of the floodplain management land use recommendations and additional ideas.
- OCB will follow up with local jurisdictions to gain a better understanding of the full extent of implementation of the land use recommendations and the reasons for that status.
- There is a public survey ongoing that is soliciting input on local actions; OCB will share results from that survey with the IAG.
- OCB and consultant staff welcome any feedback and suggestions on the meeting and IAG process, including use of tools for interactive engagement in virtual meetings.