

CHEHALIS BASIN STRATEGY: LOCAL ACTIONS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY GROUP

The Office of Chehalis Basin (OCB) is forming an Implementation Advisory Group to discuss and provide input on policy and implementation feasibility, which will be used by Chehalis Basin Board to develop and evaluate the potential of a “Local Actions Program” to reduce flood damage in each sub-basin and basin-wide. A separate Technical Advisory Group is also being formed to provide input on technical aspects of program development and evaluation.

The Local Actions Program evaluation is being completed at the request of Governor Inslee, who tasked the Board and OCB with completing a preliminary feasibility evaluation of a Local Actions Program by March 30, 2021. Potential elements of a Local Actions Program for flood damage reduction will include actions like home elevations and relocation, reducing floodplain erosion rates that pose a high risk for structure damage, increasing floodplain water storage through natural or constructed infrastructure, and prevention of new at-risk development. Many of these elements have been investigated in the past but the Governor and Chehalis Basin Board are interested in reviewing what has been considered in the past as well as a fresh look at some of the potential actions.

The Board’s goal is to substantially reduce flood damage caused by catastrophic floods taking into account the predicted increased frequency and magnitude of these floods caused by climate change over time. The damage has caused loss of residential and commercial content and structures, destruction of agricultural crops and livestock, closure of transportation systems, and impaired critical facilities. The Board has approved a set of eight measurable outcomes (see attached) to guide the work of the advisory groups and the Board in conducting the preliminary feasibility evaluation.

Implementation Issues

The Implementation Advisory Group will focus on the following issues:

1. Provide policy input to Board on potential feasibility of implementing different approaches to reducing flood and erosion damage in different subareas of the basin, including strengths and limitations of actions such as acquisitions, buyouts/relocations of structures, agriculture-related actions, and structural protection measures.
2. Potential changes to land use management at the local-government level to prevent additional development in areas at risk of flood or erosion damage, including in areas facing increased future risks from anticipated changes in future flood conditions.

Implementation Advisory Group Role

For each of the issues listed above, OCB and its consultants will provide the Group with a memorandum summarizing the previous work and potential options for additional consideration. Group members will receive the memorandum in advance of meetings to discuss the material. The Group meetings will be facilitated to get feedback on the conclusions of the past work and additional work that could be performed during the six-month process.

The Group will work directly with OCB staff and state consultants from October 2020 through approximately February 2021, including participation in six approximately 4-hour advisory group meetings and have the opportunity to attend up to three public workshops.

Group members will be asked to provide input on various products developed by OCB staff and state consultants related to the Local Actions Program, including evaluations of technical research and initial conclusions and memoranda developed for Board decision-making with summaries of agreement/differences and recommendations. Group members will not be asked to make formal decisions on any aspect of the Local Actions Program or be expected to complete any new analyses or evaluations; members will be asked to conduct outreach to their constituent communities and provide feedback and input on the potential implications, feasibility, and effectiveness of acquisition, agricultural and structural approaches to reducing flood damage.

Implementation Advisory Group Expertise and Membership

OCB is seeking experts from state agencies, tribes, local governments, conservation districts, economic development, environmental justice and environmental/conservation organizations. The membership will be limited for efficiency but interested parties will be allowed to observe the work of the Group as well as participate in public workshops.

Participation Needs/Requirements

October – November 2020

Participate in up to two (approximately 4-hour) Implementation Advisory Group meetings and one public workshop to:

1. Assess effectiveness of current local government approaches to preventing new at-risk development and identify gaps
2. Communicate with constituent communities on implications of implementing potential actions, including strengths and limitations

November 2020 – February 2021

Participate in up to four (approximately 4-hour) Implementation Advisory Group meetings:

1. Evaluate feasibility of implementing potential local actions
2. Determine how potential local actions would impact communities and populations with Environmental Justice concerns
3. Assess effectiveness of current local government approaches to preventing new at-risk development and identify gaps
4. Continue to communicate to and from constituent communities