

Chehalis Basin Local Actions Program Advisory Groups

JOINT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Monday, 22 February 2021

Time: 3:00 – 5:00 PST

Location: Zoom online meeting

Purpose of Meeting

Inform both Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members of Chehalis Basin Board process and potential options under consideration.

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.

Board Process

Andrea McNamara Doyle (Director, Office of Chehalis Basin) and Jim Kramer (meeting facilitator) provided a general overview of the meeting purpose and content and reviewed Local Action Program (LAP) advisory group and general Chehalis Basin Strategy progress to date. Key takeaways included:

- The immediate Chehalis Basin Strategy timeline:
 - February 17, 2021: Public meeting to collect public comments on Strategy options
 - February 18, 2021: Board meeting that included more details about the Local Actions Program and provided feedback on updated project phasing, milestones, and cost estimates for the ASRP and potential analysis for Skookumchuck Dam
 - March 9, 2021: Evening public meeting for OCB to receive additional public comments on Strategy options
 - March 4, 18, and 24: Board meetings to consider options, receive public comment, and seek consensus
- Strategy process adjustments from 2020 and Board objectives for September 2020 – March 2021 that stemmed from Governor Jay Inslee’s request for additional evaluation of the overall strategy: The Board will determine...
 - ...the potential for flood damage reduction through LAP, CFAR, local projects, etc., with and without a dam (including estimated costs);
 - ...the potential to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate aquatic habitat and species impacts of dam (including estimated costs);
 - ...the magnitude, priority, and sequence of ASRP actions necessary to protect and restore freshwater habitat and the abundance and resilience of aquatic species (including estimated costs);
 - ...which actions are ready to be implemented as part of a long-term strategy, which should not move forward, and which need more evaluation before determining whether they should be implemented; and

- ...next steps and resources needed to advance the long-term strategy over the next four to six years.
- Five major cross-cutting issues for the Strategy are:
 - Actionable information and key data gaps need to be filled to determine long-term actions for aquatic species restoration and flood damage reduction;
 - Planning assumptions for flood events and damage;
 - Skookumchuck Dam and potential benefits for both aquatic species and flood damage reduction;
 - Floodplain acquisition opportunities and challenges; and
 - Community outreach and engagement.
- Additional local actions that could align habitat restoration and flood projects (and contribute to breaking down silos between the two goals) are: erosion management solutions, structural solutions, floodplain acquisition solutions; dam modification or removal; building elevations and retrofits, and floodwater storage solutions.
- Currently, the Board does not have all the information it needs to determine if LAP can meet identified outcomes (with or without the dam).

Potential Options

Andrea McNamara Doyle, Jim Kramer, and Merri Martz (Anchor QEA) presented five sets of potential options the Board can consider for the LAP: 1) flood flow and floodplain options; 2) Skookumchuck Dam-specific options; 3) flood damage reduction actions; 4) flood retention facility and airport levee improvements; and 5) ASRP options. The options are listed below, along with advisory group recommendations, Board feedback needed, and/or potential next steps, where applicable.

1. Options to feasibly address future floodplain and flood flows:
 - Advisory group recommendations: Technical Advisory Group (TAG) recommends evaluating damage from more frequent events and the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) recommends using the flood of record or current 100-year floodplain standards for regulation and the 500-year floodplain or 2080 100-year floodplain standards for planning.
 - Board feedback needed: Does the Board want to evaluate multiple flood events and frequencies? If so, what would be the focus for identifying flood damage?
2. Options to explore potential flood storage at Skookumchuck Dam:
 - Conduct analyses for long-term options: existing dam and operational modification, modified dam and operational modifications, and dam removal.
 - Conduct analyses for near-term options: changes to dam operations for salmon and flood control and acquiring water rights.
3. Local flood damage reduction actions to address accelerated bank erosion and protect high value structures and critical infrastructure in high priority areas:

Options to address accelerated bank erosion:

- Develop initial maps for up to 100 miles of high priority area;
- Develop an erosion management approach to evaluate reach-scale opportunities for reducing erosion damages while protecting and enhancing habitats and ecological processes;
- Identify one or more pilot subbasins to outline how to develop a pilot technical assistance program for landowners with relative cost and staffing needed for a program; and/or
- Complete CMZ delineations in high priority areas.

Next steps to address accelerated bank erosion:

- Staff will develop an erosion program in the 2021-23 biennium with direction from the Board after it receives the analysis of the 100 miles of erosion areas in March 2021.

Options to protect high-value structures and critical infrastructure in high priority areas:

- Floodplain acquisition program
 - Potential next steps for floodplain acquisition program:
 - Conduct feasibility analysis of Centralia/Davis Hill master plan for potential receiving area
 - Limited evaluation of potential acquisitions in other areas
 - Coordinate habitat and flood damage acquisition priorities
 - Conduct professional community surveys and engagement with local governments.
 - Board feedback needed: Should staff develop a workplan and budget to design an acquisition program for Board consideration? If so, are there specific objectives or priorities that should be included?
- Floodplain land use management
 - Board feedback needed: Does the Board believe these recommendations have the potential to achieve the Board's desired outcome to prevent new development in flood-prone areas? If not, what additional actions may be needed?

Andrea McNamara Doyle wrapped up the overview by describing the 2021-23 biennium budget proposed by Governor Jay Inslee, which includes \$70 million overall for the Strategy (split evenly between ASRP and flood damage reduction actions, with some extra for Board and OCB operations) and allows the Board to reallocate funding between goals.

Closing Discussion: Perspectives to Share with the Board

The advisory group members divided into three breakout groups to discuss the following two questions:

1. *What additional perspectives would you like to share with the Board?*
2. *What perspectives do you have on whether or how to continue the advisory group process?*

Key themes and takeaways for each question are summarized below.

Additional perspectives to share with the Board:

- Any program or project in the LAP is going to require effort and time to develop more detailed information to be able to focus future work, justify effectiveness and be worthwhile over the long term.
- It's important that the Board understands the significant level of coordination needed among jurisdictions to avoid conflicts.
- Focus next steps on actions that are most likely or feasible; keep all of the tools, but narrow the focus based on technical and political feasibility and available funding.
- There is a lot of local knowledge about where erosion is an issue in the Basin. This needs to be combined with additional analysis and mapping to marry local knowledge with the "30,000 foot view."
- It's imperative that we continue to pursue a coordinated effort to move people out of harm's way and improve habitat and infrastructure. Not moving forward with programs to do that is

akin to choosing a no action alternative which is not a feasible option. The scale of the effort and programs may vary but we need to move forward with it.

- There are numerous opportunities to relocate people while maintaining a viable economy. Important to keep this as part of the comprehensive solution.
- Thorough communication will prevent misinterpretations of Board objectives/desired outcomes.
- Continue to share on-the-ground successes so residents of the Basin know progress is being made.
- Local and tribal governments, especially in rural areas, face many challenges in navigating the complexity of FEMA requirements, implementing basin-wide flood hazard management recommendations, and preparing for changing climate conditions. The Board should consider supporting technical assistance for local jurisdictions with adoption and implementation of flood-damage reduction policies (e.g., addressing challenges with permitting projects). These resources will be more and more important moving forward.
- The City of Chehalis still feels there are no better solutions than the FRE; local actions could provide value and the City has interest in continuing to participate in considering local actions.
- Ensure coordination with existing programs (don't reinvent the wheel) and combine several actions to accomplish goals.
- Important to build a culture within the basin around floodplain management and the rest of the strategy to ensure long-term efficacy.
- How will all the pieces ultimately fit together?
- Board should invest in existing programs first rather than create new ones that could duplicate existing efforts.

Perspectives on the future of the advisory group process included:

- The advisory groups might function on more of an ad hoc basis: For example, the Board could identify questions and needed information, and OCB could consolidate those needs and reach out to specific advisory group members who could help.
- If we move forward with these actions, small groups comprised of different jurisdictions and stakeholders will need to work together to plan. This will be more challenging in a virtual setting.
- In terms of how frequently a larger advisory group might be needed, it will depend on the actions we move forward with and might fluctuate based on needs. Quarterly might be a good interval to start with.
- It is unclear that there is a need to have separate technical and implementation advisory groups moving forward. Some topics have benefited from separate discussions in the past, but there will be a greater need for synthesis going forward.
- It also could be useful to focus more on ideas that are most likely to be implemented, rather than ideas that have more problematic elements. Identify impediments, which ones can be worked through and which can't. This should influence the form and makeup of future groups: identify members that can make forward motion on ideas that are ready to move. The advisory groups could shift to focus more directly on supporting implementation. For example, advisory

group members could discuss both *where* to focus efforts (channel migration, flood storage, etc.) and then on how those efforts should proceed. This could also mean identifying the impediments to programs or projects, which may be political, and working through those issues that can be resolved.

- Important to clearly identify what is being asked of the advisory groups and how the recommendations will be used.

Flood Retention Facility and Airport Levee Improvements

Heather Page (Anchor QEA) provided an overview of benefits and impacts associated with the proposal, including flood damage reduction benefits for structures and environmental justice populations and impacts on tribal historic and cultural resources and both aquatic and terrestrial species and habitat. Andrea McNamara Doyle summarized new and in-process avoidance, minimization, and mitigation analyses conducted since the Draft EIS was completed; current perspectives of the Lewis County Flood District, state agencies, and tribes; and three potential pathways for additional evaluation:

1. Flood District develops and refines avoidance, minimization and mitigation (AMM) analyses in collaborative process with agencies and tribes;
2. SEPA and NEPA EISs finalized with new information from District and additional technical studies, addresses tribal and public comments; and/or
3. District prepares preliminary permit application materials and supporting plans, e.g., finalize draft HPA/Aquatic Species Mitigation Plan for permitting, finalize draft Wetlands Mitigation Plan, develop draft AMM plans for recreation, land use, cultural resources, etc.

Aquatic Species Restoration Plan Updates

Andrea McNamara Doyle presented updated ASRP full- and mid-level options, near-term funding strategies developed by the ASRP Steering Committee based on implementation speed, and preliminary metrics to evaluate program success: landowner willingness outcomes, project implementation pace, discrepancy between actual and projected costs, effectiveness monitoring outcomes, and status and trends monitoring outcomes.