

March 15, 2017

From: Jay Gordon, Chehalis Valley Farmer and Washington State Dairy Federation

To: Members of the Chehalis Basin Flood Authority

Re: Letter of Interest for Appointment to the Office of Chehalis Basin

Thank you for your consideration on this, my application for appointment to the Board of the new Office of Chehalis Basin.

I believe this next step of developing the board and Office of the Chehalis Basin (OCB) is crucial to continuing the effort to improve the fisheries of our basin and reducing the impacts of extreme flooding that our valley, our citizens and communities have experienced, especially in the past 27 years. I also firmly believe both flood damage reduction **and** long term improvements to our fisheries are compatible. It will not be easy to do both and will require careful, thorough steps to assure we achieve both important actions. I have been part of the effort to navigate that course and know we can and must achieve both. We know more floods are coming and we know if we do nothing the fisheries will continue to flounder or decline.

Since science and history tell us inaction is not in the best interests of our valley, then our actions must be taken carefully, collaboratively and wisely. I hope the following summary gives you a glimpse of the skills, experience and perspectives I have developed over many years and that come with my offer of service on this Office of Chehalis Basin oversight board.

I bring the following experiences and perspectives to this position:

- **Chehalis Basin Governor's Workgroup** - I have served as one of the appointed advisors for both Governor Inslee and Governor Gregoire as a member of the Chehalis Basin Governor's Workgroup since the inception of that work group.
 - It has been an honor to help this effort to develop science and information, coalesce support and funding for activities. Our actions have produced a plan for a basin wide strategy to improve the fisheries in our valley and to reduce the impacts of flood on our citizens. I would be delighted to help continue with the development and implementation of that plan.
- **Washington State Dairy Federation**
 - **Policy Director** (80% staff position) – 2015 to present: oversee legislative and regulatory affairs for and on behalf of dairy farmers and farmers across our state. Work includes

local, state and national policy initiatives. Work with local, state and national elected officials and a wide variety of agencies and experts.

- **Executive Director** (full time staff position) - 11/2000 to 12/2015: Oversee Policy work as well as overall policy and board management. Include developing and overseeing budgets, hiring, contract and grant administration, board development and boardmanship training, managed four strategic planning processes and implement strategic plan and annual association plans.
- **Board of Directors, Washington State Dairy Federation** -(volunteer position) 11/1996 to 11/2000. Assisting with setting and overseeing policy of Association, set goals for staff and budgets, and assist with legislative and regulatory activities.

➤ **Gordon Dairy Farm**

- **Owner and manager**, 1979 to present: Along with my wife and a longtime farm partner, we operate and manage our, seventh generation, 900-acre crop and dairy farm that has been owned by my family since 1872. We have raised cows, corn, grain, grass and a variety of vegetables and seed crops over the years.
- **Flooding personal perspective** - Our family has experienced the trials of farming including flooding for generations. We understand, farm and live most of the time quite well with floods, but the floods since the early 1990's have become more extreme and costly for us and my neighbors up and down the valley to deal with.
- **Fisheries personal perspective** – My great uncles and aunt were commercial fishermen in Grays Harbor and I have fished recreationally my whole life. Living along the Chehalis, I can see the potential of our valley for so much improvement in our fishery, especially in the salmon and steelhead runs. With careful stewardship, and wise investments in our sometime “forgotten” Chehalis valley I see the potential for a world class fishery, once again. Our challenge is to achieve a sustainable salmon legacy to pass on to the next generation of fishermen.

➤ Other volunteer service and experience includes:

- **Board member, William D. Ruckelshaus Center**, 2004 to present: This board and center specializes in working on solving tough public policy questions through collaborative involvement and consensus processes.
- **Grays Harbor Conservation District Board Member and Associate member**, 1989 to present: Oversee staff, district projects, work with neighboring farmers on conservation activities, work with a variety of federal and state agencies including State Conservation Commission, & USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- **Washington State Conservation District Association, Treasurer, 1990 to 1996:** oversee and manage finances of the Association, assist with conference planning, policy development, legislative and regulatory actions. Work with Local, State and Federal Agencies and elected officials.

I have almost 30 years of board experience, association management, and collaboration activities focused mostly in helping farmers and encouraging conservation on, with and for our natural resources in Washington State and here in this Chehalis Valley.

The flood of 2007 was an experience that changed things for me. I have included one photo (below) that shows my farm on December 1st 2007. When the flood waters finally receded, while our fields, fences and houses were damaged, it was nothing compared to the farmers and cities upstream. Once our farm and our immediate neighbors were safe, we heard the stories from the “upper valley”. As people came back to their homes, cities and farms they and we all realized the magnitude of the work it would take to help “fix” the damage of that flood (and again in 2009 as well).

Our Association, fellow farm and local organizations, county and state agencies and hundreds if not thousands of volunteers went, with boots on, into the upper Valley. I am proud to have seen and been part of this community in action. I am proud of the help we gave (we helped raise almost a million dollars and coordinated donations of around 200 cows to Chehalis farmers to help them restart their dairy herds). I am proud to say we helped some farmers recover, but it still haunts me that we “lost” farm families who simply decided they didn’t want to risk rebuilding in our valley in the face of more flooding. The concern then, as now, is “are we safe to live and rebuild here?” Now, when the rains fall hardest, most of us wonder if the next big or bigger flood is coming, again.

The directives outlined in the legislation that formed this new Office of the Chehalis Basin are audacious mile-posts; I look forward to working with this new group to meet the goals of the legislation and the needs of citizens of our valley and in our state.

The primary purpose of the office is to aggressively pursue implementation of an integrated strategy and administer funding for long-term flood damage reduction and aquatic species restoration in the Chehalis river basin. RCW 43.21A.730 (1)

The board is responsible for oversight of a long-term strategy resulting from the department's programmatic environmental impact statement for the Chehalis river basin to reduce flood damages and restore aquatic species habitat. RCW 43.21A.731 (5)

The board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy and developing biennial and supplemental budget recommendations to the governor. RCW 43.21A.731 (6)

The Chehalis basin strategy must include a detailed set of actions to reduce flood damage and improve aquatic species habitat. The strategy must be amended by the Chehalis board as necessary to include new scientific information and needed changes to the actions to achieve the overall purpose of the strategy. The strategy must

include an implementation schedule and quantified measures for evaluating the success of implementation. RCW 43.21A.732

Thank you for considering my letter of interest for one of the board seats to be appointed by the Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority.

If you have any questions, please contact me by cell phone at 360-951-8419 or email at: Jay@wastatedairy.com

Sincerely,

W. Jay Gordon

Our farm is the bottom right hand quadrant of this image, the bridge “over the Chehalis” at Porter is mostly underwater in the upper left, Briggs Nursery and the Sharon Grange are in top part.

