

The Grays Harbor Conservation District held a series of three public meetings in July and August of 2016. The purpose of the meetings was twofold:

- 1) To inform the public of the Chehalis Basin Strategy which integrates aquatic habitat restoration with flood protection needs, and present other relevant GHCD programs;
- 2) To gather public input on the concerns, needs, and priorities relating to flooding and erosion through facilitated public comment periods.

The meetings were open to all members of the public. Each meeting targeted a specific watershed where bank erosion and flood-related damages are found to be particularly severe within Grays Harbor County, including the lower Wynooche, lower Satsop, and Chehalis Mainstem Rivers. Nearly 80 participants attended the meetings (between 24 and 28 participants per meeting). Listed in no particular order, the comments below summarize key themes that were received through the public meetings and personal communications:

- **Bank erosion/land degradation was overwhelmingly the issue of greatest concern** among participants, followed by **fish/aquatic habitat** and thirdly **water quality**.
- Frustration was expressed about the **difficult and lengthy periods required for permitting**.
- Frustration was expressed by the **lack of public funding available** to address erosion and flooding. Many landowners feel that they carry the burden of a problem that is watershed in scale. Addressing bank erosion is cost prohibitive for individuals.
- Frustration was expressed that **the process takes too long**, meanwhile landowners watch their assets erode/become threatened in each storm. Landowners want to see action now.
- Frustration was expressed that there have been **many studies completed with no significant implementation** resulting from this work.
- Concern was raised among many about **declines in fish populations** in recent years.
- Concern was raised that **logging and land use practices in the headwaters are not being addressed** despite their contribution to flooding and erosion in the lower reaches.
- Questions were raised about **why traditional methods of riprap, gravel mining, and relic channel reopening are not allowed**. Many felt that these methods have worked well in the past, and there is frustration that they can't continue to use these methods. This points to the need for **greater education about alternative methods** that restore natural processes.
- Concern was raised that **fish have been prioritized over the needs of people**.
- Frustration was expressed that **landowners do not feel heard**. For example, many landowners have intimate knowledge of their river sections, but their knowledge isn't considered when solutions are being developed.
- Concern was raised about **zoning issues**: Land converted from agriculture to a buffer planting may be reclassified and taxed at a higher rate and/or landowners are taxed for land that is inaccessible (on the far side of the river) and/or unusable (gravel bars). GHCD visited new residences recently constructed in the channel migration zone that are now at risk, showing need for greater education.
- Concern was raised among landowners in the Wynooche Valley that **poor flow management of the Wynooche Dam** is a significant contributor to the scale of flooding and erosion.

- Appreciation was expressed that the **Chehalis Basin is receiving attention now**, and there was hope that dedicated funding is coming.
- Support was expressed for the **Conservation Districts' role** in providing landowner assistance and offering an opportunity to be heard. Appreciation was also expressed for the work of the **Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups**.

| Attendees were asked in a questionnaire to indicate which water-related issues concerned them* | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Issue of Concern | Number of Landowner Responses | | | Total |
| | July 28, Wynooche | August 4, Chehalis | August 10, Satsop | |
| Bank erosion/Land degradation | 8 | 8 | 6 | 22 |
| Infrastructure damage | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Fish/wildlife and their habitat | 7 | 5 | 2 | 14 |
| Public safety | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Water quality | 5 | 3 | 2 | 10 |

| Attendees were asked in a questionnaire to indicate which GHCD programs and services they would be interested to participate in or learn more about* | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------|--|-----------|
| Projects/Initiatives | Number of Landowners Interested | | | Total |
| | July 28, Wynooche | August 4, Chehalis | August 10, Satsop | |
| a. Farm pads (elevated land to provide refuge for livestock/equipment) | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| b. Streamside plantings and/or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program | 6 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| c. Floodplain Reconnection | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| d. Culvert replacement and/or fish passage barrier removal | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| e. Streambank Stabilization | 8 | 8 | 5 | 21 |
| f. Farm and/or manure nutrient management planning | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| g. Forest management planning | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| h. Aquatic species habitat restoration | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| i. Land easements (sale of development rights while retaining ownership of land) | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| j. Land Acquisition (if you own floodplain lands that you would like to sell) | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| k. Other | 1 (ancient overflow channels reopened) | 0 | 1 (opening old flood channels, gravel removal) | 2 |

*Note: These tables are based on 26 questionnaires returned; however the relative numbers of water-related concerns and program interests indicated in these tables are representative of what the GHCD has heard from landowners throughout the county.