

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 30, 2021
To: Chehalis Basin Board
From: Andrea McNamara Doyle, Director
Re: 2022 Chehalis Basin Board meeting schedule

Background

It's the time of year that we need to begin planning for next year's meetings. At the October Board meeting, staff will ask for direction on the Board's preference for regular meeting format/location, frequency, dates, and times during 2022.

Since its creation, the Board has maintained a regular meeting schedule of monthly meetings, on the first Thursdays of most months. Pre-pandemic, regular meetings were held in person, rotating between different locations in the basin, and scheduled for a full day (9 am to 4 pm). No call-in or virtual option was available for either board members or the public. Board members all participated in person, and attendance by members of the public averaged 30 or less.

Since the pandemic, meetings have been virtual or hybrid, and shorter (9 am to noon). Board members have attended through a combination of in-person and virtual means. Public participation has been entirely virtual, and attendance has been averaging 50+ online attendees.

Considerations for 2022

Format/Locations

Due to the continuing coronavirus pandemic, it remains unclear when a return to full capacity, in-person meetings will be allowable under state and local health guidelines. Whenever that happens, it seems likely that some sort of virtual option will continue to be an expectation for public participation. This creates some issues for the board to consider, most notably around expectations for hybrid meetings, such as whether board members will be expected to attend in person. It also creates some new logistical challenges such as making sure host locations have reliable bandwidth for videoconferencing.

Another important format/location issue to consider is site tours or workshops. Staff is recommending adding some site tours and workshops to the Board calendar for next year. This will allow board members and the public an opportunity to see and learn first-hand about on-the-ground projects happening around the basin. Given the traveling distances and scheduling issues involved, staff recommends combining these some site tours and/or workshops with regularly scheduled board meetings once in-person meetings resume.

As you think about the format for next year's hybrid meetings, you may also want to consider the following benefits and challenges the board has experienced with your hybrid meetings to date.

Hybrid benefits:

- Provides a safe alternative for those who might be uncomfortable returning to large indoor, in-person gatherings even when health/safety guidelines allow it
- Allows greater convenience for board members and public by eliminating need for travel

Hybrid challenges:

- Difficult to achieve meaningful board member interaction when some board members are in person and some are virtual
- Complicates the ability to have informal, small group breakout sessions
- Virtual meetings have been shortened to reduce screen fatigue, which limits the amount of time for information sharing and deliberations at each meeting
- Bandwidth and technology challenges in basin locations can make for an unpredictable and frustrating experience, for both in-person and online participants. Even in the best locations, they require much more staff/contractor support manage both in-person and virtual logistics.

Frequency

Does monthly still seem like the right frequency for the board's needs to share information, deliberate, and make decisions in a timely way?

Less frequent meetings would provide board members and staff more time in between board meetings for informal conversations. It would also provide staff more time to prepare, and board members more time to review and consider advance meeting materials before each meeting. Less frequent, but in-person, meetings would also allow for more extended discussions. On the other hand, since the board generally does not take action on agenda items at the same meeting they are introduced, less frequent meetings could mean board decisions might take longer.

Dates/Times

Based on prior feedback, OCB staff recommends continuing regular meetings on the first Thursdays during 2022. Staff's recommendation for the length of regular meetings depends on the frequency and format the board prefers. If meetings will be monthly, where board members are participating virtually, staff recommends half-day meetings (9 am – 1 pm). If board members are participating in person, staff recommends extending meeting times and adding a lunch break. If the board prefers less frequent meetings, staff recommends full-day meetings to allow adequate time for informational items, board deliberations, and decisions, as well as the addition of site-tours.

Possible approaches for 2022 Chehalis Basin Board regular meetings

The table below shows three potential approaches for board meetings next year. Based on board feedback at the September meeting, staff will prepare a proposed meeting calendar for consideration and possible approval at the October meeting.

Option 1: Continue monthly, half-day, hybrid meetings

This would include both online and in-person options for board members and the public to attend, even after pandemic-related restrictions are lifted. This approach would require use of locations in the basin where bandwidth and technology concerns can be adequately addressed, and may require a more limited virtual participation such as phone only.

Option 2: Return to monthly, longer, in-person meetings and add site tours (Covid19 restrictions permitting)

This would include an expectation that all board members and staff would attend in person, once public health guidance allows. It would allow occasional site tours and/or informal workshops. The public would have the option to attend meetings in person or virtually, although virtual attendance may be more limited (such as by phone only) and would not be available for site visits. Public facilities in the upper, middle, and lower portions of the Chehalis Basin with adequate bandwidth/technology would be used in order to balance the travel burdens for board members and maximize opportunities for public engagement.

Option 3: Shift to less frequent, full day, in-person meetings and add site tours (Covid19 restrictions permitting)

Like option 2, this approach would include an expectation that all board members and staff would attend in person, once public health guidance allows, and would allow for occasional site tours and/or informal workshops. This would allow the Board more flexibility to continue rotating meeting locations between public facilities in the upper, middle, and lower portions of the Chehalis Basin.

Regular Meeting Dates	Monthly Hybrid	Monthly In-Person	Less than Monthly In-Person
Thu, January 6	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	9 AM- 5 PM
Thu, February 3	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	-
Thu, March 3	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	9 AM- 5 PM
Thu, April 7	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	-
Thu, May 5	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-12 PM + 1 PM- 3 PM site tour	9 AM-12 PM + 1 PM- 4 PM site tour
Thu, June 2	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	-
Thu, July 7	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-12 PM + 1 PM- 3 PM site tour	9 AM-12 PM + 1 PM- 4 PM site tour
Thu, August 4	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	-
Thu, September 1	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM- 12 PM + 1 PM- 3 PM site tour	9 AM-12 PM + 1 PM- 4 PM site tour
Thu, October 6	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	-
Thu, November 3	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	9 AM- 5 PM
Thu, December 1	9 AM-1 PM	9 AM-3 PM	9 AM- 5 PM
TOTAL MEETING TIME	48 hours	60 hours	50 hours