





# **CHEHALIS BASIN FEDERAL FUNDING WORKSHOP SUMMARY**

Topic: Chehalis Basin Federal Funding Workshop

**Date:** Tuesday, January 30, 2024

**Time:** 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Location: Chehalis Tribal Community Center, 416 Secena Rd, Oakville, WA

## Attendees

Nikki Atkins (Lewis Conservation District) Rachel Bradley (ICF) C.K. Eidem (Ducks Unlimited) Caprice Fasano (Quinault Indian Nation) Ken Ghalambor (Ross Strategic) Josh Giuntoli (Washington State Conservation Commission) Greg Green (Ducks Unlimited) Alex Gustafson (Trout Unlimited) Kirsten Harma (Chehalis Basin Lead Entity) Mara Healy (Thurston Conservation District) Mack Hunter (Grays Harbor Conservation District) Jessica Inwood (Western Rivers Conservancy) Nat Kale (Office of Chehalis Basin) Victoria Knorr (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife) Jay Krienitz (Washington Department of Ecology) Jennifer Lewis (Office of Chehalis Basin) Cindy Malay (Office of Chehalis Basin) Laura McMullen (ICF) Andrew Mealor (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife)

Jacob Murray (Mason Conservation District) Anthony Novack (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife) Brandon Parsons (American Rivers) Kiana Sinner (Thurston Conservation District) Andy Sorter (Mason Conservation District) John Stepanek (Grays Harbor Conservation District) Karin Strelioff (Thurston Conservation District) Jenn Tice (Ross Strategic) Colin Tierney (Mason Conservation District) Megan Tuttle (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife) Julie Tyson (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife) Anthony Waldrop (Grays Harbor Conservation District) Ann Weckback (Lewis County Public Works) Leanne Weiss (Forterra NW) Jeff Zenk (Office of Chehalis Basin)

# **Action Item Summary**

ASSIGNED TO	ACTION ITEM	
ICF (Rachel	• Prepare a report based on the clusters from this workshop that identifies the most	
Bradley and	promising federal funding sources, recommends a path forward for seeking	
Laura McMullen)	funding, and provides potential modifications or considerations to improve	
	competitiveness. This report will be available to participants by mid-March.	
OCB (Cindy	• Coordinate discussions with state, local, and Tribal partners to discuss specific	
Malay)	opportunities to pursue federal funding and support needs.	

# Summary

The purpose of these notes is to record key points, decisions, and discussion topics. They are not intended to be transcripts.

# Introduction

Workshop cohosts Cindy Malay (Office of Chehalis Basin [OCB]), Kirsten Harma (Chehalis Basin Lead Entity), and Anthony Waldrop (Grays Harbor Conservation District, GHCD) welcomed participants and noted the importance of organizations working in the Chehalis basin collaborating to access more substantial funding for species recovery and habitat restoration. Facilitator Jenn Tice (Ross Strategic) reviewed the workshop agenda, which had three objectives:

- Prepare as a Chehalis basin community to access significant funding opportunities, particularly from federal grants.
- Foster collaboration and innovation between state, Tribal, and local partners working on aquatic species recovery and habitat restoration in the Chehalis basin.
- Identify "clusters" of projects and concepts with shared themes where organizations could work together to access federal grants more effectively.

# **Chehalis Basin Vision**

Jenn Tice (Ross Strategic) facilitated an interactive session where participants shared their organization's vision for the Chehalis basin and/or areas within the basin. After organizations shared their visions, participants posted the ideas on sticky notes on the relevant area on a Chehalis basin map or on an area of the wall designated for the whole basin. Most people posted visions in the "whole basin" area, but there were a few visions relevant to specific areas of the basin. Ms. Tice reflected on the similarity across the visions, noting that there were common themes including healthy fish and wildlife populations, properly functioning ecological processes, communities and habitats that are resilient in the face of floods and climate change, and conservation efforts that involve community, sustain agriculture, allow for controlled development, and support recreational and commercial opportunities. This provides context for why it is important to work together to seek funding to achieve our goals for the Chehalis basin.

THEME/CATEGORY	VISION COMMENTS FROM WORKSHOP				
Healthy fish and	• Wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow, and forever				
wildlife	• Biodiversity of wetland habitat, especially early emergent to support diverse plants and				
populations and	d animals				
habitats	• Conservation and restoration of wetlands and habitats for waterfowl. Also recognize that				
	these habitats benefit other wildlife and people (wetlands, healthy watersheds, Ag $\&$				
	access)				
	• Voluntary based conservation that takes a holistic approach to support partners in				
	sustainably managing shared natural resources				
	<ul> <li>Restore and build resilient runs of wild trout and salmon</li> </ul>				
	Rooted in science and led by uplifting tribal and local goals through conservation				
	policies and effective habitat restoration				
	Natural resources conservation via voluntary incentive-based programs				
	• Strong partnerships and collaborative land stewardship that strengthens ecosystem				
	health and the relationship of residents to the land and natural resources. Recognize the				
	role of all partners whether human or creature, and emphasize communication,				
	flexibility, resilience, and innovation				
	Preserving, protecting, perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems				
	Implement a long-term strategy that enhances aquatic species restoration				

THEME/CATEGORY	ME/CATEGORY VISION COMMENTS FROM WORKSHOP				
Attain a healthy and diverse population of wild salmonids					
	<ul> <li>Provide habitat connectivity across the region</li> </ul>				
	A healthy estuary promoting nursery and economic sustainability				
	Restore, enhance, and protect the Grays Harbor Estuary				
	gon spotted frog: habitat protection and restoration, maintain adequate hydrology				
	for each life stage, increase overall population, decrease isolation				
Properly	Healthy and protected watershed where natural processes can proceed				
functioning	Reversal of poor historical practices and anthropomorphic degradation				
ecological	• Restore the natural processes that sustain healthy watersheds				
processes	Restore and preserve properly functioning riparian areas				
	Jatural processes in freshwater and marine that preserve or enhance biologically				
	erse runs of salmon capable of self-sustaining natural reproduction				
	• More natural state within our riparian areas through hydrologic improvement				
	• One less limiting factor - a habitat condition allowing for sustainable populations				
Resiliency:	Community and habitat resiliency				
Communities	Climate change resiliency				
and habitats that	• A watershed where people and property are protected and aquatic species are				
are resilient in	recovering				
the face of	Community involved/inclusive, environmental and economic benefits, healthy, resilient.				
floods and	diverse, sufficient, sustainable, wildlife habitat, wetlands, sustained agriculture.				
climate change	recreation, and access				
enimate change	• Flood resilient communities, harvestable self-sustaining salmon populations, and high				
	quality of life for residents (integrated)				
	• Restore and enhance ecologically significant land, and encourage a healthy community				
	for generations to come				
	• Create a resilient basin for flood, drought, and climate change to assure the needs and				
	health of people and other species				
	• Promote a resilient and productive ecosystem for fish, wildlife, and the humans that				
	interact with them				
Community/	Keep and add wetland functions on profitable working lands				
Multi-benefits:	• Support consumptive use to maintain connections to the land - forage, fishing, and				
Conservation	hunting				
efforts that	• Commerce, agricultural activities, controlled development, recreation, and abundant				
involve	aquatic species coexist				
community,	• Increase coordination with cities, ports, conservation districts, state agencies, and				
sustain	citizens to accomplish larger restoration projects combining infrastructure				
agriculture,	improvements with increased floodplain connectivity and improved riparian habitats				
allow for	• Restoration efforts by partners protected in perpetuity, opportunities exist for people to				
controlled	voluntarily move out of the floodplain, and working lands coexist with restoration and				
development.	conservation				
and support	• Enhance and protect creeks and rivers while helping to sustain agriculture				
recreational and	• Establish a balance between more natural watershed function and human development				
commercial	• A well-informed public that engages in hands-on projects to improve the environment				
opportunitios	<ul> <li>Community pride in watershed enhancement and commitment through/ during</li> </ul>				
opportunities	continued development				
	<ul> <li>Farmland preservation and sustainable farming practices</li> </ul>				
	Continued development of a culture of natural resource and watershed stewardship in				
	our communities				
	• Promote a culture of land/water stewardship for the benefit of humans and wild				
	populations of native organisms				
	Sustainable use, conservation, and restoration of natural resources for future				
	generations				

# Success Story of Coastal Resilience and Integrated Management in Washington Coastal Communities

Jay Krienitz (Washington Department of Ecology, Ecology) presented on what he has learned about pursuing federal funding and a successful collaborative effort involving multiple agencies and projects in the Whidbey basin. He recommended assembling a project portfolio with approximately 80% construction/final design and 20% outreach and innovative activities as "ornaments" to help sell the project and build for the future. He said that it was important to tell a good story that resonates with the grant objectives, to have diverse partners, to establish a structure for local coordination, and to focus on the best, most compelling projects (e.g., top priority projects could receive federal funding, then state funding could support the next tier).

# **State and Federal Funding Context**

Cindy Malay (OCB) said that OCB is committed to supporting local and Tribal partners to access federal funding for aquatic species restoration and flood damage reduction in the Chehalis Basin, including through consulting support for grant writing and efforts like this workshop, and is developing a long-term federal funding strategy for the basin. While OCB hopes to develop additional staff capacity over time, OCB currently does not have the capacity to be a state sponsor for federal grants. She said that she has had conversations with other state agencies about the needs expressed by partners for state agencies to sponsor and administer grants. Drew Mealor (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, WDFW) said he was glad that partners were thinking more strategically and holistically about how to approach federal funding opportunities through this workshop and through the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) process. Josh Giuntoli (Washington State Conservation Commission, WSCC) indicated that much of the federal funding that flows through WSCC is associated with disaster response, and that WSCC is also capacity challenged, and leans on conservation districts for their relationships with basin constituents.

Rachel Bradley (ICF) and Laura McMullen (ICF) gave a presentation that summarized examples of federal grants relevant to habitat restoration, coastal resilience, and fish passage improvement; described co-benefits that are important to highlight in many federal grant applications; highlighted other aspects that improve competitiveness of grant applications, including the project value proposition, partnerships/engagement, engagement of underserved and Tribal communities, and data and documentation; and reviewed grant support services available from ICF through the Chehalis Basin Strategy.

# **Cluster Discussions: Exploring Collaborative Opportunities to Pursue More Substantial Funding in the Chehalis Basin**

### **Introduction to Project Clusters**

Jenn Tice (Ross Strategic) provided an overview of the project summary table included with the meeting materials, introduced the initial project "clusters" identified by the planning team prior to the meeting, and explained the structure of the small group discussions about the clusters. The workshop planning team identified clusters and made preliminary project assignments to those clusters based on topics associated with specific federal grants (e.g., fish passage/barrier removal, coastal/estuary), geographic connectivity (e.g., one or more ecoregions), and, in some cases, primary species focus. These clusters included:

- **Barriers / Fish Passage Cluster:** Projects that focus on improvements to fish passage and/or barrier removal and could be bundled together to compete for larger fish passage grants.
- **Estuary / Tidal / Coastal Cluster:** Projects in the estuary and tidal areas of the basin or vicinity that could be bundled and be competitive for grants focusing on coastal resilience, estuaries, etc.
- **Olympic Mountains Cluster:** Projects in the Olympic Mountains ecoregion and/or Humptulips watershed that could be bundled together for grant applications.
- **Spring Chinook / Cascade Cluster:** Projects that focus on Spring Chinook and/or Spring Chinook habitat restoration, are in the Cascade ecoregion or vicinity, and could be bundled together for grant applications.
- Wetlands / Black River / Frogs Cluster: Projects in the Black River ecoregion with a wetland and/or spotted frog focus that could be bundled together for grant applications.

Workshop participants affirmed these overall groupings, and then refined the specific focus areas, projects to include, the species focus, multi-benefit components, and overall "story" for the clusters through two rounds of small group discussions. A summary of these cluster discussions is below and detailed notes from the cluster discussions are in Appendix A. The cluster summaries vary in style and detail due to differences in how each small group facilitator prepared them.

### Barriers / Fish Passage Cluster Summary

There were not enough participants to discuss the barriers / fish passage cluster in a small group; however, participants affirmed it as worthwhile to consider for federal funding opportunities. Projects to consider in this cluster include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following.

ID#	PROJECT NAME	SPONSOR
1	Van Ornum Crk at Bunker Crk Rd Fish Passage Construction	Lewis County Public Works
2	Berwick Crk at Bishop Fish Passage Construction	Lewis County Public Works
4	Trib to SF Newaukum at Tauscher Fish Passage Design	Lewis County Public Works
5	Stowell Crk at Johnson Rd Fish Passage Design	Lewis County Public Works
13	Point Hill Crk at Wildwood Fish Passage Design	Lewis County Public Works
35	Grayland Estuary Fish Barrier Removal and Habitat Restoration	Ducks Unlimited

### Estuary / Tidal / Coastal Cluster Summary

The story of the estuary cluster was titled, "Changing the Tide in our Estuary: Understand and Improve Legacy Infrastructure to Restore Natural Processes to the Grays Harbor Estuary."

The estuary is a complex ecosystem which needs marsh and tidal flats restored to help regenerate and reclaim natural processes essential for the endangered species. The habitat uplift can also serve double duty as a means of supporting the inundation that will come with rising sea levels. The Northshore of the Estuary, especially with the Levee Project underway, will require analysis to help encourage redevelopment and restoration working side by side. Economic development will only be realized if the communities have a solid understanding of the needs of a natural system and then a plan that compliments nature.

Projects supporting the estuary should include mapping to better understand what is in the estuary – counting pilings, places that systems are easy to restore, vulnerable landowners and lands, places for more economic restoration – including aquaculture, improving species protection – water quality, toxic removal, and assessment of potential recreational uses to promote revitalization of our estuary. ESA species use the estuary in critical phases of their lifecycle. The community is vulnerable economically and inclusive of critical Tribal fishing rights. Many historic industrial uses of the estuary are no longer viable. Functioning port essential for the local and state economic well-being. The Ecology Coastal Communities Program is working with U of W, Sea Grant, and Department of Emergency Management to identify projects that promote resiliency in the 15 counties on the Washington Coastline.

The group identified two categories of projects for the cluster: "shovel-ready" projects and integrated solutions, as follows.

### Shovel-ready projects (80%)

• Projects identified for this cluster:

ID#	PROJECT NAME	SPONSOR
8	Chehalis River Mile 13-20 Restoration	Grays Harbor
		CD
25	UNK Creek @ Lower Wynoochee WDFW Region 6 office, Acquisition,	WDFW
	Implementation	
26	Chehalis River @Porter, Acquisition, Implementation	WDFW
27	Chehalis River @Elma, Restoration/ Acquisition, Planning/ Implementation	WDFW
34	Cosmo Specialty Fibers Mainstem Chehalis Riparian Acquisition	WDNR
35	Grayland Estuary Fish Barrier Removal and Habitat Restoration	Ducks Unlimited

- Inventories of the following:
  - 1. Legacy impacts: locations of derelict vessels, pilings, and abandon industrial infrastructure and hardscapes
  - 2. Mapping of natural restoration opportunities
  - 3. Land use and existing zoning

- 4. Water quality, pollution extent and sources, and temperature monitoring across the estuary
- 5. Species survey- compilation of existing information
- 6. Mapping of sea level rise forecasts and the surge plane
- 7. Landowner outreach and readiness
- 8. Acquisition opportunities
- 9. Estuary User Overview highlighting Tribal fisheries
- 10. Economic overview of population highlighting Tribal communities

### Integrated Solutions (20% "Ornamentation")

- Community outreach strategy
- Education Program to teach about the estuary function
- Economic overview how to move a vulnerable population to a vibrant economy shifting from traditional industries and improving current fisheries
- Spark innovative recreation and economic development in the region based on the healthy functions of the estuary

### **Olympic Mountains Cluster Summary**

The title of this cluster is "Winter Olympics 2026." Stream habitat restoration is needed in a mosaic throughout this region to help winter and summer steelhead and coho stay resilient to climate change. Restoration actions focus on enhancement of juvenile rearing habitat and water quality improvements and floodplain reconnection. Improvements focus on coho in the Humptulips due to the importance of this fishery to the Quinault Indian Nation, and on steelhead and coho in the other watersheds given their declining numbers and importance to Tribes and stakeholders throughout the region. Since most of the projects are currently in planning and design phase, they would be ready to apply for construction funding in 2025 or 2026. This leaves time to develop additional elements to make the bundle more competitive.

Note: This cluster was originally called the Olympic Mountains/Humptulips cluster, but the group recommended calling it the Olympic Mountains cluster, as the headwaters of the Humptulips come from the Olympics, too.

### Spring Chinook / Cascade Cluster Summary

Our "story" statement was "Preserving spring chinook in working lands and rural communities."

Our initial projects were 14 (SF Newaukum), 15 (NF Newaukum), 22 (Newaukum Headwaters), 23 (Skookumchuck Restoration), 31 (Lower Newaukum), and 36 (Independence Valley). Our team added project 40 (Bernier Creek), plus a potential project on Thompson Creek, and a possible project with the City of Chehalis' water intake on the NF Newaukum. We also considered adding the Riverbend Ranch project on the Skookumchuck, but construction starts this summer, so it might be too far along.

An initial talking point bolstering our story is the petition to ESA list spring chinook, underscoring the need for urgent action.

We spent some time talking about multi-benefit projects. The group noted that the town of Bucoda is an underserved community. Other communities in the area and near waterbodies include parts of Centralia, the Grand Mound area, Onalaska, and Adna, all of which might also meet some definitions of underserved communities. The potential for federal funding could be boosted by working with those communities and identifying flood damage reduction projects to bundle with habitat projects. There are also proposed or ongoing OCB flood projects in the area, including home elevations under the Community Flood Assistance and Resilience program, a Letter of Map Revision for the Skookumchuck River in the Town of Bucoda, and levees on the Skookumchuck River proposed by the Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative.

Lack of capacity to support grants was identified as a primary constraint. Some programs, like BRIC and NFWF, allow limited capacity building. Some entities build capacity directly into grant applications, by adding line items to fund consultants to manage projects. The group discussed the advantage Tribal governments have in applying for federal funding. Local Tribes, especially the Chehalis Tribe, have refrained from submitting applications due to capacity constraints, so a key item to address is Chehalis Tribal capacity.

Food systems could be a unique approach for telling a story for federal funding. This area has a number of small-scale farmers that supply local needs.

More funds for monitoring are always beneficial and always difficult to obtain. In the "Christmas tree" analogy, currently funded monitoring is an "ornament" that could make the core projects even more appealing. Monitoring is an opportunity to divide funding streams within a single project or cluster of projects – federal funds to design and construction, state funds to monitoring.

### Wetlands/Black River/Frogs Cluster Summary

The main story that the group discussed was to shift wetland restoration efforts from the periphery of the conversation and really bring it into center stage and look at how these areas focus both on the habitat needs but also bring significant human benefit in a changing climate. There was a specific interest in looking at Oregon Spotted Frog (ESA listed species), wetland habitat, and wet prairie habitat, all along the Black River and Scatter Creek areas.

The group identified the ability to build off existing projects in this area, which makes their project much closer to the "construction ready" stage of the work. There is also opportunity to expand these projects with current landowner interests (specifically in the Scatter Creek). This specific wetland area allows for a focus not just on the habitat restoration for ESA listed species, but also other amphibians and birds, and endangered prairie plants.

These projects multi-benefit elements focus on providing human benefit, addressing issues such as flood mitigation, groundwater recharge, drought response. The Oregon spotted frog and wet prairie systems are often also on agricultural lands, so there are opportunities to support sustainable agricultural practices that can both support the farming community and the local ecosystem.

These wetland projects need a lot of human intervention and human engagement, so there is a need for ongoing monitoring and management of these areas. This is critical to ensure that the benefit can be sustained in the long term. This is an opportunity to develop STEM education, outreach, and community engagement strategies that support that ongoing stewardship need. All of which would support the ESA listed species (and other habitats living there), as well as continue to support the need for flood and water storage and availability.

There are strong partnerships working on these projects, including WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Department of Fish and Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, Conservation Districts, and other Conservation programs. There is an opportunity to develop more capacity to support a more formalized local wetland focused partnership that coalesce around these regional wetland restoration efforts with a primary focus on identifying wetland systems and services that could enhance both the natural systems and human benefits.

# **Full Group Reflections and Next Steps**

After sharing high-level summaries of the cluster discussions, participants reflected on the outcomes of the workshop discussions. All cluster groups thought that there were compelling reasons to continue collaborating as a cluster and to explore opportunities for seeking federal funding. Several participants noted the importance of capacity building assistance and the need to identify sponsors, a framework for collaboration, and timelines for pursuing funding opportunities. Jay Krienitz (Ecology) said that the Coastal Resiliency Partnership has an interagency team that can provide technical support to assist with funding opportunities related to coastal wetlands and more. Drew Mealor (WDFW) suggested that the ASRP Regional Implementation Team meetings could be a forum to continue conversations related to the clusters. Immediate next steps from the workshop include:

- ICF will prepare a report, available to workshop participants by mid-March, which reviews the clusters from this workshop, identifies the most promising federal funding sources for those clusters, recommends a path forward for seeking funding, and provides potential modifications or considerations to improve competitiveness of the clusters.
- OCB will continue to coordinate discussions with state, local, and Tribal partners to discuss specific opportunities to pursue federal funding and support needs.

# **Appendix A: Full Notes from Cluster Small Group Discussions**

Cluster facilitators prepared these notes, so the notes may vary in format and style across clusters.

### **Estuary Cluster Discussion**

#### Facilitator: Jennifer Lewis (OCB)

**Participating organizations:** Ducks Unlimited, Ecology, Forterra, Grays Harbor Conservation District, WDFW

### Projects Submitted & Included in Estuary Cluster:

The below 6 projects are focused on improving estuary habitat through restoration of natural processes to ensure critical tidal habitats for six species of salmon at various life phases and a bevy of other critical species. Three of these projects include acquisitions that would provide protection to the tidal zone lands in perpetuity. One project aims to remove fish barriers to restore marshlands. Removal of derelict infrastructure is proposed for all the projects to reduce toxins and improve water quality.

- 8 Grays Harbor- Chehalis River Restoration RM 13-20 this project focuses on the Grays Harbor Estuary and Chehalis River Tidal Zone. This project will build on concept designs and community/stakeholder outreach along the 7 mile stretch on the Chehalis River mainstem. The project benefits could help to protect bridges (#) and farmhouses (#) already at risk to erosion (be more specific), reduce derelict infrastructure, and improve salmon habitat for all salmon species in their migratory phases of life. The project could be phased to fund designs and then expanded to include final designs and construction. There are already preliminary designs funded for RM 15.5-17.5 with ASRP funding. Restoration would likely include engineered log jams, riparian plantings, infrastructure adjustments and removal, and invasive plant treatment.
- 2. 25 WDFW Region 6 Acquisitions Lower Wynoochee The goal of this project is to expand the footprint of the existing WDFW Wildlife Region 6 property to better preserve and protect aquatic habitats, wetlands, and key species of birds-waterfowl, coho, and other salmon. The opportunity enables intensive restoration and additional research and outreach in the lands close to the regional office. (map needed)
- 3. 26 WDFW Porter Acquisition and Implementation Acquisition of tidal, riparian habitat and Chehalis River shoreline which is directly adjacent to land currently owned by WDFW and not accessible by land. This will support the Olympic Mudminnow, waterfowl, and a variety of salmon in the mainstem of the Chehalis. (map needed)
- 4. 27 WDFW- Elma Restoration, Acquisition, Planning, and Implementation The project goal is to preserve and protect aquatic habitats (wetlands and riverine) and their associated species in the lower Chehalis Valley along Wenzel Slough Road. Since 2020, two properties totaling over 120 acres have been acquired by WDFW. The aim is to remove unused buildings and assorted infrastructure that lays within the floodplain. Subsequent phased will include additional acquisitions, riparian restoration, and wetlands enhancements. This project could extend beyond the 2-5-year timeline.

- 34- DNR Cosmo Specialty Fibers Mainstem Chehalis Riparian Acquisition The proposed project could conserve, in the perpetuity, 225 acres of rare high quality freshwater tidal surge plain wetland, as well as habitat for rare Olympic Mud Minnow, bald eagle, and six species of salmon.
- 6. 35 Ducks Unlimited Grayland Estuary Fish Barrier Removal and Habitat Restoration -Fish barrier and tidal gate removal to open culver that will result in marsh and off channel habitat restoration. The project will address important life history stage of juvenile Coho rearing in a semi-saline environment.

### Summary: What is our story?

Changing the Tide in our Estuary: Understand and Improve Legacy Infrastructure to Restore Natural Processes to the Grays Harbor Estuary

Projects should include:

Mapping to better understand what is in the estuary – counting pilings, places that systems are easy to restore, vulnerable landowners and lands, places for more economic restoration – including aquaculture, improving species protection – water quality, toxic removal, and assessment of potential recreational uses to promote revitalization of our estuary. ESA species use the estuary in critical phases of their lifecycle. The community is vulnerable economically and inclusive of critical Tribal fishing rights. Many historic industrial uses of the estuary are no longer viable. Functioning port essential for the local and state economic well-being.

The estuary is a complex ecosystem which needs marsh and tidal flats restored to help regenerate and reclaim natural processes essential for the endangered species. The habitat uplift can also serve double duty as a means of supporting the inundation that will come with rising sea levels.

The Northshore of the Estuary, especially with the Levee Project underway will require analysis to help encourage redevelopment and restoration working side by side. Economic development will only be realized if the communities have a solid understanding of the needs of a natural system and then a plan that compliments nature.

Ecology Coastal Communities Program is working with U of W, Sea Grant, and Department of Emergency Management to identify projects that promote resiliency in the 15 counties on the Washington Coastline.

80% - shovel ready projects could include the above project list submitted

Inventories

- 1. Legacy impacts: locations of derelict vessels, pilings, and abandon industrial infrastructure and hardscapes
- 2. Mapping of natural restoration opportunities
- 3. Land use and existing zoning

- 4. Water quality, pollution extent and sources, and temperature monitoring across the estuary
- 5. Species survey- compilation of existing information
- 6. Mapping of sea level rise forecasts and the surge plane
- 7. Landowner outreach and readiness
- 8. Acquisition opportunities
- 9. Estuary User Overview highlighting Tribal fisheries
- 10. Economic overview of population highlighting Tribal communities

#### Integrated solutions-

#### 20% - Ornamentation

- Community outreach strategy
- Education Program to teach about the estuary function
- Economic overview how to move a vulnerable population to a vibrant economy shifting from traditional industries and improving current fisheries
- Spark innovative recreation and economic development in the region based on the healthy functions of the estuary

### Timeline and Next Steps:

- 1. Form a group to continue discussions of this cluster to identify phasing and opportunities to develop a strategy to get project resources
- 2. Identify entities interested in oversight of larger combined projects including tribes and communities
- 3. Start with a small grant Ecology or OCB
- 4. Bundle projects in Federal Grant

### Notes on Small Group Questions

# **1.** Cluster Composition/Continuity: What connects the projects in our project cluster together? What other projects or project features could be added to enhance those connections and make it more cohesive?

#### **Project highlights/themes**

- GHCD: community building, capacity, infrastructure
- DU: engineering, acquisitions for restoration
- Forterra: acquisitions for restoration
- DFW: biological, species support, acquisition in coastal habitat for restoration, removal of infrastructure
- DFW/OCB: improving biological habitat for key species, estuary ecoregion focus

#### Unifying themes

• Infrastructure removal - examining legacy and current structures on the landscape/seascape

- Inventory of Opportunities to improve the habitat and vulnerabilities posed by abandoned uses
  - Derelict facilities and vessels
  - Dredging materials
  - Creosote pilings
  - abandoned industrial sites
  - Working Port relic port
- Unique habitat- nursery for many creatures under water and around the estuary improve water quality
  - Find and restore nature-based solutions to improve water quality, pollution, habitat
  - Example would be to remove industrial cement that exists over former tidal flats to improve natural processes and marsh lands.
  - Recognize riches like shellfish beds, eel grass, and potential for aquaculture
- Build on the Investment Strategy now being developed with the Port of GH, GHCD, Montesano, DFW that is looking at prioritizing areas for work in the estuary including risk and hazard mapping. (ask Anthony more about this)
- Support people where they are and restore natural processes to restore functions of the estuary essential for all species

# 2. Species: What target species would the cluster benefit, and are there other species of interest that could benefit?

Overarching: The estuary has an abundance of species at varied phases of their lifecycle and is critical to full river systems - note the toxic bubble theory indicates that the anadromous fish may have a loss of life due to the estuary habitat being polluted or unfit

- Anadromous fish Salmon, trout all traverse the estuary during multiple life phases
  - ESA spring chinook- essential for lifecycle
- Sturgeon (green)
- Mudminnows
- Eulachon
- Lamprey
- Many birds only snowy plover listed?
- Orca feed on fish that come in and out of the estuary

Economic contributors- Estuary is essential to many species that are critical to the fishing economy

- Shellfish of all varieties oysters, mussels, etc.
- Crabs and crustacean
- Salmon

# 3. Underserved communities and Tribes: Would or could this cluster engage underserved communities?

- Tribes of the Chehalis Basin and Quinault rely on the health of Grays Harbor estuary to assure their salmon return to spawn.
- CIJEST lists the northern part of the Grays Harbor as uniquely vulnerable because of low income and so many people dependent upon fishing displaced and low economic conditions.
- Vulnerable to flooding, poor quality of land, and don't have the resources to leave these strained communities.
- Aberdeen and Hoquiam are very economically challenged by loss of resource heavy jobs including fishing
- Past solutions for combating flooding and erosion of fragile lands are no longer permitted.
- Relocation of economically challenged people is often a struggle because they appraisals of these vulnerable landscapes are not high and do not give people enough compensation that they can find another suitable place to live.
- Utilize things like Life Estates to trust some lands into uses after the owners die -change use for ecosystem functions to be retained.
- Identify agricultural lands that can be protected around the estuary
- Any project would need to have a very solid community engagement strategy program to better understand what the community wants and find tools appropriate for them to solve their issues.
- Education and outreach that define bioengineer to promote restoration practices that do not further harm the environment. Riprap and other means of stopping erosion are no longer permitted. People in the region are not always open to new practices to protect their properties. There will need to be mediation because there is a resistance to new approaches that have not been used by past generations.
- Focus on early adopters to have examples of good practices to enhance the estuary function in natural processes
- Education in what is a healthy estuary will be needed because it is also a working harbor and has many uses.
- Compromises to find multi-user collaborations to balance stakeholder interests and needs.
- Disaster Resilience is essential especially with sea level rise and this should be a focus since it brings people and communities together to devise solutions and can address larger systemic problems through hazard mapping.

# 4. Mult benefit opportunities: What co-benefits can we emphasize or enhance with this cluster?

- Flood protection infrastructure
- Climate Risk

• Mitigate risk to critical/public facilities like hospitals, schools, utilities, etc.

Partnerships needed:

- Tribes
- Municipalities
- Department of Natural Resources (especially for maintaining acquired land)
- Port of Grays Harbor
- DFW
- Cranberry Growers
- Oyster Growers
- Grays Harbor Conservation District
- Flood Authority
- Ecology Coastal Communities OCB and others
- Audubon

# 5. Other cluster enhancements: How else could we enhance the competitiveness of this cluster to compete for federal funding (innovative aspects, leveraged funding, broadened support/partners)

- What role can Ecology or DFW or Washington Conservation Commission take to support oversight, monitoring, and administration of a larger grant especially the reporting and multi-partner environment?
- Suggested that the lead entity could serve as oversight for initial coordination to write grant but would likely need a state entity to manage federal funding if secured.

## **Olympic Mountains Cluster Discussion**

Facilitator: Kirsten Harma (Chehalis Basin Lead Entity)

**Participating organizations:** Grays Harbor Conservation District, Mason Conservation District, Quinault Indian Nation, Thurston Conservation District, Trout Unlimited

### Summary

The title of this cluster is "Winter Olympics 2026." Stream habitat restoration is needed in a mosaic throughout this region to help winter and summer steelhead and coho stay resilient to climate change. Restoration actions focus on enhancement of juvenile rearing habitat and water quality improvements and floodplain reconnection. Improvements focus on coho in the Humptulips due to the importance of this fishery to the Quinault Indian Nation, and on steelhead and coho in the other watersheds given their declining numbers and importance to Tribes and stakeholders throughout the region. Since most of the projects are currently in planning and design phase, they would be ready to apply for construction funding in 2025 or 2026. This leaves time to develop additional elements to make the bundle more competitive.

Note: This cluster was originally called the Olympic Mountains/Humptulips cluster, but the group recommended calling it the Olympic Mountains cluster, as the headwaters of the Humptulips come from the Olympics, too.

### Notes on Small Group Questions

### 1. Cluster composition/continuity

The projects are related by their geography - rivers that flow from the Olympic Mountains to the lower Chehalis River and Grays Harbor Estuary. They collectively improve watershed conditions to increase salmon and steelhead resiliency to climate change.

Species focus is on coho in the Humptulips due to the importance of this fishery to the Quinault Indian Nation, and on steelhead and coho in the other watersheds given their declining numbers and importance to Tribes and stakeholders throughout the region.

Projects are spread out from headwaters to river mouth, but are united in providing improved juvenile rearing habitat, floodplain reconnection, and improved water quality.

Suggested additional planned projects to add to cluster: "Deckerville RM 13.5-14 LWD Construction" and "Decker Side Channel RM 2.5 Construction" both by Mason CD.

Suggested additional project types (not currently under development):

- Culverts, even those with low upstream linear gain, which are clustered to provide additional access to cold water refugia in headwater tributaries
- Studies experimental headwater restoration
- Outreach

### 2. Species

- Olympic mudminnow
- Lamprey
- Muscles (esp. on Deep Creek)
- Fall Chinook as food for Orca
- Marbled Murrelet and Spotted Owl corridor (with any forest restoration elements)

### 3. Underserved communities and Tribes

These areas don't show up strongly on the federal EJ maps, but the argument could be made in a narrative form as to how they are underserved. Most of Mason County is low-income. The Humptulips, while "off-reservation" provides an important fishery to the Quinault Indian Nation. The area has important value as the traditional grounds of the ancestors of the people who are today united as the Chehalis Tribe and Squaxin Tribe.

One of the projects enhances stream habitat in the Schafer State Park. The park is an amenity to low-income communities in the area. The project could be enhanced with salmon-viewing

stations and interpretive signs at the Park. This is one of the only places that is publicly accessible for viewing spawning salmon in the entire Chehalis Basin!

Project elements could include engaging Tribal interns in monitoring (Quinault have an existing monitoring program, and one could be built with the Chehalis), engaging Grays Harbor College Forestry students in restoration techniques for lands managed for forestry, and building the restoration workforce in the area.

### 4. Multi-benefit opportunities

- Improvement of the County road at Schafer State Park
- Improvements at Schafer State Park campground
- Improvement in fish runs leads to improvement in recreational and commercial fisheries
- The sediment transport study in the bundle could lead to identification of actions to improve water quality
- Could use the projects to educate the public about erosion
- This is a relatively low-population area, so there would not be any benefits to critical or public facilities, health, or safety.

### 5. Other cluster enhancements:

- Most projects are in design phase, to be construction ready by 2025 or 2026
- By the time the projects are ready to apply for construction funding, they will have leveraged state funding for design
- If the project bundle includes the lower-Satsop project, it would have a constructionproject as its anchor, with the other design projects included in the funding ask
- Add funding for Tribal interns
- Add funding to support Grays Harbor College interns
- Existing projects in development are building partnerships with private forestry companies. This work will continue to grow those relationships.

# Spring Chinook / Cascade Cluster Discussion

### Facilitator: Nat Kale (OCB)

**Participating organizations:** American Rivers, Lewis Conservation District, Lewis County Public Works, Thurston Conservation District, Trout Unlimited

### Summary

Our "story" statement was "Preserving spring chinook in working lands and rural communities."

Our initial projects were 14 (SF Newaukum), 15 (NF Newaukum), 22 (Newaukum Headwaters), 23 (Skookumchuck Restoration), 31 (Lower Newaukum), and 36 (Independence Valley). Our team added project 40 (Bernier Creek), plus a potential project on Thompson Creek, and a possible project with the City of Chehalis' water intake on the NF Newaukum. We also considered adding

the Riverbend Ranch project on the Skookumchuck, but construction starts this summer, so it might be too far along.

An initial talking point bolstering our story is the petition to ESA list spring chinook, underscoring the need for urgent action.

We spent some time talking about multi-benefit projects. The group noted that the town of Bucoda is an underserved community. Other communities in the area and near waterbodies include parts of Centralia, the Grand Mound area, Onalaska, and Adna, all of which might also meet some definitions of underserved communities. The potential for federal funding could be boosted by working with those communities and identifying flood damage reduction projects to bundle with habitat projects. There are also proposed or ongoing OCB flood projects in the area, including home elevations under the Community Flood Assistance and Resilience program, a Letter of Map Revision for the Skookumchuck River in the Town of Bucoda, and levees on the Skookumchuck River proposed by the Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative.

Lack of capacity to support grants was identified as a primary constraint. Some programs, like BRIC and NFWF, allow limited capacity building. Some entities build capacity directly into grant applications, by adding line items to fund consultants to manage projects. The group discussed the advantage Tribal governments have in applying for federal funding. Local Tribes, especially the Chehalis Tribe, have refrained from submitting applications due to capacity constraints, so a key item to address is Chehalis Tribal capacity.

Food systems could be a unique approach for telling a story for federal funding. This area has a number of small-scale farmers that supply local needs.

More funds for monitoring are always beneficial and always difficult to obtain. In the "Christmas tree" analogy, currently funded monitoring is an "ornament" that could make the core projects even more appealing. Monitoring is an opportunity to divide funding streams within a single project or cluster of projects – federal funds to design and construction, state funds to monitoring.

## Wetlands/Black River/Frogs Cluster Discussion

### Facilitator: Cindy Malay (OCB)

Participating organizations: Ducks Unlimited, Thurston Conservation District, WDFW

### Summary

The main story that the group discussed was to shift wetland restoration efforts from the periphery of the conversation and really bring it into center stage and look at how these areas focus both on the habitat needs but also bring significant human benefit in a changing climate. There was a specific interest in looking at Oregon Spotted Frog (ESA listed species), wetland habitat, and wet prairie habitat, all along the Black River and Scatter Creek areas.

The group identified the ability to build off existing projects in this area, which makes their project much closer to the "construction ready" stage of the work. There is also opportunity to expand

these projects with current landowner interests (specifically in the Scatter Creek). This specific wetland area allows for a focus not just on the habitat restoration for ESA listed species, but also other amphibians and birds, and endangered prairie plants.

These projects multi-benefit elements focus on providing human benefit, addressing issues such as flood mitigation, groundwater recharge, drought response. The Oregon spotted frog and wet prairie systems are often also on agricultural lands, so there are opportunities to support sustainable agricultural practices that can both support the farming community and the local ecosystem.

These wetland projects need a lot of human intervention and human engagement, so there is a need for ongoing monitoring and management of these areas. This is critical to ensure that the benefit can be sustained in the long term. This is an opportunity to develop STEM education, outreach, and community engagement strategies that support that ongoing stewardship need. All of which would support the ESA listed species (and other habitats living there), as well as continue to support the need for flood and water storage and availability.

There are strong partnerships working on these projects, including WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Department of Fish and Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, Conservation Districts, and other Conservation programs. There is an opportunity to develop more capacity to support a more formalized local wetland focused partnership that coalesce around these regional wetland restoration efforts with a primary focus on identifying wetland systems and services that could enhance both the natural systems and human benefits.

### Notes on Small Group Questions

# 1A. Cluster composition/continuity: What connects the projects in our cluster together (e.g., geography, goals, species focus, theme, etc.)?

- These projects are part of all 5 of the Black River Ecoregion
- All have a wetland focus on the Black River and Scatter Creek areas.
- There is one Spotted Frog project, but all projects can have a Spotted Frog nexus, but there are different management approaches for each area.
- There is overlap with wetland prairie areas, both restoration and planting
- These are all early emerging projects.
- All have some climate resiliency aspect to them:
  - Water availability, both abundance and limitations
  - Adaptation and Management qualities
  - Climate Change puts all these project areas at risk.
- All projects must address water level changes throughout the seasons.
- All are keeping early wetland habitat succession happening. (habitat turnover needed for natural wetland processes)

1B. What other projects or project features could be added to enhance those connections and make it more cohesive?

- The Independence Valley Stewardship project could be added to this list. Focus on preservation efforts.
- Include more Scatter Creek wetland prairie projects, both already developed and potential opportunities to phase.
- These projects could define how they are "mimicking" or restoring natural processes.
- These projects could highlight the forage habitat benefits.
- There could be more sustainable farms and agricultural nexuses.
- Look at human growth and what type of flood and water storage and availability benefits could support the community.
- Build on ground water recharge benefits.
- Include land acquisition and protection.

# 2. Species: What target species would the cluster benefit, and are there other species of interest that could benefit?

Lots of biodiversity in these project areas:

- ESA listed Oregon Spotted Frog
- Endangered native plant species (41 species?): EX: Camas, Water Howellia Aquatilis
- Waterfowl & other birds
- Coho Salmon
- Elk (maybe?)
- Beavers
- Pocket Golfers
- Mud Minnow

# 3. Underserved communities and Tribes: Would or could this cluster engage underserved communities and/ or Tribes? (see Justice 40 handout)

- Lots of Chehalis Tribal land use recognition Camas plant is culturally important
- Group believes this is characterized as rural and low income.
- Farm community: There is a concern with farmland preservation and development constraints so looking to support that community with complementary nature-based development.
- Community at risk for flooding and for water storage issues (water rights, drinking water, farming)

# 4. Multi-benefit opportunities: What co-benefits can we emphasize or enhance with this cluster? For example:

#### A. Flood protection infrastructure

- Thurston County Roads: Fish Barriers
- Chehalis Western Trail (historical walking trail, near Tenino)

- North Crack Creek (near Tenino)
- Drinking water protection
- Farmland infrastructure protection (farm pads out of the floodway)

#### B. Other community benefits (social systems, education, health, safety, well-being, etc.)

- Flood storage
- Groundwater recharge areas
- Serves as a natural water quality filtering system.
- STEM opportunities/outreach with local stewardship efforts and engagement with schools.
- Provides access to open space for communities to reconnect to land.
- Community wellbeing: provides water availability and flood protection reassurance in the face of climate change.
- Recreation benefits for hunting, fishing, boating, nature walks, and open space.

# 5. Other cluster enhancements: How else could we enhance the competitiveness of this cluster to compete for federal funding (e.g., innovative aspects, leveraged funding, broaden support/partners, strategic phasing, etc.)?

- Partner with WDFW and Wild Fish Conservancy to look at the no net rise.
  - Circle back with Capitol Land Trust, US Fish & Wildlife, Creekside conservancy, and Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture
- Engage with the Beaver co-engineering efforts already happening in the area. There are ongoing efforts on Beaver Dam management. Looking at Beaver Dam Analog work that could happen.
- Cohesive outreach strategies could be developed for rural communities, conversation communities, and local governments.
- Capacity building for conservation crew maintenance; hiring youth and Veterans.
- Rural Business Development: looking to local organizations to do habitat management.
- Projects are shovel ready.
- Lots of community interest in restoration.