

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 31, 2017
To: Chehalis Basin Board
From: Gordon White, Office of Chehalis Basin, Department of Ecology
Re: Chehalis Basin Strategy: Options for Continuing work from Dec 2017-Feb 2018 without a 2017-2019 Capital Budget

Background

At the August 3, 2017 Chehalis Basin Board meeting, the Board decided to sustain a critical path forward on most of the major elements of the 2017-2019 Chehalis Basin Strategy work program through November 2017 by repurposing carryover funds from the 2015-2017 biennium. A 2017-2019 capital budget has not been passed, and may not be passed before January or February 2018.

Office of Chehalis Basin (OCB) staff recently worked with the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to identify additional funds from 2015-2017 contracts, through savings or funds that could be borrowed from projects that are not scheduled to be constructed until the summer of 2018. These funds would allow some work to continue through February. The total funds available for work after November 2017 amounts to approximately \$630K (or \$210K/month) for work from December 2017 – February 2018. For comparison, the current monthly spending rate is approximately \$1.3M/month.

Any work continuing after November 2017 would need to be at a significantly reduced level. Towards that end, OCB staff identified the following priority work elements that could be continued through February 2018:

- General: funding for OCB staff and Ruckelshaus Center to continue communication with the Chehalis Basin Board (including Board meetings), supporting the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Tribes in Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) Phase 1 discussions with the Board and others, responding to legislative needs, and preparation for restart of the full Chehalis Basin Strategy effort once there is a budget, including contract amendments and tracking budget.
- Restorative Flood Protection Action: ensure the initial phase of outreach to landowners in the Newaukum is completed. Stop technical studies at an endpoint that allows them to restart efficiently when a budget is passed.
- ASRP: support review of the Phase 1 document, including ASRP core staff at WDFW, and Science Team members' availability to answer questions about Phase 1 document. Stop WDFW, Natural Systems Design, and Anchor technical studies at an endpoint that allows them to restart efficiently when a budget is passed.

- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a Dam: continue discussing EIS scoping and other issues with the US Army Corps. Stop Anchor, WDFW and Ecology technical studies at an endpoint that allows them to restart efficiently when a budget is passed.
- Other staffing: support core staff at Tribes, Chehalis Basin Lead Entity, Chehalis River Basin Flood Control Zone District, WA State Conservation Commission and WA Department of Natural Resources as necessary to participate in work during the December-February timeframe.

OCB and RCO staff also reached out to contract managers to understand what the status of their current contract's budgets will be at the end of November 2017, and to obtain budget estimates for their organization's participation in the priority work elements listed above.

Next Steps

OCB staff confirmed that work on the priority work elements above can continue from December 2017 – February 2018 with the total additional funds available from 2015-2017 contracts. OCB staff are requesting a decision by the Board on this proposal at its Thursday, November 2, 2017 meeting.

If the Board supports this proposal, OCB staff will contact agencies, Tribes, and contractors to implement the next steps. Note that if the Legislature does not pass a capital budget by the end of February 2017, there will be continued delay of on-the-ground projects and technical work to support decisions by the Chehalis Basin Board to advance parts of the strategy.