

February 15th 2006 Meeting Summary

The twelfth meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership was held on Wednesday, February 15th from 4:00-6:00pm at the Port of Vancouver Administration Offices.

Attending

Partnership members in attendance:

Brian Carlson, Nancy Ellifrit, Martin Hudson, Don Jacobs, David Judd, Thom McConathy, Chris Hathaway for Deb Marriott, Iloba Odum, Patty Boyden, Randy Phillips, Doug Quinn, Scott Robinson, Jane Van Dyke Gary Kokstis, Vernon Veysey, Bruce Wiseman, Martin Hudson

Partnership members absent:

Pete Capell, Carol Record

Staff:

Loretta Callahan, Katy Brooks, Victor Ehrlich, Jeroen Kok, Jeanne Lawson, Kelly Skelton, Ron Wierenga, Jim Gladson

In the audience:

Dvija Bertish, Jacquelin Edwards, Eldon Edwards, Annette Griffy, Curt Loop, Bob Moser, Dave Howard, Colonel O'Donovan, Lenora Oftedahl, Heidi Yantz, Dick Carroll, Lehman Holder

Committee Business

12/21 meeting minutes

Scott Robinson requested that he and Lisa Fabion be removed from the minutes as attendees; they were not at the 12/21 meeting. No other comments about the meeting minutes.

Martin introduced Colonel Tom O'Donovan the new District Engineer and Commander.

Patty Boyden is officially the Partnership rep for the Port of Vancouver, replacing Larry Paulson who is unable to commit his schedule to the Partnership for the foreseeable future.

There was a last minute item added to the agenda by Pete Capell referring to the SR 501 Dike Erosion, but that item was skipped because Pete was not in attendance at today's meeting.

Iloba commented did not receive the meeting minutes or meeting invitation via email. Kelly will verify that we have the correct email address on our mailing list. Jeanne

also encouraged everyone to check their spam folders if they are not receiving the messages and meeting notices.

Memorandum of Agreement

Patty updated the group on the status of the Intergovernmental Agreement. A draft version of the IGA has been circulated to the Steering Group members and comments are due back to her within two weeks. Patty noted that the purpose of the IGA is to set up a mechanism for any future funding received, clarifying the collection of funds, invoicing etc. The IGA also spells out the responsibilities of the Steering Group and the Partnership Committee. Patty went on to clarify that this is a flex agreement and other agencies can contribute funds as well.

Public Information Committee update

Jeanne announced that the PI committee has new member, Katy Brooks. Katy is the new Community Relations Manager at the Port of Vancouver; she has previously worked for JD White and the Port of Portland. Katy is not replacing Maureen at the Port of Vancouver, but she is replacing Maureen on this committee. Jordan Lerner of the Port of Ridgefield is also a new member of the PI Committee but she was not in attendance at this meeting.

Loretta presented the PI and Outreach handout which outlines the PI Committee's recommendations for interim work. The list includes items such as evaluating existing surveys, outreach at parks, education centers and parking booths during this summer, neighborhood meetings and school meetings. Nancy Ellifrit asked about outreach at the upcoming Home and Garden Fair, Loretta said that nothing specific is planned but she knows that various agencies will have representation at the Fair and this is a possibility to pursue.

Congressional Delegation Packet

David Judd presented the Congressional Delegation Packet handout. This packet has been prepared and distributed to our Congressional delegation by at least two groups; Addison Jacobs at the Port of Vancouver, and Mayor Pollard and Jan Bader from the Vancouver City Manager's office. David said they've received positive feedback on the piece and he thinks it will appeal to Congress because it is simple and the message is very clear. Other feedback received is that obtaining funding this year is going to be a challenge because funding is tight. We should be guardedly optimistic about the available funding.

Bruce Wiseman asked if we can go to Congress saying that the Corps is officially a partner in this project. Martin said they are committed to work with the Partnership and will allocate whatever resources that they have, regardless of whether or not the GI study goes through. Colonel O'Donovan clarified that the Corps does not lobby, but emphasized that they will present the key facts to Congress and carry the message to the appropriate people.

David also asked the group to think of ways they can share this document with their constituencies and help spread the word through their own contacts.

Bruce Wiseman thinks the map in the packet would be more useful if it showed the entire length of Lake River to show the relationship to the Lake.

Public Comment

No comments

Corps of Engineers

Martin gave his Planning Process presentation. Please refer to the handout for the details of this presentation.

Comments/questions on Martin's presentation:

Nancy asked if the hydrology study would be a computer study and Curt confirmed that it would be.

David Judd asked for clarification on how "federal interest" is defined (slide 2 on page 3). Martin responded that on environmental restoration projects the Corps looks at the quantitative changes on fish and wildlife habitats, and evaluates what the incremental returns on investment would be. If you have an ecosystem restoration program that makes significant changes in the habitat you establish a federal interest.

Doug Quinn asked if the district has done similar projects of this scale, or applied this concept to other projects in the area. Martin said yes they have, on a smaller scale with many of the Continued Authority programs, building wetlands, and removing levees. The Columbia River Channel improvement project has many ecological restoration components to it as well.

Nancy Ellifrit asked if "no use of federal funds" (slide 2 page 6) means that funding from the Department of Fish & Wildlife or EPA is not available either. Martin said yes and no. Some federal grants can be used to match other federal dollars with a letter from the agency. VPA can be used to pay for the costs because VPA dollars are rate payer dollars. There are several existing GI studies that are using VPA dollars as their grant to establish base conditions.

Patty asked if we do get the first 100k, will we have to go back and ask for subsequent funding. Martin said once you get the first piece of funding, you can start budgeting for the next components, but there are no guarantees. Some GI studies have been zeroed out by the President, so the future is unclear. Colonel Donovan also commented that all new starts and GI studies are zeroed out for 2007.

At this time Jeanne opened up the floor for questions for Colonel O'Donovan.

Don asked if Colonel O'Donovan expects that the President's plan to zero out GI studies will change in the future. Colonel O'Donovan replied no, he expects that money will be spent on projects like fighting terrorism, hurricane relief, and replacing aging internal civil works facilities to keep them functioning. He sees the discretionary portion of the budget dropping over the next 5-10-15 years, which is the timeframe we talking about to restore Vancouver Lake. He went on to say, that there are exceptions to everything, and anything is possible. Martin referred to large ecosystem restoration projects (like the South Florida Everglades and Mississippi Management Program) that have continued to receive funding even in this tight economy.

Jane Van Dyke asked if we are in direct competition with other similar projects in this region, such as channel deepening. Colonel O'Donovan doesn't think we are competing on that level; we are competing with all funding needs of the Federal government.

Doug Quinn asked if Vancouver Lake's proximity to the Bonneville dam gives us any advantage to obtain funding. Colonel O'Donovan said that he does not think Vancouver Lake's proximity to the dam gives us any advantage. On the other hand there are possibilities to tie it in to a Salmon estuary.

Iloba asked Curt to clarify the timeline (page 2 slide 1). Curt explained that this timeline represents best and worst case scenarios. Best case scenario, depending on political connections, everything can go smoothly. If interruptions occur or the Lake's problems become more complex this timeline will become longer.

Vern Vesey commented that Lake River empties into the Columbia River and the build up of material from past dredging and sediment from the Columbia River is causing problems. He asked is there a way to tie those two together to shorten the process and give it priority because of the relationship? Martin said it's a separate issue and this is one of the questions the feasibility and reconnaissance study will address.

Colonel O'Donovan had to leave for a meeting; everyone thanked him for attending the meeting.

Martin clarified that the Corps has discussed a plan B with the Steering Group and that the Corps is going to initiative, under a small continuing authority type project, a preliminary restoration plan to incite small actions that can happen quickly with limited scope.

Bruce Wiseman commented that many people think that the confluence of the Columbia and Lake Rivers is a serious problem and it should be part of the restoration plan. Martin agreed that this is something that could be looked at.

Jeanne reiterated Colonel O'Donovan's comments of the need for a hydrological report to better understand this problem before significant action can be taken.

Interim Scope of Work Paper

Jeanne moved on and introduced Ron's Interim Scope of Work Plan. She commented that Steering Group has discussed options for interim work and issues have been raised around cost-sharing and ensuring that interim work counts if an agreement with the Corps is signed.

This paper outlines a less formal, general approach to a lake management planning process. Please refer to the Scope of Work handout for details of Ron's presentation.

Comments/questions on Ron's presentation:

Vern asked if any federal grant programs provide matching funds for interim work. Martin said that the Corps would not, nor would the Centennial Lakes program, but some groups may allow for retroactive matching. Martin reminded everyone that even if we don't receive matching funds, any money we do spend on interim work will lessen the overall costs of the project.

Thom mentioned that the tech committee has discussed looking at the formation of watershed councils, and working with basins as appropriate interim work activity. Jeanne mentioned that there was a brief discussion of this issue at the Steering Group meeting.

Chris Hathaway commented that his understanding was that there were not any watershed councils along the Columbia River in Washington due to funding restrictions.

Dave Howard responded that Washington's experience is not that same as Oregon's, Washington does not have a formal statutory requirement, and he thinks there is an unlimited scope and there can be implementation funding.

Chris clarified that his point was that we are starting from scratch if we do pursue a Watershed Council.

Thom commented there are a number of grant resources and we should continue to be open to perusing to other forms of funding from non-governmental groups.

Ron said that he thinks the money would be best spent on filling in data gaps. Jeanne asked the group to think about Ron's presentation and the possibilities of a Watershed Council. She asked the group to give Ron some feedback on his presentation and recommendations.

Thom questioned if the costs associated with Ron's proposed solutions have been evaluated. Ron said that he has not looked at detailed cost or time estimates. The next step would be to identify who would do the work, the time required, and then determine the costs. Ron also recommended that we look at the costs associated with Tier 1 first, moving on to Tier 2 if time and money remain. Thom thinks it will be difficult to evaluate these proposed solutions without cost estimates. Ron thinks we'll know the outcome of the GI study application relatively soon and which time the group can decide how and when to move forward. Jeanne clarified that it will take time to finalize these recommendations and that those costs will be estimated before any final decisions are made.

Bruce Wiseman asked if the Corps \$10,000 will be used this fiscal year. Martin confirmed that it would.

Doug Quinn asked if the Steering Group has a recommendation based on Ron's document. Jeanne explained that Ron brought a draft version of this paper to the February 1st SC meeting and their feedback was for him to get into more detail and define how his recommendations align with the Corps' plan. Patty said that purpose of Ron's presentation today was to gauge the Partnerships' interest, see if we are headed in the right direction, and determine if the technical group should move forward with cost estimates. She also reminded people that there is about \$200,000 allocated by the City and Port for interim work in 2006. That money does not have to be spent, but is there to keep things moving forward. Brian said that the SC discussion's focused more on the biology and hydrology components. No decisions were made; it was a high level discussion.

Nancy asked if Ron was planning on contacting Clark College to propose some of this work as a research project for a student. Ron agreed that this is a definite possibility.

Thom commented that the advantage of developing a Watershed Council now is the ability to built constituency with reps; we could build a stronger effort and involve more people. He is concerned that we are only looking at what the government can do for us, whereas Watershed Councils allow for other groups (i.e. the educational sector, Fish First) to become partners, allowing us to accomplish more with fewer dollars.

Vern Vesey said he's tired of talking and wants to get some things done and asked what we can do now. Jeanne asked if anyone shares Thom's desire to form the Watershed Council. Vern thought, based on previous experience, it was premature to form the Watershed Council. He cautioned against involving new people without first defining our direction and leadership roles.

Jeanne asked for and received confirmation from the group that Ron is headed in the right direction. David Judd commented we need to continue to answer these

questions, further examine how to dovetail with the Corps' work, and fill in those data gaps.

Bruce Wiseman commented that doesn't want to assume we're getting the Corps funding, he wants to see cost estimates for both Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Martin is going to see if he can get a copy of the Work plan for the Prior Lake project which might help Ron with his cost estimates.

Illoba commented that he likes the Ron's document and he thinks it keeps momentum going. He also suggested doing a Tier 3 to include the Watershed Council idea.

Ron said he thinks he can have cost estimates pulled together by our next Partnership meeting on April 19th; additionally he will pull together more information on the Watershed Councils

Bruce Wiseman said that he doesn't think anyone is going to take the charge to form a Watershed Council and he doesn't want to pursue it. Thom said he would take the charge to form a Watershed Council; he has had people approach him at the Clark County Clean Water Advisory commission asking to form a Watershed committee. Bruce Wiseman asked if Thom could do that work outside of this Partnership. Thom said he thinks the effort needs to come from the jurisdictions; individuals cannot apply for that funding.

Brian Carlson recommended that at our next Partnership meeting we need to discuss Watershed Councils, everyone agreed that this will be an agenda item to discuss on April 19th.

Public Comment

Jacquelin commented that she attend the previous Steering Group meeting and wanted Thom to know that they discussed Thom's concerns regarding the Watershed, that the SG is aware and observant of his concerns. She also suggested that Thom give a presentation to help people understand the Watershed Council process and what advantages Thom sees.

Michael Bertish asked if the seed money (the 200k) could be used to jump start the Corps project, as money in good faith toward the Corps work. He is also concerned with clarifying who the sponsorship group in Curt's presentation is. Does that become a new partnership? This is especially important to clarify if the sponsorship is responsible for the project after the Corps' portion is done. He also asked where the local ordinances fit into Ron's report. He is curious how Ron's report would work with the Port's plans and thinks that aspect is missing from the report. Ron commented that the tiers he laid out solely apply to Vancouver Lake and interim work. Jeanne asked Ron and Michael to continue their discussion after the meeting.

Jeanne reminded the group that everyone is invited to observe the Steering Group meetings. The upcoming schedule is:

- March
3/15/06 - Steering Group 3:30 pm
- April
4/5/06 - Steering Group 3:30 pm
4/19/06 - Full Partnership 4:00 pm

The meeting was adjourned.