

# Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership

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## **June 21, 2006 Meeting Summary**

The fourteenth meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership was held on Wednesday, June 21st from 4:00-6:00pm at the Port of Vancouver Administration Offices.

### **Attending**

#### **Partnership members in attendance:**

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

#### **Partnership members absent:**

#### **Staff:**

Loretta Callahan, Katy Brooks, Victor Ehrlich, Jeanne Lawson, Kelly Skelton, Ron Wierenga, Jim Gladson, Jordan Lerner.

#### **In the audience:**

Dvija Bertish, Jacquelin Edwards, Eldon Edwards, Annette Griffy, Bob Moser, Don Jacobs, Dick Carrol

### **Partnership Business**

Committee Members Updates – Dave Howard from the Department of Ecology has retired. No other committee member updates.

The February meeting minutes were not distributed to the Partnership for review, therefore they will be adopted at the next meeting in addition to today's meeting minutes. The Partnership was reminded that all meeting summaries, minutes, and handouts are posted on the VLWP website under the "Meetings & Events" section.

- <http://www.ci.vancouver.wa.us/PublicWorks/vancouverlake/>

Jeanne asked if anyone wanted to add anything to agenda, no one had anything to add.

### **IGA Update**

Patty reminded the Partnership that the IGA is an agreement between the City of Vancouver, the Port of Vancouver and Clark County. The IGA defines the roles of the Steering Group and the Partnership and lays out responsibilities of each group. All three entities have agreed to take this IGA to their various commissions over the summer. Patty reiterated some of the major elements which include the SG responsibilities, allocation of costs from each group budget for 2006, how grant money will work and be distributed, and how consultants will be paid. It also discusses in-kind reimbursement, how those staff hours will be applied to grants and other funding sources. Jeanne mentioned that the IGA is major milestone because it defines the administrative structure to carry forward funding for this project, and assigns responsibility for funding to the City, Port, and County (including the Corps) and what they are contributing. The group thanked Patty for her hard work.

### **Public Information Update**

Loretta talked about the information questionnaire and she handed out a draft report that details early results of the survey. Results thus far show that water quality is an important issue; many of responses have been submitted online. 63-64 responses have been received thus far and these

people were self-selected to respond, so it is not a technically accurate sampling of data. Many people that responded have asked to be added to an email list, Loretta hopes this will help pull people in on community involvement for future projects. Jacqueline asked if Loretta would want to know when a large group is going to assemble down at the lake, so they can anticipate requests. Loretta said that a representative from Park & Recreation will be there at all times to distribute surveys as requested. Jacqueline asked how long survey will run, Loretta is thinking it will run through the end summer but that end date has not been set yet.

### **Where are we?**

Curt Loop from the Corps mentioned that Rep Baird was able to obtain a resolution to use some of their money from the Lower Columbia Section 125 for George Medina to start the Preliminary Restoration Plan, and will continue to work on it as it moves through the House or Senate. If we are unsuccessful in getting the authorization this year, the intent is to resubmit next year. This is an important milestone.

Jeanne asked how many people read the memo that was sent in lieu of the April Partnership meeting, not many people replied that they read the memo. Jeanne asked if Brian Carlson would like to discuss the Watershed Council for Burnt Bridge Creek which was covered in this memo.

Brian reported that the Steering Group revisited the Watershed Council issue and they felt it was premature to form a Watershed Council for VL at this point in time. Ultimately the Steering Group feels that there should be a Watershed Council for VL in the future, but to have both groups at this time doesn't make a lot of sense. They also agreed that the contributing watersheds, outside of VL, are very important on their own and that they need to be dealt with independently. The City of Vancouver in the process of budgeting for the Burnt Bridge Creek Watershed in 2007-2008. The Watershed will be set up as non-profit, non-regulatory group and eventually the VL Watershed will be patterned on BBC watershed. Jeanne asked if anyone has questions, Iloba asked about timing. Brian thinks the BBC Watershed will be up and running by the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2007 but they need to secure the budget to adequately fund the project to do it right; a certain amount of base funding is necessary for it function properly. There is the possibility that a full-time director and part time support staff person will need to be hired to properly run the project to also bring in additional funding.

Jeanne reiterated that people are welcome to attend the Steering Group meetings if they that feel they are being excluded from the process. Partnership members can participate in the Steering Group meetings, the general public cannot participate but can observe.

### **Public Comment**

Jeanne asked if there were any new attendees, there were not. Jacqueline commented that she attends the Steering Group and feels very welcome; she also reminded the group that the meeting minutes are available online. She also mentioned that Salmon Creek is setting up a Watershed Council as well.

### **Steering Group Update**

Jeanne commented about the Steering Group's desire to look forward, and make sure that we have a check-in to share what has been done thus far. This Partnership is a new process, and we need to make sure that we are structured enough to keep people engaged and keep the process moving forward.

Early on in this process the Partnership expressed a need to gather information. Out of that need developed a set of values and an unconstrained vision was developed which will be refined as we move forward. These values helped establish the priorities that were given to the tech group helping them define and plan how they will move forward.

### **Preliminary Restoration Plan update by George Medina of the Corps**

George gave some background about his work thus far. He, Ron Wierenga and a few biologists took a tour of Vancouver Lake which helped George draft the PRP which is the “key that unlocks the bureaucratic process”, and establishes federal interest in our project. This is a draft, and George will hopefully present a final draft by the next Partnership meeting. George said that this isn’t a decision document, but will hopefully lead to a future GI study. Because GI studies are not funded as easily as they have been in the past, they’ve opted to go with a 536 program which a little more focused and constrained but will not be contingent on GI study. George commented that he is a little uncomfortable about handing out the PRP this early in the process especially without an identified sponsor at this time. George is looking for input because he has made assumptions and he wants to make sure they are correct. This is not for public distribution, but for Partnership to review and make comments. The format and structure of the document is required, as it is, talks about the significance of the results that will be gotten back. The document discusses land easements and right of ways, legal agreements, responsibilities of the sponsor, describes point of view of sponsor, point of view of federal government and their interests. The PRP does not cover funding, the funding is going to be based on the SOW which is not yet defined and will also depend on cost sharing of the sponsor which also has to be defined. The soft schedule is based on beginning construction in the spring of 2008 which is very ambitious. The schedule operates on the premise that there will be funding. The PRP does not contain hydraulic information, there will be more hydraulic information by the next Partnership meeting. There is also not a letter of intent completed yet either.

George has concluded in the draft PRP that there are a couple of issues and possible solutions. The Corps feels the heart of the matter is that the Lake doesn’t turn over quickly enough, there is stagnation. The Corps is proposing to improve the tide gate and pump house, dredge out a channel, take spoils from the dredging and create trenches along shoreline, creating new environments to populate with fish. Current conditions are not conducive to a fish habitat which is a federal interest.

Vern asked about hydraulic information, what more do you need? George needs an engineer to gather and assess the data to determine how deep we need to go. Analysis of the data is missing but they have plenty of data to work with.

Bruce asked if that includes looking at the mouth Lake River. George said it could, but that is not where the Corps would invest their interest. George said they need to look at the context of the hydraulics of the lake.

George also said another option not in the PRP is possibly dredging Lake River as well. Pete commented that people have to remember that this is a Preliminary Restoration Plan, so analysis will be at a cursory level at this point.

Chris Hathaway asked if there is any fish survey data for the Lake. Ron said there was a warm water fish survey done in 1998, larger data beyond that goes back to the previous dredging that looked at specific problems with the flushing channel. Otherwise not a lot of data is available.

Thom commented that right now it is a passive system, by perching the lake at a higher level it will then become an active system that will need to be sustained and pumped to keep it at that high level, George agreed. Thom commented that when we were preparing the white paper that started this project, they were looking at the material after the clean up and there is an indication that there is additional bacterial growth within the lake that wasn’t previously documented. If you add an even greater amount we could be dealing with more algae blooms, there needs to be more than a hydrological analysis, we need a biological analysis.

Gary asked about representation for the groups that have other interests beyond fish. Curt mentioned that the purpose of the PRP is to demonstrate that the Corps has an interest and demonstrate the potential of the project, and then they will broaden the scope to address other issues that people are interested in (water quality, swimming, etc.) once authorization is received. Everyone agreed that the desired outcomes are much broader and more encompassing than just fish.

George commented that there is a serious water quality issue; they realize that there are many other water quality concerns, but right now with this PRP water quality is outside their scope.

Patty commented that the Partnership will be integral part of moving this process forward and helping make decisions about what the SOW will eventually be. George agreed and said that input from the Partnership is very important to ensure that this PRP is headed in the right direction.

Pete Capell asked if multiple agencies can make up the sponsor. Curt said one group will be the sponsor and coordinate with other entities. The IGA will be the first step in defining the sponsor. George said if the group becomes a legal entity, and accepts liability, then the multiple sponsor idea could work.

Chris Hathaway asked if they see the salmon accessing the lake through the flushing channel or through Lake River. George believes they are coming through the flushing channel, if volume of water is increased the flow will increase and the fish will take care of themselves. They believe that the juveniles are coming in through flushing channel and leaving through Lake River.

Ron said previous studies have observed fish going back through the flushing channel.

Bruce asked why State Dept of Fish and Wildlife isn't part of the IGA. Patty said efforts have been made to invite them to the meetings, it is on their radar, but they aren't responding due to staffing turnover. Pete Capell he thinks it is a good idea to try and get them more involved, especially at the funding level. Pete said the first agreement was written around funding interim work and studies, which omits restoration and habitat activities.

Brian said the IGA is structured so that it doesn't limit other groups from joining the effort later on down the road. The IGA needed to get started and start moving forward, hopefully additional interest will grow.

Vern, wanted to say thanks to the Corps, they always finds away to get things moving in the right direction and he appreciates their efforts.

## **Tech Group Update**

One interim work item assigned to the Tech Group was looking at existing lake monitoring happening around the region. Data gathering is an important initial component to identify problems and create solutions The Tech Group has been in contact with other agencies, non-government organizations and universities to help compile a list of other monitoring activities in and around Vancouver Lake, to help fill in data gaps. Many monitoring locations have been mapped and several opportunities for coordination have already come up.

Station types are:

- air/climate (3)
- lake/pond/reservoir (11)
- stream/river (38)
- wetland (1)

Agencies:

- Clark county Public Works (20)
- Washington Dept of Ecology (12)
- Oregon DEQ (5)
- Clark County Health Dept (4)
- US Geological Survey (4)
- Willamette River Keeper (3)

There are many more stations but Ron is still gathering the information and this database will continue to evolve.

This database will also hopefully present coordination opportunities. One recent opportunity allowed Ron to go out on VL with the Dept. of Ecology to shock fish. This was actually a water and sediment quality study but they use fish as their benchmark. The results of the shocking were encouraging because there were a lot of fish, but disappointing because they did not find many bass. The report on this outing is due in August; Ron is hoping the DOE will come to our next Partnership meeting to present the report.

The Willamette River Keeper presented another opportunity; they were looking at doing metals analysis. Ron thinks this is a great opportunity to set up another site and gather information that isn't currently being monitored.

Study types:

- biology/habitat (1)
- hydrology/hydraulics (18)
- sediment quality (5)
- water quality (16)
- watersheds (13)

Another interim work item was looking at the biology of the lake. The Tech Group asked WSU to look at the major biological components of the lake.

Dr. Bollens proposed a project to Ron which would entail WSU doing planktonic work and partnering with others to study the fish and benthic invertebrates. A combined approach would likely look at 6 stations over 2 sampling events -- probably adding more frequent samples at a single station for plankton. The focus would be on describing what is out there, quantities, and where they occur. The goal would be to collect baseline data for recommending improvements and for measuring performance of future improvement projects.

Ron supported the WSU proposal as a comprehensive look at the biology of the lake, but also expressed concern that this approach might be too broad and shallow. Ideally we would study all components in detail, but there are budget and schedule limitations. The best approach is to have WSU focus on the algae problem and other planktonic animals. This is also where WSU's primary interests and expertise lie.

Next steps for WSU:

- Draft and approve agreement with WSU to begin algae research by 10/2006 which is good timing because volunteer monitoring ends the end of summer.
- Need to identify and prioritize the data gaps gathering under the overall Strategic Plan.
- Solicit assistance from other Partnership members and legislators – Dept. of Ecology to study plants, Dept of Fish & Wildlife to study fish, etc.

There was a round of applause for Ron's presentation.

Someone from the public asked about plant and frog populations and whether or not they are a good indicator of health of lake. Ron said that is one lead that he needs to follow up on with Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, he is assuming they having monitoring stations that have that data.

Ron reiterated that his slide doesn't represent all of the biology of the lake, but all these components are interrelated and have a significant impact on water quality. So if one population is disturbed it can greatly affect the other components.

Bruce asked how many carp were found on Ron's outing. Ron said quite a few carp were kept because so many were caught. Initially they were not finding a lot of fish which verified that they fish move around at different times of year.

Nancy asked if there were any croppy. Ron said that there weren't any croppy caught but it could have been the wrong time of year for them.

Vern asked for a big picture view. What would be an ideal number of monitoring stations? Ron said ideally he would have the money to address all major components, water quality, sediment etc. Vern asked about going outside the lake, to study the influence of the rivers. Ron said there is a need to document how to utilize information and bring it all together. Holding a workshop with a number of technical experts to gather and bring information together, helping make recommendations and define "must-haves" would be ideal.

Patty commented the purpose of this study is to eventually dovetail into a bigger study.

Thom asked if it's possible to start setting up some graphing of data sets and bring them into a big picture of what we already have out there. Ron agreed and thinks he has started that work by mapping out the stations.

Ron wanted to address the 2<sup>nd</sup> year monitoring with the volunteers. Not a lot has changed in two years of data, but we know the lake is warm. In 2005 oxygen levels, PH levels, and water clarity are all improved from levels recorded in 2004. There is also a lot less prosperous in the system, although Ron does know why. Based on chlorophyll levels the trophic level of the lake has not changed much between 2004 and 2005. Based on health department reports there are must lower levels of algae (and bacteria) in the lake in 2005 as opposed to 2004.

Jeanne asked people to send any follow up questions to Ron; the conversation doesn't have to stop at the meeting. Ron will also post a summary on the Vancouver Lake website.

### **Public Comment**

A member of public drew a correlation between the algae levels and the pollution level of the lake due to population growth over the years. He feels this issue must be addressed soon. He also feels there needs to be more height in the flushing channel and evaluation of the lake bottom needs to happen as well. Ron agreed that this is a data gap that needs to be addressed.

A second member of the public would like to see a monitoring system that looks at what goes in and out of the channel on a daily basis.

*Kelly would like to remind members of the public to identify themselves before the make comments so we can properly identify them in the meeting minutes.*

Jacqueline asked about crawdads, will they be looked at if possible? Ron said yes if the resources are available they will. She found this to be an informative meeting.

Dvija Michael Bertish said that he has participated in the Columbia River Keeper sampling and they have noticed that conductivity is very high; he thinks there would be real value in working with them to address the problem. One of the problems the Partnership was concerned about early on a continuously open passage which would lead to problems, and it would be important that a throw switch be installed to prevent material coming back into Vancouver Lake in the event of an accident on the river for example. George agreed that he had a valid point. Dvija Michael Bertish continued and voice a concern over low water levels in the channel, when levels are low it becomes impassable for fish and they get stuck in the channel resulting in fish kills. He thanked the Corps and Ron for their presentations.

Jeanne asked for final comments.

George needs comments on the PRP within the next two weeks. He reminded the group that this is draft, not for public distribution. All comments on the PRP can be emailed to Kelly and forwarded on to George.

Jeanne mentioned a concern regarding the last of attendance at least year's August Partnership meeting. Jeanne made a motion to move to move our next Partnership meeting to September 20<sup>th</sup>. The group agreed.

- July 19th - Steering Group 2:30 pm (earlier time)
- August ?
- September 20<sup>th</sup> - Partnership 4:00 pm

The meeting was adjourned.