

Not in Attendance:

Member

Anne Friesz
Aaron Henderson
Nancy Lopez
George Medina

Member Seat

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Clark Public Health
WA Dept. of Natural Resources
US Army Corps of Engineers

Opening of Meeting/Agenda Review

Phil welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a quick overview of the meeting ground rules before asking if there were any additions to the agenda. No revisions to the agenda were requested.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Project Management Update

The work of the project management team will be covered in the later discussions, with most of the team's time dedicated to progress on the matrix of techniques, to which three Technical Group meetings have been dedicated since the Partnership saw the matrix in December. Further details will wait until the later agenda items. Phil introduced the next agenda topic, an update on water trails and introduced Jean Akers of the Parks Department as the new alternate to Pete Mayer for the Partnership.

Clark County Water Trails Status

Jean Akers introduced herself as a planner with the Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation Department. The project being presented today is the Lewis River – Vancouver Lake Water Trail Plan. This plan is nearing the completion of a two year process of inventory and mapping. It covers a 22 mile scope in Clark County. Many partners have been involved, including the National Parks Service who provided technical assistance. The water trail plan is similar to regional trail plans, except that the trail itself is already in place.

A focus of the plan is beginning paddlers: planners looked at ways to make the resource more accessible to people while understanding ecological and natural resource aspects. There is also a potential economic benefit in the area through an increase of visitors using the water trails. The project looks to increase boater safety and knowledge, attain/improve access points that are reasonable for beginners, evaluate the degree of ADA and Search and Rescue access, clarify 911 access, and avoid user conflicts – understanding there are many users in and around the water with different needs. The trail connects to the Columbia River Water Trail, and there would be potential to expand in the future.

The team is starting to expand public outreach efforts. A "Big Paddle" event is being planned for Saturday June 2nd as part of National Trails Day. LCREP's 16-person canoes will be used, which will allow the team to get prominent stakeholders and officials on the water. The Big Paddle will start at Ridgefield, and last for approximately one and a half hours. The event will allow for acknowledgement of stakeholders.

By the end of year the goal is to have the plan formally adopted/endorsed and have a user guide/map. Ideally a grant will allow for development of a hardcopy water trail guide/map. If that doesn't come through the maps will at least be available through the internet.

With completion of the presentation, which will be available on the Partnership website, Jean asked if there were any questions.

Thom noted that Willamette Riverkeeper worked with REI and received an REI grant for an interpretive map as well as distribution assistance. Also, Legacy Lands received a Metro grant for a Salmon Creek project. He asked if Jean had pursued such funds. Jean commented that Parks is looking at several grant sources and Parks is coordinating with the Intertwine, which Metro is a part of as well.

Brian asked if the various implementation pieces have been identified by cost so that separate pieces could be sponsored or paid for if a potential funder would like to help with some aspect of the project. Jean confirmed that costs have been identified for different parts so they could be funded individually.

Jean was asked if the expansion of the land trail along the lake to Lake River is still progressing. Jean affirmed that the trail expansion around the lake is still in the works. Permit applications are about to be submitted.

With no further questions, Jean was thanked for her presentation.

Technical Group Update

Matrix of Techniques

Eileen gave an overview of the progress on the matrix thus far. The matrix was presented to the Partnership in December, and along with edits that resulted from that meeting, the Technical Group has made significant changes. The Technical Group focused on sustainability of technique, expected outcome, likelihood of success (which is likelihood that expected outcome would be achieved), and refined information under additional studies needed. The additional studies needed column was looked at along with the research plan to see that the earlier conclusions still held true. The group felt the most important work after USGS research is the sediment work and fish use. We are bringing this to the Partnership now to ensure that what the matrix, and the changes that have been made, make sense to the Partnership as a whole. Eileen opened the floor to Jeff to present the details of the matrix work.

Gary asked about the methodology to predict likelihood of success: is it a common measureable across all techniques to say how likely it is to succeed or is it individual for each technique? Jeff answered that each technique has specific attributes which aspects of the lake would cause a technique to be more or less likelihood to succeed at Vancouver Lake.

Jeff explained the plan for today. In December we looked at the matrix row by row in terms of adverse and beneficial affects of each technique. Today, we want to ensure that everyone understands where we have been, where we are at now, and where will be going in the future. This will be a more cursory run through, but we would like to know if there are any red flags that should be addressed.

The work done on the matrix has benefitted from input from the Technical and Steering Groups and subcontractor Rob Zisette. Since the December meeting a section has been added: engineered structures/water level control. This includes modifications to Lake River in terms of a lock/dam and modifications to the flushing channel: both techniques are engineering-centric. At the bottom of the matrix is a subgroup of actions that are not for algal control but to enhance specific beneficial use of the lake. The Technical Group did not focus on this latter section, but focused on techniques that address lake water quality issues.

When we started the matrix, and looked at it with the Partnership in December, we wanted to see which technique would have what type of affect for beneficial uses. This will be part of decision making later. Looking at the likelihood of success, everyone should note that those techniques focused on lake water quality have low to moderate likelihood of success. This is due to two things:

1. It is based on what we know now. When we close remaining research gaps we will further clarify how effective each technique could be.
2. We are looking at each technique in a vacuum. We will most likely not pick just one technique to improve the lake, but combine multiple actions to see collectively what is most viable to increase the likelihood of success of each of the techniques in the group.

Thom noted that additional studies would be necessary beyond what is noted in the column. For example, modifying the lake footprint would need a study of its own. Biomanipulation would need a secondary study of its own. What we have identified is not enough to implement a specific technique. Jeff agreed: specific studies would be needed for each, but right now we are looking to get as much information on a technique as we can: if a technique comes out of this process as unlikely for Vancouver Lake then we would be able to focus in more likely areas. This is taking a first cut on additional data, conceptualizing how likely a technique might work, but it doesn't mean we are ready to implement a specific technique.

Jeff was asked how work at Burnt Bridge Creek and Salmon Creek play a role in the 30 year period identified for sustainability of an action. Jeff commented that almost anything we do is going to be accompanied by other work, including the watershed work of the County and City.

It was asked if Chicken Creek is being considered as a potential source of nutrients, and if anyone has looked at the freshwater springs coming off the east bank of the lake. Jeff commented that Clark County is familiar with Chicken Creek, and has monitored it in the past. Part of the USGS study is to survey along the east bank to document inputs, and they are including Chicken Creek in their sampling.

Jeff asked the group for their thoughts about the matrix and if there are any red flags.

Thom commented that he believes the values in the likelihood of success column should be higher than those listed. Jeff noted that the rankings will be modified when we have more information from additional studies. The Technical Group gave these rankings based on our current understanding. Although this was not from a consensus, it is a majority opinion from the Technical Group. Thom voiced concern in looking at likelihood of success for individual techniques without considering combinations of techniques. He believes it is premature to disregard individual techniques, as they may be helpful in combination with others.

Phil pointed out that the plan for the matrix is not to take items off the table, but that we can put certain techniques to the side as they may work in other systems but would not be as successful on Vancouver Lake. This will help us focus our limited research dollars. As we get to a short list of five or six techniques that look promising we can do more analysis. We are not saying the likelihood column is precise: it is coarse, but if we do not narrow down and add depth to the stronger techniques then we will not be able to move forward.

Gary asked if likelihood of success denotes the success of technique or how difficult to apply the technique. Jeff explained it is not the difficulty of implementation but how well a technique will work once implemented in Vancouver Lake.

Chris observed that the canoe launch facility has a high likelihood of success. This would increase access to the lake for non-motorized boaters. He believes the cost could be much lower than is currently stated, and this is an action the group could choose to improve use of the lake.

Thom remarked that under biomanipulation, carp removal is important to be used with any technique, and likelihood of success should be high. Eileen noted Jeff's earlier explanation that techniques when used in combination may have a higher likelihood of success. Carp management in and of itself has a low likelihood of reducing algae in the lake.

Bruce commented on the carp management. This hasn't been very successful elsewhere: unless there is a way to keep carp out they will re-enter the lake shortly after they are removed. Also, even with a means to limit access they would likely come back in when there is flooding. Vern asked if the lake is better off if we do something to limit the carp population or not: will the lake get worse if we leave the carp population alone? Thom noted that fish screens could be installed at the flushing channel and Lake River to limit carp from entering the lake. It was pointed out that installing barriers to limit access for carp could impact other lake users.

For next steps, Jeff explained that the Steering Group has asked the Technical Group to meet and start to move through the process of reorganizing the list in a more likely to less likely lineup and bring that back to the Steering Group for sideboards as we go through the process. By the end of 2012 the goal is a smaller list of likely management techniques. While we are doing this on the technical side we will look to the Partnership and Steering Group for the social and policy feasibility of techniques. This will likely be starting at the June meeting.

The additional studies needed column notes the major study gaps – of these major gaps sediment knowledge is the biggest. Jeff is working with Rich Sheibley to maximize the sediment data that the USGS can collect.

Phil asked for input from everyone on the matrix process. Thom commented that fisheries studies are important in terms of attracting federal salmon funding. Jeff noted that while fish use study is an important gap, most techniques do not rely on fish data, although federal funding for salmon recovery is reliant on fish data. This leads into the next topic.

Federal Salmon Restoration Efforts

Federal salmon recovery funding is one of several potential funding resources for projects at Vancouver Lake. In the Federal salmon restoration process, BPA and the Corps are looking for projects between the Bonneville Dam and the mouth of Columbia to mitigate for hydro system impacts on salmon. Right now they have identified a large number of conceptual projects, several of which are within the area of the Vancouver Lake lowlands, including Sturgeon Lake, Vancouver Lake, and Buckmire Slough. Over the next several months the federal agencies will narrow down this large list. If some make the cut to the smaller list within the vicinity of Vancouver Lake then there may be funds for fish studies in our area. We don't know what the result will be but we are hoping it will help us with fish research. There are several hurdles ahead, but depending on the presence of salmon, we may be able to take advantage of federal funds for project implementation within the lake.

Thom insisted that the Partnership not be too passive. If we can prove there are salmon then we can become advocates to have funding come to the lake.

It was asked what the timing of the process is. Chris noted that some salmon restoration projects come through the LCREP science workgroup; LCREP coordinates three cycles of restoration funding per year. The next funding deadline is April, 2012.

Vern registered his concern that we should not pursue this strictly for the money if it would lead us in a direction that the Partnership does not want to go. Kevin assured the group that any project would have to fit within the vision of the Partnership and what we are trying to do; we are not looking at this source strictly for money: there are checks and balances on types of projects.

Bruce asked what the best way would be for the Partnership to get involved. Kevin answered that the Steering Group agencies will be involved and will update the Partnership. It is a funding opportunity we should not ignore.

Partner Replacement Process

Eileen reminded the group that there is an open partner seat with the retirement of James Meyer from the Partnership in December. The last time we had an open seat was in 2008, at which time we decided to expand the Partnership from 21 to 22 members due to the qualifications and community perspectives of two the applicants. We could choose not to fill the seat and return to 21 members. According to our policies, it is up to the Partnership to decide whether or not to fill any vacancies. Partnership members supported filling the position.

VLWP policies state that the Steering Group is to appoint a replacement if the Partnership chooses to fill the vacancy. The two options the Steering Group is considering are to have an open advertisement for the position as was held last time, or to appoint an individual from the 2008 applicant pool.

Partnership members voiced agreement for an open applicant pool, stating that the last application pool was from four years ago. Eileen asked if anyone disagreed with having a new application process. No one voiced disagreement

The recommendation to hold a new application process will be brought to the Steering Group. It was asked if the applicant would be chosen by the Steering Group or the Partnership. The Steering Group will choose the new member per Partnership protocols.

Outreach Update

Eileen updated the group on outreach presentations to various community groups. Rob Guttridge will be presenting an overview of the Partnership to the Vancouver Wildlife League on the evening of April 4th. Andrew Ness is scheduled to give a presentation to the Northwest Neighborhood Association at their July meeting.

There will be a meeting of the Outreach Event Ad-Hoc committee on April 2nd from 10:30-12. This is to discuss possible events for September. This Ad Hoc committee formed last year and helped plan and organize the September cleanup event. Information was sent to the same individuals for this year based on their previous interest in planning an event, but if anyone else is interested please let Eileen know.

The Public Information Officer group has been discussing an upcoming EcoFair held by CPU and the County. This event is on April 21st and brings people interested in environmental issues. This event appears to be a better fit for a Partnership table than the REI Outdoor Fest and the Alder Creek Paddle Fest, two events that occurred at the lake, but participants were focused on looking at boats, not visiting information tables. Participants at the EcoFair are encouraged to visit the various tables in order to have their 'passports' stamped. If anyone is interested in helping out at this table on April 21st, please let Eileen know. She will send information out regarding the event.

Kevin mentioned that the Steering Group is considering having a Bar-B Q type in-reach event with the Partnership at Vancouver Lake Park in September. It would be nice for the group to get together outside of the meeting room. There is still work to do on details and a date; a regular meeting date will be targeted.

General Partnership Announcements

There were no general announcements.

Close of Meeting

Phil thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to a close.

Next meetings:

Partnership: June 20, 2012 from 4 - 6pm at the Port of Vancouver.

Steering Group: May 10, 2012 from 1 - 2:30pm at the Port of Vancouver.