December 12, 2007 Meeting Summary

The twenty first meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership was held on Wednesday, December 12th, 2007 from 4:00-6:00pm at the Port of Vancouver Administrative Offices.

Attendance:

Member Present	Member Seat
Patty Boyden	Port of Vancouver
Ron Wierenga	Clark County Dept. of Public Works
Brian Carlson	City of Vancouver Dept. of Public Works
Steve Prather	Clark Public Utilities
Debrah Marriott	Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership
Iloba Odum	WA Department of Ecology
Bruce Wiseman	Port of Ridgefield
Thom McConathy	Citizen
James Meyer	Citizen
Lee McCallister	Citizen
Gary Kokstis	Citizen
Vernon Veysey	Citizen

Public in attendance:

Dvija Michael Bertish	Citizen
Dick Chandlee	Citizen
Elly Dicesare	Citizen
Jacquelin Edwards	Citizen
Vinton Erickson	Citizen
David Page	Citizen
Bob Moser	Citizen
Traci Nolan	Citizen (Geo Design)
Tabitha Reeder	Citizen (JD White)
Lehman Holder	Citizen (Sierra Club)

Other Agency Members Present:

Jessi Belston	Port of Vancouver
Gary Bock	City of Vancouver Public Works
Katy Brooks	Port of Vancouver
Loretta Callahan	City of Vancouver Public Works
Tonnie Cummings	WA Department of Ecology
Pete Dickerson	US Army Corps of Engineers
Victor Ehrlich	City of Vancouver Public Works
Anne Friesz	WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Kevin Gray	Clark County Public Works
Sharon Schulz	US Army Corps of Engineers
Dennis Schwartz	US Army Corps of Engineers
Paul Skyllingstad	WA Department of Ecology

Project Management Team:

Phil Trask	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.
Sabrina Litton	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.
Mardy Tremblay	Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership

Introductions
The project manager welcomed the group and attendees introduced themselves.

Agenda/Discussion Topics
The project manager introduced the agenda and asked if there were any modifications. There were no modifications to the agenda.

Partnership Business

Project Manager Update
The last Partnership meeting was on August 15. Since then there have been three Steering Group meetings: September 19, October 17 and November 14, an Ad-Hoc Group meeting on October 4, and a Technical Group meeting on November 7.

The Ad-Hoc Group was formed at the August 15 Partnership meeting to discuss and work with the Vancouver Lake Question List. Together with the project management team, the Ad-Hoc group revised and organized existing questions to develop an encompassing list that describes the current questions the Partnership holds about Vancouver Lake. The questions were driven to a level of detail that will allow additional analysis later on. The questions were also categorized into groups including; biological, physical environment, water and sediment quality, operations and alternatives. Adjacent to the questions on the spreadsheet were columns that are to be filled out by the Technical Group to assess how much information is known about the subjects, and how much it would cost to conduct additional technical studies.

After the Ad-hoc group worked with the questions, they were taken to the Steering Group for approval. The Technical Group will now analyze them, evaluate them against what is known about the lake and what the Partnership wants to know, and give a coarse estimate of costs.

The project manager reminded the Partnership that that the list will evolve. If there are questions missing from the list or ones that need to be further defined the list will be modified. It was asked if questions from today's Corps presentation and other informal reports would be incorporated into this list. The project manager replied that they would be as long as the new questions are pertinent to the Partnership's mission.

Work Program
A completed Vancouver Lake Work Program outlining work elements for the next two years was handed out to the Partnership. The project manager noted that the Steering Group has been seeing drafts of this document for the past four months and as a result it has been refined into this final document. The project manager reviewed components of the Work Program which include: refine vision and develop objectives, manage questions and information needs, scope and coordinate new technical studies, develop and refine draft management alternatives, and develop additional funding. The project manager said that the team would continue to build upon relationships with project managers of other lakes facing similar problems as Vancouver Lake (i.e. Capitol Lake) as well as with local, state, and federal agencies and community citizens. Another task on the program is to develop an interim Vancouver Lake Watershed Plan. It will outline the Partnership's plan to handle future management at Vancouver Lake and capture decisions that get made along the way. Lastly on the Work Program is the continued administration of the Partnership that includes continued facilitation of meetings for the various groups. Attached to the Work Program was a timeline and flow chart illustrating how the program

components fit together over time. A Partnership member noted that developing funding for implementation would be important to get started on right away.

The project manager said that he was looking for a recommendation from the Partnership to present this work program to the Steering Group for approval. Thom McConathy motioned for acceptance of the work program. Brian Carlson seconded the motion. The full Partnership approved the recommendation by a consensus vote.

Library at the Forum
The project manager told the Partnership about the Library Forum event that had taken place on September 20th. It was well attended with approximately 30-40 people and there were many good questions from the audience. He noted that if there was a message that came out of the Forum, it was "what is your vision for Vancouver Lake and can you articulate it?" The project manager said he thought it was important that the Partnership find a way to articulate to the general public what it is they want to do in the future.

Tech Group Update
Ron Wierenga reported on behalf of the Technical Group. He told the Partnership that the contract for the current scope of work (SOW) with the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (LCREP) and PC Trask for project management ends December 31, 2007. The Steering Group has decided to continue with Phil and the work program. The Steering Group has been very happy with the partnership with LCREP and Phil's work as Project Manager. Ron has been working with Deb Marriott from LCREP and Phil to develop a two-year SOW that would begin January 1, 2008. The contract should be ready for the Board of County Commissioners for approval soon, and it should be a seamless transition into the next couple of years.

Ron reported that there had been a Technical Group meeting on November 7 and that they had received a presentation from the Corps on their work to-date. A summary of the Technical Group meeting was available. Ron told the Partnership that the Technical Group will meet as needed to discuss research directions and opportunities. It is not known at this time when they will meet next.

Ron said the work being done by Washington State University (WSU) Vancouver is progressing and they have completed three out of four of their quarterly samplings. A progress report from WSU should be coming soon. At this time the Technical Group is working with WSU on next steps for their algae work.

Ron mentioned that Jennifer Parsons from the Department of Ecology in Yakima had initiated an informal aquatic plant survey. Ecology staff went around Vancouver Lake in a boat looking for both submerged and emerging plants. The summary was completed recently and Ron will make it available to the Partnership. Results confirm what was previously assumed about aquatic vegetation: there is little to no aquatic vegetation in the lake at this time.

Ron told the Partnership about several grants that were submitted this fall. One was submitted by Clark County on behalf of the Partnership for the State Centennial Clean Water program asking for funding to do diagnostic-level lake studies. They expect to hear back on this application in the spring. Clark County and WSU also submitted a grant to Washington's new Fresh Water Algae program for funding. They have just heard back on that submittal and unfortunately it was not successful. However, they did get a foot in the door and will re-submit an application for the funding again next year. The feedback received was that it was a good idea, but there was limited funding available at this time.

PIO Update
Loretta spoke on behalf of the PIO group and thanked the organizers of the Forum for the visibility the Forum brought to Vancouver Lake. The link to the recording of the Forum is on the Vancouver Lake Partnership website and at www.CVTV.org.

Loretta said there is an opening on the Partnership for a citizen member seat. The project manager provided background to this announcement by describing that over the past few months he had spoken with citizen members on the Partnership to gauge their level of commitment. To summarize his discussions, he stated that overall the members he had talked to continue to be interested in staying involved with Vancouver Lake as Partnership members. In his discussion with Clark Martin, Clark said he would like to resign his seat on the Partnership. He would like to remain involved by assisting with specific research projects for the Partnership, but not hold a Partnership seat. The Steering Group suggested that the Partnership make a significant effort to engage Clark in these kinds of projects.

With Clark Martin's resignation, the Partnership has one open citizen seat to be filled. Loretta described that the process for filling the seat would be similar to the initial Partnership citizen member recruiting process. The PIO Group has drafted a cover letter/news release that will be sent out to the news media together with an application form. The deadline for the application is set for January 31, 2008. The application will also be posted on the VLWP website and set up so that it can be filled out on-line or printed out. The link will be emailed out to Loretta's distribution list of people interested in Vancouver Lake. The PIO Group will encourage agency partner members to post it on their websites as well. There will be copies of the news release in high traffic public offices and the PIO Group will send it to stakeholder groups.

A Partnership member noted that originally the Partnership was trying to get diversity in the membership. Was Clark Martin a representative of any of the stakeholders groups? Loretta replied that Clark lived close to the Lake and that he had experience dealing with the community. She pointed out that the application asks what area you reside in, what interests you have, and what knowledge you could bring to the Partnership and everyone is welcome to apply. It was agreed that is important to have diversity in the Partnership.

Katy Brooks told the Partnership about how the PIO Group has been discussing ways to increase citizen involvement in the form of actions that can take place on the ground in the near term. A couple of ideas are a cleanup around Vancouver Lake and native plantings. The Corps, the County and many others are interested in looking at native species in the area and assisting in developing recommendations for plantings in addition to removal of invasive species. It has been discussed with the Steering Group about how best to launch actions like these and it might involve assembling another ad-hoc group. The PIO Group will provide more information on this at future meetings after the holidays. Debrah Marriott said the Estuary Partnership is involved with many volunteer projects and would like to help.

Alcoa Report

Iloba Odum introduced Paul Skyllingstad from the Washington State Department of Ecology Industrial Section with a specialty in cleanup and dangerous waste. Paul presented the current cleanup plans at the Alcoa Vancouver site and the accelerated cleanup schedule. Paul provided a handout that described the history of the site cleanups and as well as the current accelerated schedule that began in November 2007. He also handed out a graphic depicting the planned cleanup areas.

Paul began by saying that upland cleanups began in the area in 1988 and overall the site is 80-85% complete. There are three things remaining to be cleaned up, the actual smelter itself, a small upland oil site, and the PCB river cleanup. Alcoa is committed to cleaning up the area to what is technically possible. The river cleanup will begin in 2008 with dredging PCB-contaminated sediments in the areas depicted on the graphic. They plan to have an order or consent decree in public notice by the end of February 2008 and begin work in November during the fish window. This cleanup is one of the most aggressive cleanups in Washington to date.

It was asked if material from an onsite landfill was going to be cleaned and/or removed or just capped in place. Paul stated that it is now capped and secured and there will be funds available in the future for maintenance and repair. It is very expensive to dig-up and remove a landfill and this will likely be shown in a cost-benefit analysis being conducted by Alcoa. It was asked if this was a fairly standard option for this type of cleanup and Paul stated that yes it was a standard option for something this size. It was asked what was meant by capping the landfill and Paul explained how these types of landfills are capped with multiple layers of sand, heavy plastic and clay, and topped with a grass layer.

A Partnership member asked if Alcoa intended on dredging the entire area on the diagram showing PCBs or just the "hot spots". Paul said the dredging would take place in the entire area. It would likely be dredged with a clamshell dredge and filled in with clean river sand.

A citizen noted that at various meetings he had been to earlier on this subject it has been discussed that the landfill is leaking PCBs into the river. Is there going to be anything done about that? Paul replied that engineers are currently working on that and they should have remedial investigation report by the end of December. Using that data, a feasibility study can be developed to address this. One of the Partnership members asked if there would be a risk assessment done. Paul said there would be. He added that many of the landfills on the site were total removals and there is no risk involved since the material was removed from the site.

It was asked if the State was looking at PCB's in Vancouver Lake and the flushing channel. Paul said that Ecology had been directed by the Governor to address the smelter and that they are not looking at those areas. However, it was stated by a citizen that the flushing channel in Vancouver Lake is under the Federal Preliminary Site Assessment program with the EPA and is separate from the state's work. It will begin in January and will take approximately one year.

General Announcements
Jacquelin stated that there was a new subdivision above Vancouver Lake with stormwater outfalls that run into the lake.

Debrah Marriott announced that the Estuary Partnership is hosting a forum on January 4th in Vancouver at the Water Resources Center. This is a follow-up to the session held in May where scientists, implementers and policy makers met for discussions. It will be a two and half hour session over lunch and the group is going to discuss at what is known in the lower river about toxics. They will discuss what is being done about it and ask the attendees to help the Estuary Partnership help prioritize and move forward with reduction actions. Debrah said that registration information was on the Estuary Partnership website or to get in touch with Mardy Tremblay.

Corps Feasibility Study Presentation

Biological - Dennis Schwartz, the fish biologist on the Corps team, explained that he reviewed existing data and past fish reports to complete a fish abundance synthesis for Vancouver Lake. It summarizes known biological research on juvenile and adult salmonids at Vancouver Lake. He reminded the Partnership that the Corps' main interest under the Section 536 program is improving salmonid habitat and this literature review was prepared to assess the feasibility of a potential project from a biological perspective.

Dennis reported that there was little fish data available for Vancouver Lake, and even less for salmonids specifically. Some important research pieces available to him were the pre- and post-construction fish surveys associated with flushing channel construction. U.S. Fish and Wildlife conducted a pre-construction gill net survey in 1976-77 to provide the Port of Vancouver with baseline abundance estimates of what species were present in the lake during both summer and winter months. Post-construction, Envirosphere completed a report in 1984 that documented fish abundance and speculated the effects of Vancouver Lake restoration on anadramous fish. It also included recommendations for on-going flushing channel operations. The most recent fish data was from Fisherman Environmental Services in 2002 and reported on salmonid and predator

habitat conditions. This report identified data gaps such as: water quality and temperature data, the current extent of salmonid use in the lake and channel, and the availability of as-built flushing channel drawings. Dennis said the Corps was interested in the fate of the salmonids once they enter the lake.

Discussion was opened up to the group for questions and comments after Dennis' presentation. Some discussion points and questions that were raised include:

What are some of the assumptions you want to validate?
One of the assumptions made in 1983 and 1984 was that dredging improved passage for fish from the mouth of the flushing channel, through the flushing channel and into Lake River. It is unknown if this is true or not.

When George Medina spoke to the Partnership in August, he said the month of December would be a crucial time to determine whether the Corps would continue on with the ability to fund any kind of study for Vancouver Lake. Is there going to be approval for funding for further studies by the Corps?
Dennis said that the Corps is on a continuing resolution to go forward until they hear that they should stop or that they have no more money to continue. The Corps still has a vested interest in going forward slowly with go/no-go checkpoints.

Is the Corps saying they have determined that Vancouver Lake is a viable environment for fish and that they will continue with the project?
No. Dennis said there are a lot of data gaps and it will take more information before that decision can be made. Some of this information can be gained by initiating bathymetry and photogrammetry studies and running the 2-D model which will generate information the Partnership can use in the future.

Hydraulics - Sharon Schultz, the hydraulics lead for the Corps, provided an overview of what the Corps has found using their 1D hydraulic model HEC-RAS. She said that this is the Corps' Lower Columbia River hydraulic model which includes Vancouver Lake. In runs of the model, the Corps studied the flushing channel and Lake River by populating the model with 2006 and 2007 data. The scenarios investigated include leaving the system as-is, increasing the diameter of the flushing channel culverts from 7 to 11 feet, modifying Lake River to a uniform 150 foot wide channel, and the combination of the latter two. She reminded the group that these were coarse scenarios that would answer larger scale questions about the hydraulic system and help determine the benefits of further hydraulic investigation. The Corps did not look specifically at dynamics within the lake because bathymetry data is not currently available.

By modeling these different scenarios, the Corps has preliminarily determined that the flushing channel appears to be a major driver of the lake hydraulic system. Comparing the results of modeling each of the scenarios (leaving the system as-is, increasing the culvert diameter of the flushing channel, widening Lake River, and both modification scenarios combined) demonstrated a decrease in water retention time in the lake. Precisely to what extent is not answerable at this time due to the coarseness of the model.

An initial result of this hydraulic report is that modifications to the flushing channel culverts might increase the exchange of water in the lake. At this point in time these results provide enough justification for the Corps to expand their hydraulic investigation to include bathymetry, photogrammetry, and running a 2D model. Again the floor was opened up for questions by the rest of the group.

Can you explain how you arrived at the temperature data? Do you have multiple stations?
Sharon explained that the temperature data for the Columbia River came from pool at Bonneville Dam. The temperature within the Lake is from the WSU study that samples from the sailing club boat dock.

It is my understanding that temperature has one of the largest effects on fish survival. It doesn't seem that increasing the culvert size will have an impact on temperature because not a lot of water goes through the culvert. Isn't it going to be necessary to dredge the whole lake?
Sharon explained that initial findings show that increasing the size of the culverts might increase the exchange of water in the lake therefore improve temperatures in the Lake. Next steps include a bathymetry study which will provide elevations within the lake, and possibly help illustrate if the dredging that was originally done has filled in.

The project manager recapped for the Partnership that the Corps has done some initial work with the 1-D model and biological synthesis. He explained that these preliminary findings are encouraging enough for the Corps to proceed with additional study. What has been uncovered so far has helped justify the next step which is a bathymetry study. The hydraulics team will then be able to take their model further and give more definitive answers about lake turnover. It is difficult to say right now from a biological standpoint whether pursuing the implementation of a project is supported or not. This is a small go. In the spring we are likely to have additional go/no-go points.

It was mentioned that The Port has put together a three dimensional, very detailed, finite groundwater model that will be final later in December if the Corps wishes to use it. A report was developed by Clark Public Utilities and was peer reviewed. It includes Vancouver Lake, Burnt Bridge Creek and a couple miles upstream.

Will the information the Corps is compiling be compared with information on the lake prior to dredging?
Sharon replied that the information they are collecting will be related to the physical condition of the lake bottom at this time. Previous information on dredging and deposition are outside the Corps focus as they are fish-centric.

Does the Corps have funding for this next phase?
Dennis reiterated that the Corps is under a continuing resolution agreement (CRA) in which they have money. The Corps has a vested interest and wants to move forward. As long as the Corps continues to have money they will proceed contingent upon positive findings.

One of the Partnership members asked a question for the Port of Vancouver. He said he knew that the mouth of the flushing channel had been dredged and that they were collecting data on flow. Is there a summary available? Patty replied that they did dredge in 2006 and are currently collecting flow data. The Port would like to come to the Partnership for a presentation mid-2008 to report on that information.

With the 2-D model, will the same inputs drive the model? Or will tributaries become more important?
At critical salmonid times of the year, Columbia River stage really drives the system. The tributary contribution given the volume of the lake is small at that time.

Can the model be run year around?
Yes the model can be run year round.

Lake River did not have a large influence on Vancouver Lake in terms of flow during the modeling period. Could it have an influence at other times?
Sharon answered that yes it could at other times of the year. If the model was run year round, it could have a larger influence.

If you were to proceed with a biological study, what would it involve?
Dennis said that the Corps would like to collect additional fish abundance and survival data. The Corps would be interested in looking at how fish move into the lake and how they rear. They would collect temperature and turbidity data at specific sampling sites at an increased frequency.

Public Comment
The group thanked the Corps for their presentation. A citizen noted that the “flushing channel” be renamed “tidal channel” because that more accurately describes its role. It was also suggested that the flushing channel be relocated because it might be more effective if located in a different position.

Next Steps/Close
The project manager closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

Next Meetings:
Steering Group Meeting on January 16, 2008.
Steering Group Meeting on February 6, 2008
Full Partnership Meeting on February 20, 2008.