June 17, 2009 Meeting Summary

The twenty ninth meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership was held on Wednesday, June 17th, 2009 from 4:00-6:00pm at the Port of Vancouver Administrative Offices.

Attendance:

Member Present	Member Seat
Patty Boyden	Port of Vancouver
Brian Carlson	City of Vancouver Department of Public Works
Ron Wierenga	Clark County Department of Public Works (alternate for Pete Capell)
Tom Gonzales	Clark County Public Health
Lee McAllister	Fruit Valley Neighborhood Association
Iloba Odum	WA Department of Ecology
Steve Prather	Clark Public Utilities (alternate for Doug Quinn)
Bruce Wiseman	Port of Ridgefield
Jacquelin Edwards	Citizen
Nancy Ellifritt	Citizen
Don Jacobs	Citizen
Gary Kokstis	Citizen
Thom McConathy	Citizen
David Page	Citizen

Public in attendance:

Dvija M. Bertish	Citizen (Riverkeeper)
Steve Fountain	Citizen (Salmon Creek Watershed Council, WSU–Vancouver)
Erik Robinson	Citizen (The Columbian)
Ben Dennis	Citizen (Friends of East Fork Lewis)

Other Agency Members Present:

Jessi Belston	Port of Vancouver
Gary Bock	Vancouver Watershed Council
Steven Bollens	Washington State University–Vancouver
Loretta Callahan	City of Vancouver Public Works
Tonnie Cummings	WA Department of Ecology
Annette Griffy	City of Vancouver
Joanne LaBaw	US Environmental Protection Agency
Andrew Ness	Port of Vancouver
Jerry Oliver	Port of Vancouver Commissioner
Dorie Sutton	City of Vancouver

Project Management Team:

Phil Trask	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.
Eileen Stone	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.

Introductions

The project manager welcomed the group to the 29th meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership and thanked everyone for coming. Introductions were made around the room.

Agenda/Discussion Topics

The project manager introduced the agenda and asked if there were any additions or modifications. There were none.

General Partnership Announcements

The project manager asked if there were any general Partnership announcements.

Thom McConathy raised his concern that with limited funding for studies on Vancouver Lake issues, he believes that the WSU study of cyanobacteria abundance and toxin interactions is not strictly focused on the questions raised in the Technical Foundation report. He hopes that for the 3rd year of the study the scope could be re-focused. He is also concerned that due to funding constraints the Technical Foundation timeline to answer questions will not be reached; it will likely take some greater amount of time.

Gary Kokstis announced that the Vancouver Lake Sailing Club hosted the 40th annual 2-day Sailing Club Regatta. There were 150 sailors at the event. The Sailing Club is offering sailing classes every day for the next two weeks and classes will continue on Sundays throughout the summer. The Vancouver Lake Youth Regatta will take place on June 20-21, sponsored by Willamette Sailing. On June 27th there will also be a Laser class Regatta. Every Tuesday there are approximately 30-40 sailors using the lake in addition to kayakers and other lake users.

Mr. Iloba Odum reported that the 21st North West Environmental Conference will take place on December 7-8 at Jantzen Beach. More information on the conference can be found at www.nwec.org.

Dr. Steve Bollens announced the National Science Foundation's call for proposals for the Urban Long Term Research Program (ULTRA). This program looks at urban ecology throughout the country; many sites are funded at the level of approximately $150,000 per year. After two years some sites gain semi-permanent funding at the level of $1 million per year. Washington State University-Vancouver will be submitting a proposal in coordination with Oregon State University and Portland State University. The proposal is a broad multi-disciplinary study in which Vancouver Lake is not a focus, but is one of several sites in the region. This will be a highly competitive process. Letters of support would be helpful prior to the July 7 proposal deadline.

Mr. Lee McAllister reported that the Fruit Valley Neighborhood Association expanded its boundaries to extend to Vancouver Lake's high water mark. One of the reasons for the boundary extension is that it may help the non-profit Association secure funding for the Lake.

Jacquelin Edwards stated that several young children were bit by mosquitoes near the Lake and became ill, requiring doctor visits.

With no further Partnership announcements, the Project Manager introduced Joanne LaBaw of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Vancouver Lake and Flushing Channel EPA Site Assessment

Ms. Joanne LaBaw presented preliminary results from EPA's March sampling of Vancouver Lake. This site assessment was conducted under EPA's Superfund program due to a petition received in the fall of 2007 by the Rosemere Neighborhood Association. The full Power Point presentation will be posted on the Vancouver Lake Website.

In summary, the EPA collected 32 sediment samples in Vancouver Lake and the flushing channel. Although EPA does not typically sample clams or other biota, the team attempted to collect clams due to the Army Corps of Engineers' study of 2005 in which clam tissue contained elevated levels of PCBs. Unfortunately the crew were unable to find any clams when they sampled. Of the sediment

samples collected throughout the lake, four contained contaminants above the “Threshold Effects Levels” (TEL) set forth in the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's Screening Quick Reference Table. Two of those samples were above the TEL for lead, one was above the mercury TEL and one was above the TEL for three semivolatile organic compounds. Site samples were also compared to background samples. Many of these site samples did have elevated concentrations in comparison to the concentrations in the background samples. The predominant contaminants were heavy metals including lead, copper, mercury, and beryllium.

The presentation was then opened up for questions:

- *If the team didn’t find clams to sample, why not sample carp or other fish?*

  The sampling protocol process EPA follows to determine if an area should be on the National Priority List does not require sampling biota. Although sampling clam tissue would provide more information about the site, this information is not critical for developing a hazard ranking score. Also, movement of carp or other fish makes them less indicative of contaminants that are found in sediments.

- *Statement from Partnership member: this research is not strictly tied in to the original questions regarding Vancouver Lake (i.e., cyanobacteria). The Partnership should prioritize according to these questions, not pull in additional concerns.*

- *It is illegal to harvest clams freshwater clams throughout Washington. However, the Corps’ finding of high levels of PCBs in clam tissues in Vancouver Lake raises concerns of potential PCB concentrations in tissues of fish that may be harvested. If EPA could return to sample clams due to the human health concern, Clark County Public Health would like to partner with EPA on sampling.*

  This is outside of the original question to determine if Vancouver Lake should be on EPA’s National Priority List. However, due to the human health concerns Ms. LaBaw will discuss with EPA staff if an additional attempt at clam sampling is warranted. This study evaluated sediment samples that were collected along the shoreline to a depth of 10 cm. While the sampling plan did call for the collection of clam samples, EPA's contractor was unable to find any clams in shoreline samples to depths of 10 cm. Sampling later in the summer, when the water level is lower, may help uncover clams. If the EPA is able to return this summer, Ms. LaBaw would appreciate assistance in locating clam beds. Ms. LaBaw indicated that she would contact the Army Corps staff who collected the clam samples.

- *If clams show PCBs but sediment doesn’t, why? And if such is the case what does it mean for EPA’s ranking?*

  The answers to each question are unknown at this time.

Discussion of earlier studies:
The US Army Corps’ study sampled clams exclusively. Sampling was a) downstream of the ALCOA site, b) on the west side of flushing channel, c) just off of the ALCOA site, and d) across the Columbia River. The Department of Ecology’s 2006 study found low levels of PCBs in both sediment and fish in Vancouver Lake.

The EPA Site Assessment Report should be out this summer. If clams are sampled, these results will likely be provided in a separate addendum to the report. However, Ms. LaBaw may postpone the report slightly if she is able to sample clams this summer.

The project manager and the Partnership thanked Ms. LaBaw for presenting her work to the group.

Public Health: Water Quality Monitoring of Vancouver Lake

Mr. Tom Gonzales of Clark County Public Health opened his presentation by thanking the City of Vancouver's Brian Carlson, Annette Griffy, and Victor Erlich for their work in securing funding for the water quality sampling done at Vancouver Lake.

Clark County Public Health Department takes water quality samples at Vancouver Lake at five sites along the public swim beach for public health monitoring. Water samples are taken every two weeks on Monday mornings during summer-use months and looked at for Temperature, Dissolved Oxygen, turbidity*, E. coli* bacteria and Cyanobacteria cell counts and toxin levels. If colony counts are high or the presence of Cyanobacteria is observed, samples are checked for toxin levels.

So far this season samples on May 18th and June 8th were both under 10 colonies per 100 mls. for *E. coli.* The guidelines to close a swimming area are at greater than 236 colonies per 100 mls for *E. Coli.* The swim beach has not yet been sampled for Cyanobacteria cell counts or toxin levels this year.

Last year all samples at Vancouver Lake were below the threshold to close the swim beach. In late June, a sample was near the concern level for Cyanobacteria cell counts according to World Health Organization (WHO) parameters. Also toxin levels (anatoxin and microcystin) are sampled and microcystin is not to exceed 1 ug/ml and anatoxin 6.0 ug/ml. Last year microcystin was at .83 ug/ml the previous year, microcystin exceeded 1 ug/ml on two occasions and therefore the public swim beach was closed.

The presentation was then opened up for questions:

- *Do you find a correlation between high numbers of cyanobacteria and high toxin levels?*

  It is not an exact correlation, but can be close. It appears that some toxins may not appear until cyanobacteria die off, but not totally clear.

- *Weather patterns, including rains, seem to influence algae blooms, do you see a relation for cyanobacteria?*

  There appears to be some level of relation between the two, but again, not exact. The lake was 4° F degrees warmer last June than this June. Last year cell counts were near the closure level in late June. However, last year the lake temperature dropped 3° F in July.

- *Last year there was a higher spike in cyanobacteria counts than the previous year. Why wasn't the lake then closed last year?*

  Closures were triggered a couple of times in August, 2007. In 2008 a WSU sample had a higher count than the 2007 samples that triggered closure, but it was later in the year (early autumn). Mr. Gonzales wasn't involved in sampling, but it is possible that the toxin level didn't reach closure levels.

- *Colony numbers are different than cell count and biomass. What is the testing parameter, and has the parameter, or the lab used, changed between years?*

  The samples are checked for both colony and cell counts. The samples have always been sent to the same lab.

The group discussed whether there are known limiting factors for cyanobacteria colonies such as a convergence of time of year and temperature. This could be a hypothesis to study in the future. A multivariate analysis could be run looking at cyanobacteria numbers, toxin levels, temperature, weather, and presence of grazers. There would also be variation between sites in Vancouver Lake. The Department of Ecology is currently creating a database to see when cells and toxins are present for each species.

For more information on the water quality sampling there are several websites: the World Health Organization: http://www.who.int/en/ and Clark County Public Health: http://www.clark.wa.gov/public-health/pools/beaches.html. (The Vancouver Lake website contains a link to the Clark County monitoring on its "maps and materials" page under "Public Health").

The project manager and the Partnership thanked Mr. Gonzales for sharing this information with the group.

Project Manager Update

Funding Update

The most critical update for the Partnership is that the Centennial Clean Water Program funding fell through. The Vancouver Lake study was on the bubble of the Governor's proposed budget of $35 million, which was then reduced by the Legislature to $31 million. With that, the Vancouver Lake project is no longer on the funding list. For this study to look at nutrient budget and hydraulics of the lake and not being a "turn dirt" project it did very well, even though it didn't get funded in the end. Feedback from Ecology was positive, so we will refine proposal and apply again later this year after looking at reviewer's comments and getting additional feedback on potential improvements. The funding criteria change somewhat each year. This past year's application we added a TMDL component to increase attractiveness in the applicability to a water quality cleanup plan.

The project manager reported that the Steering Group discussed last month about looking at the funds the Partnership has from the City, County, and Port to see if there is a more conservative nutrient budget study we can fund. The project team is and will be having conversations with USGS and other consulting firms to put alternative studies on the table. Although USGS' current proposal is expensive, there may be a cost share possibility with USGS. We will bring alternatives back to the Steering Group and the Technical Group.

Dr. Bollens restated his comment from the last Partnership meeting that leveraging funds from various funding partners can be powerful. Washington State University–Vancouver has added to the funds received from the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership with funds from the Murdock Charitable Trust, the Water Research Center and Department of Ecology. If we all think as broadly as possible the Partnership funds can go further than their base amount.

Other Business

George Medina of the US Army Corps of Engineers has submitted his report and data on the 1-D and 2-D models. Clark County Public Works maintain the data and the PIO group will be putting information on the website.

The project manager informed the Partnership of plans discussed at the Steering Group meeting to develop a five year research plan. The project management team received direction to look at all six study areas raised in the Technical Foundation Report to better define and associate study questions with costs and schedule. Development of this plan will include the Technical Group and then be brought back to the Steering Group and the general Partnership.

The project team continues to broaden the alternatives report. While by definition it is premature when the nutrient budget and other research needs are incomplete, looking at how cyanobacteria issues were addressed worldwide will be useful in informing us in what areas to look at for solutions.

The project team is also working on a project with another client that may have benefits for Vancouver Lake. With the Bonneville Power Administration the team is examining "Reach F" of the Columbia River, which goes from Scappoose to roughly the I-5 Bridge, and includes Lake River and Vancouver Lake. This project involves working with restoration practitioners to look at restoration areas for the benefit of salmon within Reach F as well as other reaches. The team took a kayak trip along Lake River to explore restoration possibilities there. This may bring increased visibility of Vancouver Lake to funding agencies.

The team also met recently with the West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District and discussed the District's efforts regarding Sturgeon Lake on Sauvie Island, which has many similarities to Vancouver Lake. As appropriate, the project team will share information between the Sturgeon Lake interest group and the Vancouver Lake Partnership. The Partnership voiced a general interest in hearing more about Sturgeon Lake.

Technical Group Update

Ron Wierenga discussed the concept of the Five Year Research Plan as a means to set milestones for a broad research plan. Having something concrete may help attain funding resources. Some research questions are sequential but we want to identify as much as we can.

The County, Port, and City have some funding; some of which keeps this group meeting, as well as funding important work from WSU-Vancouver. Some of these funds may be available for studies as the project manager mentioned earlier.

A groundwater input model proposal is being developed for Vancouver Lake, building off of the Port/CPU model. This may give us a reasonable estimate of ground water inputs to the lake. The model will be discussed at the next Steering Group meeting.

There is no Technical Group meeting scheduled at this time.

PIO Update

Andrew Ness reported that he is taking Katy Brooks' place on the Partnership for the Port of Vancouver. Also, Jim Gladson has left Clark County for a position elsewhere.

Vancouver Lake informational postcards targeting Vancouver Lake Park users were given to the Vancouver Lake Park fee booth to hand out to individuals as they enter the park.

Public Comment

Brian Carlson noted that this was the twenty ninth meeting of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership and thanked the public members for participating in and contributing to the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership for this amount of time.

There was no additional public comment.

Next Steps/Close

The project manager thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

Next Meetings:

Steering Group Meeting on June 30, 2009 – 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Full Partnership Meeting on August 19, 2009 – 4:00-6:00 p.m.

All meetings will be held at the Port of Vancouver Administrative Offices.