

Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

Meeting 9:00 A.M.

SW Washington Fairgrounds, Chehalis

January 15, 2015 - Meeting Notes

Board Members Present: Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Frank Chestnut, City of Cosmopolis; Lionel Pinn, City of Napavine; Ken Estes, City of Montesano; Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Lonnie Willey, Town of Pe Ell; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen; Bud Blake, Thurston County Commissioner; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor County Commissioner; Julie Balmelli-Powe, City of Chehalis

Board Members Absent: Dan Thompson, City of Oakville

Staff, Consultants Present: Scott Boettcher, Jim Kramer, French Wetmore

Others Present: Please see sign-in sheet

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from December 18, 2014
- Proposed Floodplain Management Improvements
- French and Associates Phase 2 Technical Assistance Budget
- PowerPoint by J. VanderStoep
- PowerPoint by French Wetmore
- Updated Projects List
- Financial Report
- See meeting materials
here https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings_2013-15.aspx#January2015

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Vickie Raines at 9:11 a.m. Michael Strozyk, Director of Communications for Lewis County, stated the building in which the meeting was being held had 14' of water in it during the 2007 flood. It has since been rebuilt and flood-proofed. He stated there was some high water this past Monday, with about 6" coming into the fairgrounds; the Salzer levee protected the fairgrounds from more water. Kresky Avenue had about 4' of water.

2. Introductions

Self-introductions were made by all attending.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. Election of Officers

Mr. Kramer stated that the nominations last month were for Vickie Raines for Chair and Edna Fund for Vice Chair; Ron Averill for Chair and Vickie Raines for Vice Chair. Mr. Kramer suggested voting for a ticket; Mr. Averill suggested voting for Chair. Mr. Kramer called for the vote for Chair and Ms. Raines was supported unanimously. Mr. Kramer called for a vote for Vice Chair and Commissioner Fund had the majority of votes. There was a misunderstanding regarding whether or not Mr. Averill had been

nominated for Vice Chair also. The meeting notes from December 18 were read and it was determined that Mr. Averill had been nominated for Chair not Vice Chair.

5. Approval of Meeting Notes

The meeting notes were approved by consensus.

6. Briefing on Governor's Work Group Recommendations

https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1492/images/Chehalis%20Flood%20Authority%20Briefing%20Draft%201%2014%2015.pdf

Mr. Vander Stoep stated the Governor's Work Group developed a set of recommendations for the entire Chehalis River Basin: Protect I-5, water retention, local projects and restoration of aquatic species. The PowerPoint showed the history of flood damage and that the floods are getting worse. FEMA flood claims in the Chehalis are the highest in the State of Washington. Since 1978 there have been over \$70M in claims to FEMA but these claims are only a fraction of the overall economic damage, and they do not account for businesses closing, relocations, highways being closed and other impacts.

The salmon population is declining and habitat degradation is predicted to get worse. The 100-year flood level has increased 33% in the last 28 years. Hotter, drier summers will exterminate the salmon population.

The Work Group considered many possibilities: levees, protecting I-5 alone, forest practices, dredging, multiple storage options, relocation, floodplain reconnection, and by-pass channels. Each of these can have a localized effect but they do provide a significant basin-wide benefit.

The Work Group recommendations are a single project: fish and flooding which would include habitat restoration, water retention, flood-proofing and local projects.

The economic costs and benefits include:

- Cost of \$500-600 million depending on the type of dam
- Direct benefits of \$720 million based on the record of flooding
- \$3.8 billion in total benefits, including economic multiplier and intrinsic value of fish

Benefits

- I-5 closed for less than one day instead of five or more
- Airport Levee would be improved to protect the airport, commercial areas and I-5.
- 2000 structures would be protected from a 2007-like flood
- Up to a 50 percent increase in salmon populations

The choices:

- Move forward with recommended project, or
- No action taken and \$3.8 billion in damage over the next 100 years and decimation of salmon runs

Mr. Vander Stoep stated many people contributed to the information provided by the Work Group, thanks to Mr. Kramer and the Ruckelshaus Center. The Work Group, at the time of these considerations, consisted of David Burnett, Karen Valenzuela, Vickie Raines, J. Vander Stoep, Jay Gordon, Rob Duff and Keith Phillips.

Next Steps:

- Legislative decision on budget
- Initiate permit process with programmatic EIS
- Implement immediate actions to restore habitat and reduce flood damage, continue community awareness preparedness for all floods

For the next biennium budget the Work Group recommended \$27 million for long term strategy and \$26 million for early actions (for a total of \$53 million). The Governor's recommendation was \$20 million and \$10 million respectively (for a total of \$30). The difference of \$23 million is mainly engineering design for water retention and less early actions for habitat restoration and local projects to reduce flood damage.

Mr. Averill stated no priority on the projects has been given. Mr. Kramer stated as the budget firms up the split will be defined. He would recommend showing the entire list to the legislature and ask them to consider the priorities the Flood Authority set for the \$17 million.

Mr. Vander Stoep stated the legislature asked the Work Group and WSDOT to look at protecting I-5 with and without a dam. WSDOT said none of the I-5 only options (bypass, walls, levees) fit into its budget so they did not recommend going forward on any of those. He also stated that this last flood is a reminder that all local projects will not stop flooding.

Mr. Kramer stated that WSDOT looked at the analysis with benefits of a dam and was not willing to spend \$80 to \$100 million to solve a 20-hour closure. If the dam does not move forward then WSDOT will look at measures to protect I-5.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated FEMA dollars don't include damage to agricultural businesses. There was a lot of agricultural damage in Lewis County. She asked what will be the decision between the two types of dams. Restoration projects are great but she is afraid that a reduction in the flow of the river will create more damage to fish.

Mr. Kramer stated a lot of the work in the Work Group's proposed \$27 million budget will go towards a better understanding of how fish and other species use the river. It is not clear from the scientists involved in the work whether flow augmentation would help. There is a concern from environmental groups and others that a permanent blockage of the river by a flow augmentation dam will have a significant detrimental effect. In the next biennium the benefits and impacts of flow augmentation will be further analyzed.

Mr. Averill stated this area will see a need for water retention for river quality and for human consumption. It's hard to believe that there isn't enough water here but there isn't. We need to look at an all-purpose dam. He also stated that the project list connected the dam to Phase 2 of the airport project. The Work Group agreed that Phase 2 of the Airport Levee belongs in the long-term projects.

Mr. Bhagwandin asked how much would be allocated in the overall proposal for a multi-purpose dam habitat restoration. Mr. Vander Stoep stated a multi-purpose dam is \$100 million more and the Work Group's recommendation includes \$150M for habitat restoration. On the benefit side, the state has a modest economic value of fisheries. If the cultural issue of fisheries is included it would be a bigger number. Mr. Bhagwandin stated it appears that the focus is on the flood part rather than on the fish

part and suggested adding a bullet in the presentation that highlights the \$150 million go towards the benefit of fish.

Mr. Averill asked if someone is looking at potential funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Mr. Vander Stoep stated that source of funding and others will be pursued.

7. Support for Budget to Implement Work Group Recommendations

Mr. Kramer stated the next biennium budget for the Flood Authority is basically the same as for this current biennium: for staffing of the Flood Authority and continuing its work, and for supporting local governments in floodplain management. He asked the group if there was support for the biennium budget proposed by the Work Group. There was consensus support.

8. Improvements to Local Floodplain Management

https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1492/images/Floodplain%20Management%20Improvements%20PowerPoint%201-15-2015.pdf

Mr. Kramer stated that French Wetmore would present his PowerPoint on the recommended floodplain management improvements. He noted that the Flood Authority could not implement the recommendations but asked that they consider encouraging the twelve local governments in the Chehalis Basin to implement them.

Mr. Wetmore completed floodplain management assessments for each of the 12 local governments. There is one for each jurisdiction, which has been distributed to the jurisdiction, and three basin-wide reports which can be found https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/28124/library.aspx#GovWrkGrp. These include the basin-wide floodplain management assessment, repetitive flood loss strategy, and the Community Rating System (CRS) program review. He went through the PowerPoint and asked for questions or comments.

Mr. Kramer stated that the CRS program lowers the rate that residents pay for insurance. The flood insurance rates are going up dramatically (about ten times) and the federal government has only delayed the increase, not stopped it. If a jurisdiction is in the CRS program and has a good score the insurance rates could be reduced by half.

Mr. Averill stated one concern for jurisdictions being in the CRS program is the significant cost for the complicated reporting that is required by the federal government.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe asked why there is a discrepancy between Mr. Wetmore's amount of damages and Mr. Vander Stoep's. Mr. Kramer explained that it is because of the distribution between communities and the basin. Mr. Wetmore's cover the communities; Mr. Vander Stoep's cover the basin.

Mr. Kramer stated that the jurisdictions are using flood maps based on data that is 40 years old. The recommendation is to use information and map that are consistent with the HEC-RES model that was developed for the Flood Authority.

Mr. Vanell asked if the elevation certificates are based on the lowest elevation on a piece of property where a structure would exist. Mr. Wetmore stated there are several elevations that are considered.

Ms. Zieske asked the easiest way to obtain an elevation certificate. Mr. Wetmore stated a surveyor would do it. The actual form can be downloaded from the website.

Mr. Kramer stated the Work Group recommendation includes improvements to local floodplain management by the 12 basin jurisdictions. The specific improvements highlighted by Mr. Wetmore define what those improvements would mean. The elected officials in each of the 12 jurisdictions are responsible for determining if the improvements should be adopted in their area. There is a lot of work involved in working with 12 jurisdictions. Staff needs to know what more information the Flood Authority needs and if French and Associates should be tasked to go out to each jurisdiction and get reactions from the elected officials.

Mr. Averill thought the recommendations made sense but asked specifically how they would be funded; if the money would go to French and Associates. Mr. Kramer stated the Flood Authority provides support to the jurisdictions and developing a checklist for building officials is one recommendation. That kind of support can be made through the budget.

Ms. Balmelli Powe stated all of the recommendations made sense; some may be more costly in some areas. She asked for confirmation that the Flood Authority is not voting for recommendation of this package for everyone. Mr. Kramer wanted to know if the next step should be to take the recommendations to the jurisdictions for consideration by the 12 jurisdictions. Responses from the jurisdictions be brought back to the Flood Authority see if it should go forward or if there are significant issues. The Flood Authority does not have the authority to require action by a jurisdiction.

Mr. Vanell stated understanding the requirements and enforcing them for any new structures is okay but asked how they can be enforced and how much will that cost a small community, and is it feasible for a small community.

Mr. Wetmore stated most of these rules on are on the books in each jurisdiction already and these are proposed modifications to the existing rules. Mr. Kramer stated this would not create any bigger burden for enforcement than what a jurisdiction has now. There will be information to think about before a homeowner does the work.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated she was struggling with the 50% cumulative damage standard. If she has 51% damage over 10 years can she not get a permit? Mr. Wetmore stated that the NFIP rule is that a single improvement or repair project worth more than 50% of a building's market value is treated as a "substantial improvement" and requires that the structure must be current local code requirements. Some owners apply for a 40% improvement one year and another 40% improvement the next year which gets around the flood protection rule. If improvements are tracked cumulatively and damage is tracked cumulatively this would not happen. City ordinances are designed to ensure that new development and redevelopment are protected from flood damage, don't aggravate flooding on other properties, and buildings don't deteriorate over time after several floods. Once an ordinance is adopted a person cannot claim exemption from the law because they do or do not have insurance. He added that what should be included in the recommendations is a disclosure requirement.

Mr. Kramer asked if there was consensus to take the recommendations to the jurisdictions. There was consensus. Mr. Boettcher stated staff would connect with the local governments.

9. Amendment to Contract for French and Associates

Mr. Kramer asked if the Flood Authority wanted to amend French and Associates' contract to add an additional \$100,000.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe asked Mr. Wetmore to clarify the technical assistance project. Mr. Wetmore stated the last two pages have recommendations. There will be a survey to prioritize, general training, templates and checklists and community-specific issues, such as going through ordinances, etc. On call means jurisdiction staff can call and ask for assistance.

Mr. Averill asked if this is using current biennium money and is it coming out of the elevation money. Mr. Kramer stated that was correct.

There was consensus to approve the addition to French and Associates' contract.

10. Subcommittee Structure

Mr. Kramer advised the new board members that there are three Committees to the Flood Authority: Executive, Project, and Outreach and Education. The structures of these subcommittees need to be reviewed. He asked members to consider which committees they would like to serve.

11. Vent Retrofit Contract Process

Mr. Boettcher stated the RFQQ was sent out in January and a procurement process has started to get three contractors on board. It is hoped that a contractor is selected by the 28th and that contracts are signed by the latter half of February. The first homes to be retrofitted will be in Bucoda. Once the contractors are on board the mayor will send out certified letters stating that this opportunity is available. The contractors and community will talk about what the retrofits entail. Home owners will sign permissions for contractors to walk around their homes to give quotes. The lowest bidder will be selected and the contractor will acquire the permit. When the work is done the building official and the home owner will sign off. Mr. Boettcher will then request payment. In theory this will work but what if other deficiencies are discovered to keep the building official from signing off? There are wrinkles to work out. Mr. Boettcher has received phone calls; other jurisdictions are watching to see how it goes in Bucoda.

Mr. Boettcher stated that the contractor must appropriately install flood vents and they need to get a registered land surveyor to do an elevation certificate also. This will help in the advancement of the CRS program. Another issue is some concrete block walls are filled and they will be more expensive to retrofit. The cost of the elevation certificate is included in the cost of retrofitting. Since a surveyor can do more than one at a time the cost will be less than the typical \$1000.

Mr. Averill asked if there will be one contractor for all three counties. Mr. Boettcher stated there would be a pool of contractors. They will give a quote and a selection will be made by that.

12. Construction Projects

Mr. Boettcher stated the Pe Ell and Montesano projects are done. Pe Ell had no flooding during the last event and Montesano was 6" below flood level.

The Wakefield Rd project is not going forward. Larry Karpack did modeling and found the project would not generate flood reduction gains that would be worthwhile. That money will go back to the Flood Authority.

There is uncertainty about the Wishkah Rd project. Grays Harbor County did not move forward with eminent domain and the County is no longer a sponsor of that project. It is unclear where that project is at this time.

Lewis County has completed 11 farm pads, protecting 1500+ head.

Mr. Ogden stated another evacuation project has also been completed. Grays Harbor County is working on two farm pads but they have been held up in the permitting process. A shoreline development permit may be required.

13. Social Media Report

Mr. Boettcher stated social media could help with the flood warning system which currently sends out email alerts. Tim Elsea, Lewis County Public Works Director, will be receiving Tweets on five gages which will promote early awareness. Emails can be sent out that have a link to a gage so someone can look at a hydrograph of that gage. Lastly, emails will be going out asking people if they want to sign up for the flood warning system.

Mr. Averill stated he is on the state Emergency Management council. When he attends a meeting the reporting is always about USGS; rarely is One Rain mentioned. Mr. Curtis has been working with USGS so the community can benefit from all information. Emergency managers are not telling the public what to look at. Outreach needs to be done on that matter. Mr. Kramer suggested working with Chris Brewer at the Chronicle, also.

Commissioner Fund stated an Emergency Manager will be on board on March 1 in Lewis County. She stated a lot of information is being put on Facebook and it is not always accurate. There needs to be one place to look. All Emergency Managers should get together to work on this so anyone can understand the information and trust it. Ms. Balmelli-Powe suggested an instruction sheet that anyone could use.

Mr. Chestnut stated Cosmopolis has a Facebook page and a lot of people use it. The number of people who update it should be limited. It is a great benefit.

14. Financial Report

Ms. Napier gave the financial report, stating just over \$15,000 had been expended. She asked if there were any questions; there were none.

15. Public Comment

Mr. Bhagwandin thanked the Flood Authority for the issues it is taking on and its level of professionalism. He wanted to see the Flood Authority focus on fish and encouraged the Flood Authority in its outreach efforts.

16. Reports

a. Chair's Report

There was no report from the Chair.

b. Member Reports

Aberdeen – Ms. Hoder had photos of the flooding in Aberdeen last week. She said the city needs a dike badly. Mr. Boettcher stated he would post the photos to the website. Mr. Kramer stated that at the

meeting in November Mr. Curtis showed the ability to predict storm surges and that enabled better predictions for that area. Mr. Boettcher sent that information to Malcolm Bowie.

Centralia – Mr. Averill stated this last event was different from the others, which usually involved the Chehalis River or the Skookumchuck. This event reinforced the issues with China Creek and Salzer Creek. Emergency Management said there would be minimal claims, and that there was only about 3” of water. China Creek goes under City Hall and the Chronicle building. City Hall did have water in it. The water in China Creek came to within 3” of the underside of the bridge and that reinforces the need for the projects at Agnew Pond and another upstream. Salzer Creek comes under National Avenue by the fairgrounds. The channel has not been maintained and the creek doesn’t stay in the channel. There is a grant through the County to fix that this summer.

Cosmopolis – Mr. Chestnut stated the last event proved that the improvement at Mill Creek was necessary. He stated that 10-11” of rain fell in a 24-hour period. The Mill Creek dam would have mitigated that by about 75%. Cosmopolis fared better than Aberdeen and Montesano with about 6 or 7 homes taking in water. The damage is being assessed right now.

Napavine – Mr. Pinn stated that the last event shows that there is a need to check on creeks, too. Napavine had an impact at Kirkland Rd and Bethel Church and Burger King were impacted. He hoped to get the Kirkland Rd culvert project moved up on the project list.

Bucoda – Mr. Vanell stated there was no flooding in town; there was some flooding on Hwy 507. He stated Bucoda was hit in 2009 while Lewis County was hit badly in 2007. He wondered what would happen if the 2007 and 2009 floods hit at the same time. Besides the Pineapple express there is the atmospheric river to consider. He recommended looking into that.

Chehalis – Ms. Powe stated she was concerned about the new trees that were planted at Mellen St. She stated when they grow up they will take up water storage space, not to mention a possible issue with beavers.

c. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

d. State Team Report

Ms. Hausman stated Ecology and the governor are working on the budget.

Mr. Ogden stated the Conservation Commission met with DOE and others regarding a budget proposal on stream bank stabilization work. He has been asked to put a tour together in Wahkiakum County and others for this purpose. If anyone is interested in participating, please email him.

17. Confirm Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a conference call on February 19. In March the meeting will be in Thurston County.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.