

Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

Meeting 9:00 A.M.
Veterans Memorial Museum
Chehalis

September 17, 2015 - Meeting Notes

Board Members Present: Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Dan Thompson, City of Oakville; Ken Estes, City of Montesano; Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Frank Chestnut, City of Cosmopolis; Julie Balemelli-Powe, City of Chehalis; Lionel Pinn, City of Napavine; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner

Board Members Excused: Bud Blake, Thurston County Commissioner; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor County Commissioner; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen

Others Present: Jim Kramer, Kramer Consulting; Scott Boettcher, SBGH Partners; Chuck Tenpas, Lewis County PUD; Bob Amrine, Lewis County Conservation Commission; Lee Napier, Lewis County Community Development Director; Dale Lewis, Congresswoman Herrera-Buetler; Merlin MacReynold, Chehalis City Manager; Bart Gernhart, WSDOT; Jan Robinson, CRBLT; Jessica Hausman, Department of Ecology; Frank Kersch, Al Smith

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from July 16, 2015
- Basin Strategy – Programmatic EIS
- Land Use Recommendations
- Local Small Projects
- 2016 Flood Warning System Annual Maintenance Costs
- Story Maps
- Financial Report
- See https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#Sept2015.

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Commissioner Fund called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. in Chair Raines' absence.

2. Introductions

Self-introductions were made by all attending.

3. Approval of Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda and it was approved as presented.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

There were no changes or corrections and the meeting notes were approved as presented.

5. Basin Strategy, Programmatic EIS

Mr. Kramer stated the Programmatic EIS is funded by the Legislature and DOE is the lead agency. DOE will use the information generated over the years regarding the assessment and analysis of flooding issues in the Basin as well as habitat restoration. The purpose of the EIS is to start the formal process of reviewing and permitting. The first step of the permit process is to

see what gets funded and approved over the long-term. The key question of the Programmatic EIS is: Is everything being considered that should be considered?" It may seem like the process is starting over because of the scoping but this is an important part of the long-term process to decide the future of the Basin.

The process starts with defining the formal Purpose and Need per schedule in the handout. Mr. Kramer explained the chart. A notice will go out next week asking for comments. There will be two public scoping meetings: September 28 at the Veterans Memorial Museum in Chehalis and September 29 at Montesano City Hall. Mr. Kramer asked members to encourage people to attend.

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2016. The primary driver for the deadline is to ensure that it is completed and have the governor make a decision on ultimate strategy for the 2017 Legislature. In addition to the work on the EIS, a policy workshop will be held on October 7, possibly at the Great Wolf Lodge. Attendance is encouraged. There will be an update on what has been learned about the Basin and the habitat issue in the last several years.

The Governor's Chehalis Basin Work Group will continue to look at the feasibility of a dam and other alternatives. There will be additional discussion on the funding of flood proofing homes. Restoration of the environment will be parallel work to the EIS. Mr. Kramer stated Anchor QEA is the primary consultant working for DOE on the EIS, as well as being the consultant on the rest of the work.

Mr. Vanell asked if there is a NEPA schedule. Mr. Kramer stated the EIS is under SEPA, State Environmental Policy Act and DOE is using that authority. NEPA is the National Environmental Policy Act which involves the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others. There have been discussions with federal agencies and they are not predisposed to doing a programmatic EIS but they are tracking it. There is a government advisory team that is advising them. Through that coordination the recommendations will need to go through NEPA; hopefully these agencies participating with DOE can use information generated in the SEPA for the NEPA. He stated there was good response with the first meetings with agencies. It is important that people know that this process is important to establish permits.

Upon a question by Mr. Boettcher, It was agreed by DOE to look at including FEMA on the above described government advisory group as they too are an important federal agency.

6. Land Use Recommendations

Mr. Kramer stated the Flood Authority has talked about floodplain management over the last couple of years. French and Associates did an assessment of the flood plain and 12 governments were provided with individual reports to develop a basin-wide report. Mr. Kramer sent out an executive summary that was finalized in April with a new set of recommendations. There is a little more detail relative to standards to be considered by the 12 governments.

In talking with state agencies there is a strong sense that allowing development in the flood plain may be increasing the flooding problem. The Flood Authority has supported this in the past and the recommendations of the work group support that. There have been discussions with Grays Harbor County, Lewis County, Centralia and Chehalis. As representatives of

jurisdictions, the Flood Authority should encourage local bodies to take up this issue and decide if they would initiate a formal process against what they currently have and then adopt the recommendations.

Mr. MacReynold asked if FEMA mapping is impacted by the methodology change or is something different being done. Mr. Kramer stated FEMA came in with new maps for the Centralia, Chehalis, Lewis County area which expanded the area of the floodway where development is prohibited. That was challenged and FEMA has put new maps on hold to determine how the levees affect the flood plain. The hydrology study done by Larry Karpack can be used for the depth of the floodplain without changing the current designation of the floodway. That is FEMA's official position. Using the flood of record doesn't mean there is a new floodway designation.

Mr. MacReynold asked if there will be stringent requirements regarding fill. Mr. Kramer stated there is no federal standard for fill requirements.

Mr. Kramer stressed that this is a recommendation to look at standards and take action on them. Staff will continue to meet with individual jurisdictions but the Flood Authority should encourage formal review and consideration by their respective jurisdiction.

Mr. Averill stated that French and Associates have been encouraging consideration of the CRS (Community Rating System) and this chart tells how points can be accumulated. It does not mean you need to meet these by law but they may impact a jurisdiction's CRS.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe asked how a dam would affect the regulations. Mr. Kramer stated a dam will not stop flooding. In some areas where the floodplain is narrow a dam would not reduce area of flooding but would reduce the depth of flooding. Changing the BFE (base flood elevation) for a 100-year flood would change the freeboard standard.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated some areas are now considered to be in the floodplain because of the 2007 flood. Could they be taken out? Mr. Kramer stated they could be, but communities will need to decide what protections want based on the uncertainty of flood predictions. The Basin could see worse floods in the future.

Mr. Averill stated if there are changes - impacts from a dam - a change could be submitted to FEMA. Mr. Kramer stated staff is recommending using the flood of record which is sometimes greater than FEMA. We could regulate to Best Available Science.

7. Local Small Projects

Mr. Boettcher stated there are ten projects going through the process, which are largely moving forward. Except for Wishkah Rd all agreements are drafted and out to sponsors for review. Cosmopolis' Mill Creek Dam final went out today, to be followed by the Elma project. Some outstanding items are budget and schedules.

Regarding Aberdeen, this is a large project and a multi-agency group will be assembled to better understand the project. There are some unclear aspects of what is being proposed. Some sort of hydraulic analysis will be needed regarding the levee impacts on adjacent communities.

Boistfort Valley Water project – this is not a public entity so there needs to be discussion with the County or someone else to be the sponsor.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe asked if anything had been decided on the projects to include DOT funding. Mr. Averill stated there is some money in the transportation budget but the wording was not what we were told so we need to go back to the legislative staff. \$75 million was approved in the transportation budget with \$40 million for the Chamber Way bridge replacement.

Mr. Gernhart stated the money for the new interchange won't be available until 2025. That is a legislative issue; DOT doesn't have anything to do with it. There will be \$40 million available for the Chamber Way project in 2015. He will send information to Mr. Boettcher.

Mr. MacReynold asked where the levee fits in. Mr. Kramer stated the discussion with the work group the walls and levees alternative will be considered in the EIS. The walls and levees are predicted to reduce flooding of Interstate 5 but increase flooding on some adjacent properties.

8. **2016 Flood Warning System Annual Maintenance Costs**

Mr. Boettcher stated the table in the handout shows that costs are down a little for 2016 because last year more money was spent on building a parts inventory. WEST maintenance costs include 4 visits per year to the 10 gages that the Flood Authority owns. USGS owns and maintains the others. It was discovered that the Skookumchuck gage did not work and spare parts were used for a repair. Mr. Curtis monitors operational support and works with OneRain on that. Mr. Boettcher stated he is working with Mr. Curtis to improve the OneRain website.

The chart showed \$57,935 for annual maintenance that was divided between the counties. Mr. Boettcher asked for a decision on the allocation.

Mr. Averill stated at one time there had been discussion about whether or not WEST could also maintain the USGS gages. Mr. Boettcher stated USGS stores long-term data and WEST does not and cannot. As USGS collects data it is fed into their on-line system.

There was thumbs up for the same allocation approach and percentage for annual gage maintenance.

Bob Amrine stated he understood that some gages were going in at higher elevations and satellites were being used to calibrate them. Mr. Boettcher stated NASA is working at predicting rainfall. The University of Washington selected 10 gages to collect rain fall data to see how closely the satellite accomplishes what is happening on the ground. They have been invited to meetings and they are still in touch. They interviewed WEST and are aware of everything WEST learned and has factored that into their 2-year pilot program.

Mr. Boettcher stated last year an email went out letting people know they could sign up for email alerts on certain gages. That is one of WEST's operational support responsibilities. It will be done again with the intent of reaching a broader group.

9. **Update on Outreach**

Mr. Boettcher stated the Flood Authority had booths at both the Grays Harbor County Fair and Southwest Washington Fair this summer. The booth placement was good, the posters were

good as were the scrolling photos. At the SWW Fair the Farm Bureau was right next door and they had photos also.

Improvements needed include more booth coverage. The SWW Fair booth was aided by monitoring support from the Farm Bureau and Commission Fund when it was otherwise unattended. The general feeling was that the booths should be manned at all times.

Mr. Thompson stated another strength is the presence of the Flood Authority. People know about the Flood Authority and Mr. Thompson thinks they respect it and have hopes that it will accomplish its goals.

Mr. Boettcher suggested partnering with Emergency Management organizations in the future. Jill Kangas (Lewis County DEM) wants to do a booth with the Flood Authority next year. That would provide more people, more material and shared resources. He would like to find a way to use something other than a laptop next year. Mr. Averill stated a local business donated the large screen used by the Farm Bureau. Mr. Pinn stated he covered the booth on Friday and he would like to see the Flood Authority team up with EMS, partly to show cooperation between the two groups.

Mr. Boettcher has been looking at ways for more flood information coverage. He suggested a single sheet distributed to business, chambers, to include what is available and where to get information. He stated refrigerator magnets are not very expensive and they would have more longevity than a piece of paper.

Mr. Boettcher stated the Flood Warning System has gage alerts where people who provide an email address can be notified when a gage reaches flood stage. Last year there were 30-40 people who signed up. Mr. Boettcher would like a public service announcement in the local newspapers, and something similar that goes out to radio stations. Lewis County will have an annual flood information event in November and brochures are available for that.

10. **Story Maps – Flood Warning System**

Mr. Boettcher has created a new draft story map on the Flood Warning System. It is not as powerful as the farm pads story map because it does not have the string video testimonials. He is not sure how to get such testimonials. There has been discussion about knowing where the Flood Warning System is and logging on. Mr. Pinn suggested an app for cell phones. Mr. Boettcher stated Conrail might have one for their website and will check with Dave Curtis.

Mr. Boettcher put an icon on the Flood Authority home page that is intended to convey that working together can accomplish more things and produce results.

Mr. Vanell referred back to the magnets and stated EMS has magnets and perhaps the Flood Authority could have information added to those. He also wondered if the colleges had a video department that could put a brief spot on You Tube.

Mr. Kramer asked what the preparation is for when a flood is predicted and what message we want to get out to the public. He suggested the Outreach Committee talk about this.

Mr. Boettcher reviewed the story map home page which directs users to the strategy and flood warning system. Clicking on the new icon (the puzzle pieces) takes one to flood stories, gages and stations, inundations flood maps and more.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe asked if there could be a reference point to the 2007 flood put on the inundation map.

Mr. Vander Stoep stated the WIRA is outlined in blue and for clarity he suggested a different color since the river is usually shown in blue.

12. Financial Report

Ms. Napier stated there were two reports since there was no meeting in August. For the period of July 1 through July 31 expenses were \$10,729.65. For August 1 through August 31 the expenses were \$22,278.17 which includes two months for French and Associates.

10. Flood Proofing

Mr. Boettcher updated the group on the Bucoda flood proofing project. A portion of the town did not have a Base Flood Elevation (BFE) established. With properly installed flood proofing vents insurance reductions are possible but not if there is no BFE. Larry Karpack worked on establishing that and it now needs to get institutionalized. Bucoda's flood ordinance needs to be revised. Mayor Carr will present a revised flood ordinance that includes the new BFE. When that is adopted the remaining flood vents can be installed.

Mr. Boettcher stated French and Associates have been meeting with various jurisdictions to talk about land use management and flood regulations.

13. Reports

a. Chair's Report

There was no report

b. Member Reports

Centralia – Mr. Averill stated the Mellen St/Harrison Avenue project will mostly be done in 2016 with some carryover into 2017. The Centralia Station exit was missed in the Transportation Budget and will be added. Other projects are going well. There is a concern with the water table in Boistfort Valley.

Oakville – Mr. Thompson stated Grays Harbor Transit will once again offer bus service to Oakville on Tuesdays and Fridays. He also reported that Oakville has done a lot of work on the south side and east side flooding. Now that those areas have been corrected the north side needs to be addressed. Mr. Thompson is contacting state, county and city agencies to put together a plan to do a study to alleviate flooding on the north side of the city.

Montesano – Mr. Estes reported that the Lake Sylvia Fall Festival is this weekend. Mr. Estes is up for re-election and will continue with the Flood Authority at least until the end of the year, depending on election results.

Pe Ell – The Willapa Trails will be opened up to take people from Chehalis to Pe Ell. The Fat Tire event will not be as big as the STP but a large turnout is expected. Mr. Vander Stoep stated that is a beautiful trail and it could help create tourism.

Bucoda – Mr. Vanell stated the 4th annual haunted house will be in October. The 4-H club is also putting on a non-scary haunted house. He stated on August 28 there was a severe windstorm that took out a store front. The plan is to clean up that area and put something there.

Cosmopolis – Mr. Chestnut stated Cosmopolis will celebrate 125 years next year. He has asked the city council to think about things to do for that celebration. He is looking forward to continuing work on the Mill Creek Dam.

Chehalis – Ms. Balmelli-Powe reminded everyone of the harvest dinner at The Loft. She also stated she is a Scout Master and asked for support of the Boy Scouts in their popcorn sales.

Lewis County – Commissioner Fund stated October 3 is the Apple Festival in Onalaska. That event will include apple pies, canoe races and more. She encouraged everyone to make agritourism a success. Mr. Vanell reminded the group that this weekend kicks off Art Trails in Lewis County, a very wonderful experience.

Aberdeen – There will be a River Festival in Aberdeen on October 10.

14. Public Comment

A question was asked about WDFW testing the water temperatures in the river. Mr. Kramer stated a lot of work is going on by WDFW and others and yes, they are checking that. They have not seen any major fish kills but there are levels that could impact the fish. They are also looking to see where the fish are going while it is so warm.

Stu Trefry, State Conservation Commission Regional Manager, is working with Mr. Kramer on building a budget piece with landowners.

15. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a telephone meeting on October 15.