April 2012- LCSG Reverse Assessment Report

After conducting interviews with all current members of the Lower Columbia Solutions Group, comments have been complied and categorized as follows:

- Future meeting format & content
- The value of the group (past and future)
- Potential projects/topics of discussion
- MCR comments
- Funding
- Other general feedback

Comments are summarized herein, and the full spreadsheet of all comments is available. An assessment summary and recommendation are included.

Meeting format/content:

Most of the members responded positively to the idea of an annual meeting. However, the potential scope and size of that meeting varied considerably. Ideas included:

- a full day (or more) conference with a broad sediment management topic with small, focused break-out sessions (suggested possibly as an every-other-year event). If conference could generate self-sustaining funds, that would be ideal
- Smaller sediment management conference with adjacent LCSG meeting
- Less structured meeting to allow people to share information about projects and provide for sharing of resources and ability to collaborate
- Standard meeting- a couple/few hours to share project updates and upcoming issues

Value of the group:

The group is very respected, and most participants indicated that the experience has been positive. Each category is nuanced, but this is a summary of the outcomes of the group that members value (and also indicated it could provide in the future):

- A neutral forum
- A place to communicate
    - Information sharing
    - Relationship building
    - High quality and level of interaction among members
- Accountability

Potential projects for the LCSG:

A variety of responses were received, but quite a few topics were mentioned repeatedly. Presented in order of the number of times mentioned:

- Contaminated sediment/ toxics from upriver
- Beneficial use projects
- Future deepening (of both Columbia and Willamette)
- Jetty's
- Dredging at Astoria
- Other

MCR Feedback:

As not all of the members are directly involved in the MCR project, there was not as much feedback on this project. However, from those who are involved, comments fell into the following categories:

- The positive outcomes of the work, including but not limited to: better communication among team members, and distance the project has come in the last year or so
- Current and future role of the LCSG in implementation and oversight of the plan/ the plan's components
- Challenges and concerns for the work ahead

Funding:

The responses to the funding question were spread along a spectrum of:

- No funding from organization available
- Project specific funding potentially available
- General program funding potentially available
- Desire to talk/think more about funding in larger group

Other general feedback:

This category is the catch-all for things that didn't fit above but were significant to capture. A sample of comments is provided (all comments are available):

- The group's lack of focus
    - LCSG seems to be seeking a purpose
    - Is it worth it to try to keep it together without a specific issue/project?

    - There may be other groups that deal with similar issues -- don't want to have redundancy
    - Too bad there's not more unifying issues, the group does good work when there are
- Personalities and turn-over affect relationship building and maintenance
- It's nice to have a forum where can go to get issues resolved/ask questions that are very specifically focused
- Do not think group has met its goals- only ½ accomplished

Summary/recommendation:

It is difficult to imagine reconfiguring a group that has been together for so many years, but it is time to update and refresh the LCSG. It is important to have people/agencies around the table that want to be there and have a sense of value in participating- both by what they can contribute and also what they can get out of it. Sediment management is an issue that many have a vested interest in, and having a space to communicate openly and receive unique information is of value to many.

Whether it is a large annual conference, or a smaller annual team meeting, there is an expressed need/desire to have the group stay together. Reviewing the mission statement and the membership is in order and reviewing the resources available to general group maintenance and for project support are important as well.