

Lower Columbia Solutions Group
DRAFT Meeting Notes

February 4, 2011
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Meyer Memorial Trust Board Room
710 Urban Center, Portland State University
Portland, Oregon

Participants

Steve Greenwood, LCG Convener	Robert Anderson, NOAA
Brian Lynn, WA Governor's Office, WA DOE	Nancy Pustis, OR DSL
Jim Neva, Port of Ilwaco	Alejandro Bancke, CREST
Mike DeSimone, Pacific County	Peter Huhtala, Clatsop County
Donna Nyberg, Rep. Brad Witt's office	Hobe Kytr, Salmon for All
Deb Marriott, LCREP	Doris McKillip, USACE
Catherine Corbett, LCREP	Kevin Brice, USACE
Kimberly Pincheira, Sen. Maria Cantwell's office	Bill Wyatt, Port of Portland
Caren Braby, ODFW	Fritz Graham, Sen. Ron Wyden's office
Dale Blanton, Oregon Coastal Management Program	Bill Hunsinger, Port of Astoria
Kathy Roberts, USFWS	Jack Crider, Port of Astoria
	Jim Mahar, USACE

Staff

Steve Greenwood, LCG Program Manager
Lauren Beeney, Oregon Solutions Program Coordinator

Welcome, introductions, meeting objectives and announcements

Steve Greenwood called the meeting to order, welcomed the group and explained that he has taken over Greg Wolf's position as acting director of NPCC. Steve noted that he has also replaced Jane Bacchieri who has gone to work for city of Portland, so today will be filling a dual role. Attendees then did self introductions.

Steve asked if there were any revisions needed or comments on the notes from the meeting in October. Doris McKillip from USACE commented that there should be some updates to Mike Ott's section which Lauren Beeney said that she had received and would incorporate. With those changes included the notes will be posted on the LCG website.

The West Coast Governor's have awarded a small grant to do a sediment planning workshop in NW. People from California will be coming up to make presentations and the date is tentatively set for May 9th. It will be an all day free workshop, and they are just beginning the planning. LCREP is also a partner. More information and details will be provided when they are available.

Deb Marriott from LCREP announced an update on Columbia River Restoration Act (CRRA). She noted that the Restoration act was packaged with Great American Outdoors Act, which included several other great water bodies and aspects of protection, but it didn't pass out of congress before December. However, LCREP is working with the congressional offices in an effort to keep momentum going, though there isn't expectation that it will pass this year either. More information and details will be provided if/when they are available

Hobe Kytr from Salmon for All announced that NOAA has proposed designation of eulachon smelt critical habitat and he has prepared a 1 page summary of the listing. Among the things that are listed as potentially affecting smelt are- dredging and sediment disposal; water pollution; port district operations; and habitat restoration projects. Hobe noted that the likely economic impact will be on additional sector 7 consultations, and the likely burden will fall on smaller and port districts. The biological and economic report available on the NOAA website at: <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Other-Marine-Species/Eulachon.cfm>. Deadline for comments is March 5th.

Robert Anderson from NOAA added to Hobe's information saying that because the habitat is designated as critical for other species, it would be rare that additional regulatory work would be triggered due to other critical habitat being identified.

MCR Sediment Management Plan

The MCR Steering Group Convener Jim Neva, from the Port of Ilwaco, provided an update on the MCR Regional Sediment Management Plan project which is focused on establishing new nearshore or on-shore beneficial use placement sites in Oregon and Washington. Jim reviewed the project schedule, highlighting that they are on a very aggressive timeline and are having success at slowly building consensus with the workshops they've been doing. The plan will continue to be vetted with individual agencies and stakeholders over the next few months and he anticipates convening a larger stakeholder group in May. It is anticipated the team will have a Declaration of Cooperation by the end of June.

It was asked whether or not agencies will be able to provide input and feedback before the report goes out. The response was that will be an opportunity for individual agencies to provide input on a preliminary draft before it is finalized and more widely distributed.

Dale Blanton, from the Oregon Coastal Management Program, commented that the science team has been moving forward with looking at risk of various species of concern. They have been looking at mechanisms for monitoring and for adaptive management and folding that into the sites they are considering. Dale noted that a lot of work that is happening through INR (Institute of Natural Resources) will come together in the next month with what the science community is telling policy makers about how to monitor and adapt if proposed sites are the ones selected.

Regional Sediment Management Planning

Deb Marriott from LCREP provided an overview of the progress on the RSMP project, which is similar to the progress reported at the October meeting. Deb shared that the commitments from the 2009 Declaration of Cooperation are pretty much done. LCREP is waiting for some revisions from NOAA on the biological chapter but otherwise the framework is complete. Deb stated that they are at a point where the next steps require a much larger chunk of funding and she asked the group to consider how to proceed to the next steps and stages, and how to secure the resources to do so. Deb shared a list of identified work for next steps and the anticipated costs for the work which comes to a total of just under \$900,000. However, the work has been categorized in such a way that it is scalable and can be chunked out if funding for particular elements becomes available. Deb shared that LCREP has included their request for funding of the RSMP work in their annual federal appropriations requests, but this year federal appropriations are unlikely.

Fritz Graham, from Senator Ron Wyden's office, shared that a press release from the head of the appropriations committee had been released in the last couple days saying no earmarks will be accepted in the upcoming fiscal year. For FY12, they will be working to try to find money and try to assist with getting funding any other way possible.

Brian Lynn, from WA Department of Ecology, asked if last year a letter from LCSR had been submitted in support of the CRRA. Brian suggested the group may want to do that to show broad support for that work.

Brian also mentioned that the Executive Committee and West Coast Governors group were looking for funding and discussing ways to line up behind the coastal ask, so that may be an avenue for consideration. Brian noted that there is no national pot for RSMP, but there are pots through Marine Spatial Planning by NOAA.

Steve summarized that what Deb and LCREP have done is to complete the foundation, planning and info gathering on which to base RSMP. The first geographical piece of the plan is the MCR work. Once that portion is done (June 30th) more specific planning can move upriver, segment by segment. He said that, as a group, they will have a better sense what this planning is like once the MCR is complete.

Doris McKillip from the USACE noted that the regulatory framework section of the RSMP is worth reading.

Deb concluded the discussion by summarizing her and LCREP's next steps, being that she will work w/ Brian Lynn regarding the NOAA and spatial planning pieces. She will also work with Catherine Corbett on sharing the information from the plan and LCREP will keep the project and the future needs on their radar as something that could use funding if they come across any.

Progress on the Regional Upland Disposal Facility

Alejandro Bancke, Coastal Planner for CREST, reported on the progress made on the Regional Upland Disposal Facility project that is under development for disposal of contaminated sediments in the Lower Columbia River region. He reported that this project also has an aggressive timeline, and they plan to have the feasibility study completed by June 30th.

Alejandro asked the group to put their heads together to determine if there is a way to fund the next steps of further design and then building of the site.

Bill Hunsinger, Commissioner from the Port of Astoria, commented that Astoria has been trying to find a spot for dredge spoils for years. He said that one way the LCSG could help would be to support flow lane disposal.

Jim Neva commented that the problems that the Port of Astoria has to deal with are not of their own making. He noted that he has always believed that USDA should be a player in funding some of this.

Jack Crider commented that they have to have a place to go with contaminated material. He thanked the group for their support of the lagoon, and commented that ultimately the Port needs to solve the ongoing filling of slips. He requested the support of the LCSG for a feasibility study for the Corps to install pile dikes to divert material from the slips.

Alejandro noted that the areas that the Corps dredges right now are not contaminated.

Peter Huhtala, Clatsop County Commissioner, mentioned that he had heard the EPA was going to be designating the basin as a Superfund site. He said this was cause for concern for businesses commented that at some point contamination clean up is going to have to happen. He said he would prefer to have it sent to Warrenton rather than trucked up Arlington.

Bill Hunsinger added that the amount of money the port pays to do dredging is enormous. He said that there are 3 log yards in Astoria that are shipping raw logs, and more customers are coming. He emphasized that this is causing a real sense of urgency to come up with a solution. Bill stated that there's a lot of money and a lot of jobs at stake. Bill shared Jack's request for support from the LCSG to help the Port get it done and to support a feasibility study.

Steve Greenwood responded that, with respect to what the port is saying about pile dikes, it sounds like regional sediment planning issue. He noted that this may be an incentive to look at the next section of the river up from the mouth sooner rather than later.

Robert Anderson from NOAA commented on the pile dike proposal, saying that LCREP & action agencies have RPAs that are looking at removing pile dikes and looking at the surrounding environmental issues. If pile dikes are something the Port is going to pursue, they will want to consider the suite of issues- to minimize dredging and also make sure competing interests are accounted for.

Steve Greenwood confirmed with the group that they were interested in having the topic of supporting a feasibility study on pile dikes on the agenda at the next meeting.

FY12 Appropriations Requests

Fritz Graham re-stated that a press release from the head of appropriations has been released indicating that the Senate will not be accepting earmark requests for FY12 or 13.

Kimberly Pincheira, from Senator Cantwell's office, commented that their office had been accepting appropriations requests, but are now shifting to a more general "federal funding request" in order to assist if possible with other funding opportunities. On Senator Cantwell's website there will be a link to the updated form. Kimberly suggested to the group to manage expectations for a new process. She emphasized that by submitting a form, it gets the issues and projects on the radar- which is good. Fritz agreed, noting that having the information will only be a benefit.

Peter Huhtala commented that he was hearing that they should be working on FY13 and specific agency requests. Brian Lynn responded that he was not sure they should rule FY12 off the table- noting that federal asks are still being figured out. Kevin Brice stated that there are several budget years still "in play" right now, and uncertainty about how specific funds will be allocated. Bill Wyatt, Director of the Port of Portland noted that it is going to be important for LCG to work with agencies (as well as Congress) and try to get on their radar screens for potential funding of projects.

Fritz Graham shared that some submissions include their top 3 priorities, but also includes other important things they want to accomplish. He commented that more information is good, that way in case they see something that may be able to support any of the items on the list they can assist in directing attention to that item. This comment was echoed by Kimberly Pincheira.

Steve asked Fritz and Kimberly about timing, asked if it is still important or if they anticipate that it will change? Kimberly responded that there has been no deadline set yet, but the sooner the better.

The general consensus of the group was that requests should be put together on behalf of the LCG for the priorities of: repairing the Jetties, the Upland Disposal Site, and the next phase of the RSMP.

Status Review of LCG and Direction for Future

Steve Greenwood led this discussion, briefly reviewing the group's history and highlighting that the initial purpose was to be a neutral forum where parties and stakeholders could come together to talk about sediment issues of common concern.

Steve noted that in the charter there was a ground rule to do an annual evaluation. He asked if there should be a quick survey monkey form circulated, just to get feedback on how the group is doing and what changes to make? There was no objection to this suggestion. Members also responded to a verbal survey of if the

group is doing what is supposed to and if there is still a need for a neutral forum for the group as it goes forward? Comments from members were mostly positive as to the value of the group itself and to the neutral forum. Other types of comments included; the positive nature of the discreet agenda and high level of membership and participation; the positive outcome of the group to network, share information and solicit assistance; the usefulness to be able to talk about a topic (e.g. contaminated sediment) with one “voice”; the history of the group to facilitate cooperative relationships among previously adversarial ones; the current scope of the membership as positive though there may be some sectors that could use additional representation.

The charter dictates that the Director of NPCC will be the “initial chair”. Steve suggested the potential of co-chairs, one each from governor’s offices of OR & WA. Asked the group if that would be a preferable model? The comments from several group members reflected a desire to keep NPCC providing a “neutral” chair for the group. Steve said there would be further opportunity for comment in the feedback survey form.

The LCSG charter calls for quarterly meetings. Steve noted that the group has been meeting less than quarterly. He asked how the schedule feels, if it is enough? Too much? It was recommended to leave the charter as is, because meeting every 3-4 months is about right, and noted that some of the heavy lifting is done in sub-groups, which meet on a more frequent basis.

The charter currently has an outdated membership list. Steve noted some of the updates that are needed and highlighted that a citizen representative is called for but the group hasn’t had one for awhile. The group was asked if it would be helpful to have one, and if so, what kind of person that would be. The response from the group was that it would be difficult to find someone interested in the subject matter and who feels comfortable contributing to the discussion. Steve concluded that this would be on the survey form for further input.

LCSG Budget

For this fiscal year the budget has included about \$500,000 in contributions by member agencies, most toward specific projects, including \$30,000 for the operations of the group.

Lauren Beeney shared that EPA has also contributed \$17,000 toward the MCR project. This was not included initially because the funding is not being managed by the LCSG.

The funding for the LCSG meetings and organizational work has come primarily from one group, the Channel Coalition. Steve noted that it is good to see that many, if not most LCSG members, are contributing in one way or another. Steve also highlighted that the funding picture changes if the Channel Coalition does not continue to fund the group. Bill Wyatt commented that the Channel Coalition essentially doesn’t exist anymore, since the channel deepening project is complete. He shared that specific ports in that coalition may be interested in continuing the funding for the LCSG and he would be happy to be an advocate for that.

Next steps

The next meeting will likely include 3 major topics of discussion- the feasibility study for the Upland Disposal Site; the pile planning information from Jack Crider; and the completion of MCR planning.

It was determined that the next meeting should be held in June, at the coast, and may include tours of the sites that the group has been working on.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40.