

Spirit Lake/Toutle-Cowlitz River Collaborative Meeting Summary

April 19th, 2023 | 9:30am – 12:00pm

Longview City Hall, 1525 Broadway Street, Longview, WA 98632 | WebEx
Facilitators: The William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Chris Page, Kara Whitman)

<https://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/projects/current-projects/spirit-lake/>

Meeting Chat Transcript Available in Appendix A

Meeting Goals:

- Consider accepting the workshop summary
- Consider changing the Collaborative's name (Mt. St. Helens Watershed Collaborative)
- Hear updates from the Steering Committee and participating organizations
- Add shared values to Operating Protocols (social capital, trust, and cross-sector collaboration)
- Workshop follow-up: Consider project ideas and potential workgroups

Meeting Attendees:

Representing Sovereign State, Federal, & Tribal Governments:

- Karl Ahlen, Travis Ball, Chris Budai, Valerie Ringold, Paul Sclafani – *US Army Corps of Engineers*
- Dalton Fry – *Cowlitz Indian Tribe*
- Matt Gerlach – *WA Department of Ecology*
- Jody Nickerson-Powell, Chris Strebbig – *US Forest Service*
- Steve Ogden – *WA Department of Natural Resources*
- Joe Skalicky – *US Fish & Wildlife Service*
- Kurt Spicer – *US Geological Survey*

Representing Local Governments & Special Purpose Districts:

- Amy Boyd – *Port of Longview*
- Rick Dahl, Darcy Mitchem – *Cowlitz County*
- Susan Eugenis, Jim Mallett – *Cowlitz County Department of Public Works*
- Bill Fashing, Sean Nugent – *Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments*
- Andrew Hamilton – *City of Kelso*
- Shauna Hanisch-Kirkbride – *Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board*
- Wayne Nelson, Adam Trimble – *Cowlitz County Building & Planning*
- Dave Vorse – *City of Castle Rock*

Representing US Congressional Offices:

- Tanisha Harris – *US Senator Maria Cantwell's Office*
- Cameron Kockritz – *US Representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez's Office*

Representing Other Interested Parties:

- Lisa Dally Wilson – *Dally Environmental*
- Nathan Enos – *Washington State University*
- Mark Gaither – *Lower Columbia College*
- Susan Saul – *Member of the Public*
- Mark Smith – *EcoPark*
- Ray Yurkewycz – *Mount Saint Helens Institute*

Welcome & Introductions:

Chris Page and Kara Whitman welcomed participants to the meeting and reviewed the meeting's agenda. Chris invited the participants to state their names and affiliations before answering the following question: Why is it important for you to participate in the Collaborative?

DECISION: The participants approved the workshop summary.

Updates from Participating Organizations:

- Jody Nickerson-Powell: The Forest Service has hired a Deputy Forest Supervisor, who will start on May 21st. The Forest Service has also hired a Detail, who will start on May 7th. Michelle Palmer has moved on from the Forest Service. A new contact will be identified.
- Ray Yurkewycz: The Mt. St. Helens license plate is being discussed by the legislature. Proceeds from the license plate would fund recreation around Mt. St. Helens. If you support the license plate, please write to your legislators.
- Amy Boyd: We have started updating the Port of Longview's Comprehensive Park Plan. A survey will be released in May. If you're interested, please complete the survey.

Updates from the Steering Committee:

The participants discussed changing the Collaborative's name. Suggestions for the new name include the Mt. St. Helens Watershed Collaborative and the Toutle River Collaborative, among others.

The participants also discussed adding "social capital, trust, and continued cross-sector coordination" to the Collaborative's list of shared values. After some conversation, Bill Fashing suggested adding "collaboration to build social capital, trust, and understanding."

DECISION: The Collaborative's name will be discussed further. "Collaboration to build social capital, trust, and understanding" will be added to the Collaborative's list of shared values in its Operating Protocols.

US Army Corps of Engineers Silver Jackets:

Travis Ball shared information on the Army Corps' Silver Jackets program.

- The Silver Jackets provide a statewide forum for flood risk coordination. The Silver Jackets leverage the expertise, authority, and funding of a wide range of federal, state, and local partners to address flood risk priorities in Washington. Partners include the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Geological Survey, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Oceanic and Aeronautic Administration, and others.
- The Silver Jackets hold monthly webinars. The Army Corps coordinates and funds the webinars, but each partner funds its own participation. Proposals for interagency projects are submitted annually. Past projects include the Taholah Flood Risk Assessment, the White River Flood Risk Assessment, the Elwha Levee Assessment, and nature-based solutions.
- There may be opportunities for the Silver Jackets to work with the Collaborative, for example:
 - The Silver Jackets can help the Collaborative leverage the expertise of its partners.
 - The Silver Jackets can also review proposals for interagency projects from the Collaborative.
- Travis said he would try to start attending SLTCRC meetings regularly.

Workshop Debrief & Project Ideas:

The participants debriefed the workshop and discussed project ideas. Workgroups or project teams have begun meeting or will begin convening around several project ideas, including drone surveys, applied science and ecotourism, sediment control and stream restoration in the South Fork Toutle, systemwide bank protection, and potential levee setbacks.

Drone Surveys—project team has begun meeting

George Fornes (WDFW), Colin Thorne (University of Nottingham), Karl Ahlen (Army Corps), et al

One drone survey looks likely to go forward, awaiting only flight plan approval. It will look at fish habitat in tributaries of the North Fork Toutle River and the potential for voluntary downstream migration for salmonids using the wall-base channel. The workgroup has begun discussing another potential drone survey, of vegetation and sediment volumes around the cross-valley grade-building structures on the sediment plain.

- Mark Smith: We should complete the drone surveys before foliage comes in.
- Valerie Ringold: the Army Corps has the mandate to ensure fish passage in the North Fork System. We want to avoid redundancy.
- Jim Mallett: Should we hire someone with a higher-capacity drone?
 - Chris Page: George Fornes is working on getting a higher-capacity drone to get the imagery needed for the second initiative.
- Since a small group has already begun meeting to advance the drone efforts, the Collaborative opted not to create a new workgroup.

Applied Science & Ecotourism

- Mark Gaither: The goal of the Applied Science and Ecotourism program is to provide a framework that makes educational opportunities available to broader audiences. The Brookings Institution has looked at regional economic impacts centered on scientific research. We can look at the economic opportunities and potential positive impacts Mt. St. Helens can generate.
- Mark G. further noted that the Mt. St. Helens Institute already works with elementary, middle, and high school students. Lower Columbia College works with undergraduate and graduate students. Lower Columbia College is interested in recruiting research partners to study Mt. St. Helens. This effort would be part of a study abroad program. Lower Columbia College is pushing this effort forward, and we would appreciate the Collaborative's support and oversight.
- Ray Yurkewycz: The Mt. St. Helens Institute has some programs already that address some of the same things. Again, we want to avoid redundancy and build on what is already happening. We can talk about this effort during the workgroup meetings and dive deeper.
- Darcy Mitchem: Don't forget about the local kids. It's important for local kids to be Volcano Volunteers and receive geology credit at Lower Columbia College.
- Mark G. said he would appreciate guidance from a workgroup, so the Collaborative opted to create a new workgroup:
 - *Mark Gaither (LCC)*
 - *Jody Nickerson-Powell (USFS)*
 - *Ray Yurkewycz / Alyssa Hoyt (MSHI)*
 - *Mark & Dawn Smith (EcoPark Resort / landowner, Cowlitz County Tourism)*
 - *Darcy Mitchem (community member)*
 - *Shauna Hanisch-Kirkbride (Lower Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group)*
 - *Matt Gerlach / Rich Doenges—outreach person? (Dept Ecology)*
 - *USGS will need to keep tabs on this (Kurt Spicer or Jon Major)*
 - *Cowlitz Tribal liaison (Jerry BigEagle maybe?)*
 - *WDFW (ask Dave Howe / Maddie Nolan)*
 - *Army Corps (cc Karl, Liza, Valerie)*

Sediment Control & Restoration Work in the South Fork Toutle River—project team has begun meeting Brice Crayne / Shauna Hanisch-Kirkbride (LCFEG), Colin Thorne (University of Nottingham), Tom Hausmann (NOAA Fisheries), et al

- Chris Page: This project would address sediment control and habitat restoration. There is a proposal to start surveying and modeling how much sediment the appropriate amount of wood would trap. Modeling by the US Forest Service could start with modeling the quantities of sediment that wood and vegetation could retain in the reach of the South Fork Toutle that the Lower Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group is working to restore, then be expanded to the full Toutle River.
- Colin Thorne is developing a long-term vision for the area above the SRS in which a functioning river channel and floodplain could be rebuilt. The goal in this area is to slow and trap fine sediment above the SRS for decades to come, with two spillway crest raises planned for the SRS through 2035 and no plan beyond that yet developed.
- Valerie Ringold: For budgeting purposes, we have only looked at the solution through 2035. Our authority doesn't go away in 2035. We won't walk away from the SRS. There is no concern with the structural integrity of the SRS.
- Shauna Hanisch-Kirkbride: We are stabilizing the river and creating a future source of wood in the South Fork. We are speeding up the recovery of the riparian area for sediment control.
- An existing project team is already advancing the project.

Systemwide Bank Protection

- Chris Page: Permits are needed for bank protection and restoration, as for any in-river work, from both NOAA Fisheries and WDFW. The current permitting process takes multiple months or years for each project. A programmatic permitting process would cover the Toutle and Cowlitz Rivers. There is a precedent in Oregon under a program called Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species (SLOPES). Projects that meet SLOPES criteria receive automatic permits from both NOAA Fisheries and WDFW, who would participate in the development of the Local Operating Procedures.
- Amy Boyd: SLOPES has a list of programmatically covered activities. My supervisor is supportive of my participation in this workgroup. My organization can assist with grant applications.
- Susan Eugenis: The Washington Department of Transportation's Regional Road Maintenance Program is permitted under SLOPES. The same biological opinion applies to all projects that meet certain criteria.
- Valerie Ringold: SLOPES is a great program, but there are applications and paperwork involved. Anything involving water requires a Section 404 permit from the Corps. Other circumstances trigger a Section 408 permit. The 404 and 408 are important aspects of the program.

Potential Levee Setbacks

- Chris Page: This project would survey the lower Cowlitz River floodplain to identify potential areas for levee setbacks that would provide the primary benefits of sediment storage and flood mitigation. Additional potential benefits of this project include habitat restoration, recreation access, dredge spoil disposal, and bank protection.
- Amy Boyd pointed out that this work would necessitate in-river work that would require the same types of permits from NOAA Fisheries and WDFW, so should be discussed in the same SLOPES workgroup as bank protection.
- The Collaborative agreed to form a SLOPES workgroup to advance these initiatives:

Potential Workgroup Participants:

Local Gov:

- *Amy Boyd (Port of Longview)*
- *Amy Blain (Consolidated Diking District #2)*
- *Adam Trimble, Jim Mallett (Cowlitz County)*

State Gov:

- *Maddie Nolan (WDFW)*
- *Matt Gerlach (Dept of Ecology)—at least keep him informed, as he is liaison for Floodplains by Design, a potential funding source*
- *DNR Aquatics Division (need contact—maybe Jacqueline Dent...ask Steve Ogden?)*

Federal Gov:

- *USFS Contact (to be identified)*
- *Joe Skalicky (USFWS)*
- *Army Corps (Karl, Valerie, Liza)*
- *Tom Hausmann (NOAA Fisheries)*

Nonprofit / Special Purpose District:

- *Steve Manlow (Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board)*

University Researcher / Professor:

- *Colin Thorne (University of Nottingham)*

Adjourn:

Chris Page thanked the participants for attending the meeting. Chris reminded the participants of the upcoming workgroup meetings, which will replace the regular meeting in May.

Appendix A: Meeting Chat Transcript

- 04/19/2023 09:28:28 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: Good morning all!
- 04/19/2023 09:33:16 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: all meeting materials are posted on the project page at <https://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/projects/current-projects/spirit-lake/>
- 04/19/2023 09:39:58 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: Kara Whitman, Ruckelshaus Center, Washington State University. Facilitator of the SLTCRC
- 04/19/2023 09:40:34 AM from David Vorse, City of Castle Rock to Everyone: David Vorse, City of Castle Rock
- 04/19/2023 09:40:35 AM from Steve Ogden to Everyone: Steve Ogden, WA DNR. The collaborative touches many important issues and bringing all of those perspectives under a similar umbrella continues to be very beneficial.
- 04/19/2023 09:40:38 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: Folks in webex, please introduce yourselves in the chat.
- 04/19/2023 09:41:12 AM from Karl Ahlen to Everyone: Karl Ahlen Project Manager US Army Corps of Engineers
- 04/19/2023 09:41:42 AM from Tanisha Harris, Cantwell Staff to Everyone: Tanisha Harris. I'm the SW WA Outreach Director for Senator Cantwell. Many of the issues that the Collaborative works on, are very important to the Senator.
- 04/19/2023 09:41:46 AM from Valerie Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: Valerie Ringold, US Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, Planning Chief and today also representing Liza Wells, our District Deputy for Project Management (Sr Civilian). Here to provide information and guidance related to USACE projects in the basin
- 04/19/2023 09:41:50 AM from Susan Saul she/her to Everyone: Susan Saul, conservationist with long history with MSHNVM, interested in natural ecological restoration.
- 04/19/2023 09:42:15 AM from Mark Gaither, LCC to Everyone: Mark Gaither, Lower Columbia College Faculty... Interests are in educational opportunities for current and future students as well as economic development for the region
- 04/19/2023 09:42:22 AM from Matt G to Everyone: Matt Gerlach, WA ECY. Looking to assist with all things floodplain management!
- 04/19/2023 09:42:39 AM from Darcy Mitchem to Everyone: Darcy Mitchem represent local community, I have been involved in MSH since I was a child and have worked for decades (mostly for free) to improve/give a voice to Toutle Valley.
- 04/19/2023 09:43:24 AM from Dalton Fry to Everyone: Dalton Fry, The Cowlitz Indian Tribe

04/19/2023 09:43:27 AM from Kurt Spicer to Everyone: Kurt Spicer, USGS. Long time involvement in water and sediment monitoring in the basin. The collaborative is a useful means of staying informed of the many ongoing and proposed activities.

04/19/2023 09:43:27 AM from Joe Skalilcky to Everyone: Joe Sklalicky - USFWS, Vancouver WA. Looking to work with partners to increase passage for native fishes above the FCF, SRS and above.

04/19/2023 09:44:01 AM from Andrew Hamilton to Everyone: Andrew Hamilton - Kelso City Manager , dredging of Cowlitz River

04/19/2023 09:44:41 AM from Chris Budai to Everyone: Chris Budai, US Army Corps of Engineers, Project Manager

04/19/2023 09:49:53 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone:
<https://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/projects/current-projects/spirit-lake/>

04/19/2023 10:00:58 AM from Matt G to Everyone: Haven't heard anything through Ecology channels on a grant for next year...

04/19/2023 10:06:59 AM from Joe Skalilcky to Everyone: Toutle-Cowlitz Basin?

04/19/2023 10:07:03 AM from Dalton Fry to Everyone: Cowlitz-Toutle River Collaborative

04/19/2023 10:08:06 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: please make sure to announce your names in the room when you speak, for the folks on line

04/19/2023 10:15:34 AM from Lisa Dally Willson to Everyone: how about multi-stakeholder coordination

04/19/2023 10:57:39 AM from Matt G to Everyone: I have to head to an 11am meeting. Thank you Travis and others for the discussion!

04/19/2023 11:28:33 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: Mark, I am on the WSU Internationalization Lab committee that is looking for these kinds of opportunities. I can connect you with some folks from WSU

04/19/2023 11:35:06 AM from Mark Gaither, LCC to Everyone: Thank you all... Kara, Please connect me with the Internationalization Lab.

04/19/2023 11:40:12 AM from Kurt Spicer to Everyone: FYI, USGS sediment monitoring on the SF Toutle ended with the 2013 water year.

04/19/2023 11:58:24 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: I have to head to teach right at 12. I have shifted the webex host over to Chris and Hazel.