

Spirit Lake/Toutle-Cowlitz River Collaborative

September 8th, 2022 | 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Cowlitz County Museum, 405 Allen Street, Kelso, WA 98626 | 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:

- Determine details of October Field Tour
- Hear updates from participating organizations and Steering Committee
- Hear about riparian work by Cowlitz Conservation District
- Continue developing workplan
- Continue discussing riparian restoration

Meeting Attendees:

Representing Sovereign State, Federal, and Tribal Governments:

- Karl Ahlen, Chris Budai, Valerie Ringold, Liza Wells – *US Army Corps of Engineers*
- George Fornes, Kessina Lee, Maddie Nolan – *WA Department of Fish and Wildlife*
- Jon Major – *US Geological Survey*
- Michele Palmer, Sue Ripp – *US Forest Service*
- Ted Perkins – *Federal Emergency Management Agency*
- Rudy Salakory, Erik White – *Cowlitz Indian Tribe*

Representing Local Governments and Special Purpose Districts:

- Amy Blain – *Consolidated Diking District #1*
- Amy Boyd – *Port of Longview*
- Bill Fashing, Brandon Robinson – *Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments*
- Ken Hash – *City of Longview*
- Darin Houpt – *Cowlitz Conservation District*
- Jim Mallett – *Cowlitz County*
- Dave Vorse – *City of Castle Rock*

Representing US Congressional Offices:

- Sarah Kohout – *US Senator Maria Cantwell's Office*
- Colin Swanson – *US Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler's Office*

Representing Other Interested Parties:

- Ashley Short – *Cascade Forest Conservancy*
- Mark Smith – *EcoPark*
- Raymond Yurkewycz – *Mount St. Helens Institute*

Welcome, Introductions:

Chris Page welcomed the participants to the meeting. Chris invited the participants to state their names and affiliations before answering the following question: What are you looking forward to this fall? He shared the agenda, the ground rules, and the work-to-date before asking participants to participate proactively and focus on mutual gains.

Field Tour:

- Mark Smith: There are three options. All three options cover the normal route (the fish collection facility and the Sediment Retention Structure (SRS)). The tour takes four to six hours.
- Chris Page: Option A would end around 1:30 with no lunch. Option B would end around 2:00 with lunch. Option C would end around 12:00.
- Mark Smith: This would be an all-day trip for most people (8:00 – 3:00 with travel time). It's important for people to see the growth that has occurred in the mudflow. The spillway raise will have effects over the next three to five years. People will be able to see the effects. If we have participation from everyone, I like Option B.

DECISION: The tour will follow Option B. The tour will most likely take place on October 12th, but Kara Whitman will send a calendar survey to the participants.

Updates from Participating Organizations:

- Kessina Lee: Our agency has completed the capital budget request for the Hoffstadt Hills acquisition. In the last session, we weren't successful since there wasn't room in the capital budget. There is a groundswell of support, and we're interested in working with this group. We've enhanced our proposal to explain the acquisition in more detail. If folks supported the acquisition during the Legislative session, that would be helpful. There is value in terms of habitat and recreation – I can share the proposal with folks.
 - Question: When will letters of support be needed?
 - Kessina Lee: Once the session is underway, we will ask for letters and provide information. Letters will probably be needed around the beginning of the year. We can provide talking points and templates for letters.
- Liza Wells: I want to ask about Option B. What are people looking for? What is the objective?
 - Chris Page: We can have folks available to answer questions. This would provide a forum to hear updates and discuss the work. What would be helpful?
- Liza Wells: In the last session, there were questions about whether the Corps could help inform potential legislative candidates. The Corps can provide information, but not during campaign events. The Corps can educate people about its projects.
 - Sarah Kohout: We're still trying to pass the budget. The legislature might not pass a continuing resolution. There hasn't been movement on that.

Updates from Steering Committee:

- Bill Fashing: We're going to send informational news releases to the general public. If you want to participate, you're welcome to sit at the table.
- Kara Whitman: I'll be talking to communication professors at WSU about the potential to creating branding (e.g. a logo) for the SLTCRC.
- Brandon Robinson: Update on the Monday software project tracker. I've added more projects from the email. I'll get more information on those projects. I've also started outlining the user guide. At the next meeting, I'll have drafted the language about what constitutes a project. I'll also have drafted the project information request form. I might have some general questions about the projects people would like on the board. We've talked about having a library of completed work. We're waiting to hear back about security protocols. We'll get back to the group.

Presentation, Riparian Work by Cowlitz Conservation District: Darin Houpt provided details on two specific riparian projects that the Cowlitz Conservation District is working on.

Project One: Cowlitz River Channel Migration Project

- There are erosion concerns along the right bank. There are migration lines based on aerial photos. The total migration is about 100 feet. Most of the migration occurred post-eruption. As the bar moves, the bank moves. Flows are affected. The bar becomes a speed bump for flows. Farther downstream is a second bar with slack water above and below. Most of the migration is occurring further downstream. The wash load is a concern: the river is trading in larger sediment for finer sediment. That part of the bank has moved about 100 feet. You can see dredged soil on native soil.
- The bar will continue to grow. We are proposing to plant riparian vegetation. There were cottonwoods along the river, but they fell into the river. We need root mass. We would like to use native soil to plant trees. Additionally, we are proposing piling structures. They are an effective, inexpensive tool. You can see two structures and the amount of sediment.
- They have been planting willow and dogwood to establish root mass. We've excavated across the bar. Dredging wouldn't hurt; the upper river would benefit from dredging.
- They have about \$100,000 from Cowlitz County and are working on getting a matching amount from the state. They could use state salmon recovery money to purchase materials. If the state reappropriates salmon recovery money, they will have the project ready. They are hoping to have materials onsite by June 30th.

Project Two: Stacy Cowlitz River and Riparian Restoration

- People are required to build above the 100-year floodline. That doesn't mean anything for channel migration. There has been migration in the upstream edge of the horseshoe bend. It's a natural process that we should look at. People should not build in these places. The channel is continuing to grow, putting pressure on the river.
- In the lower river, the biggest issue is the level of flooding protection. In the Lexington area, most of the river is diked. The river has moved about 20 feet. Towards Castle Rock, vegetation is being recruited from the bank. As this continues, there could be hotspots. Above Castle Rock, there are two or three hotspots.
- In the Lower Toutle, there are several places with residences and roads. I'm not sure what they did to manage the river. They are not sure they did anything, besides moving the road away. Everything can be managed by restoring riparian function.

Discussion:

- Jim Mallett: The river has migrated north. My goal is to reduce erosion and stabilize the bank with trees. I need to remove the sediment and create a natural flow. At the confluence with the Cowlitz, the river is congested with ash. The river starts migrating significantly. There is erosion. This enters into Darin's project. I have good ideas, and I need some help. This is the Army Corps' baby but also a shared responsibility.
- Jim Mallett: I need to control the sediment that is contaminating the water and inhibiting the fish. When I say this is the Army Corps' baby – I've been knocking at the Army Corps' door. I've worked hard to identify alternatives. I need a lot of help. Money is always an issue.
- Darin Houpt: Each side of the lower river was dredged. Today, it's a trapezoidal channel. Everything in the lower river is man-made. Everybody should come together to resolve this.
- Chris Page: What can the collaborative do?
- Darin Houpt: Above Lexington, there are issues that could benefit from dredging. The SRS is a six-foot or seven-foot lift. The SRS will only last so long. We should look at all the pieces. Dredging needs to be one of those pieces, especially in the lower river. We can make the riverbeds rougher

and mobilize the material, but where would the material go? The bar deposit could create a mess. Our land use planning is lacking.

- Chris Page: Does anyone from the Army Corps want to speak about dredging?
- Liza Wells: USACE is implementing another crest raise. Dredging is included as an emergency option. Liza asked Jim how he has connected with the Corps?
- Valerie Ringold: The dredging is only associated with flood risk management. If the levees aren't meeting the level of flood protection, we could meet the level with localized dredging. There is an extensive cost to the Corps, the county, and the state. There needs to be a place for dredged material. We don't have permission to dredge whenever or wherever.
- Jim Mallett: We had a meeting to determine when dredging should take place. I asked the Corps, "Can't you see what wicked thing is coming?"
- Dave Vorse: If we stay in our boxes, we will be stuck in what we've been doing. We have to agree to some projects. There will be dredging in either the Cowlitz or the Toutle. We have to be creative and think about each other's needs along with our own. That will be the strength of this collaborative.
- Darin Houpt: What does the group think about our projects?
- Amy Boyd: I like the projects. Darin has gotten things done in Wahkiakum County, which is not an easy county to work in. I'm working on the permits for the dredging process.
- Chris Page: Do you have partners, Jim?
- Jim Mallett: I have presented to every major agency. The Army Corps has been the most difficult agency. The Army Corps has a standard answer but they need to step out of the box.
- Liza Wells: There are boundaries we must work inside. The current plan is the most cost-effective way to manage the flood risk until 2035. There will be an opportunity to examine the plan. There are other ways the Corps can help, but those may be under other authorities. Valerie understands our other authorities. There are opportunities for creativity.
- Jim Mallett: I'm not complaining about the Corps. I'm small potatoes, and I can't get in. That's why the collaborative is important to me.
- Liza Wells: Valerie is a good person to contact. If you're trying to get through regulatory processes without federal support, we have someone who can help.
- Valerie Ringold: We have programs that could assist you with funding. We also have technical assistance programs that could bring engineering expertise. Let me help connect you.
- Bill Fashing: I appreciate this discussion. We're starting to understand challenges better. Perhaps the congressional representatives need to change the Corps' authority?

Workplan:

Address Spirit Lake Outflow Risks:

- Ashley Short: The environmental analysis is in litigation. The analysis is in the Ninth Circuit and verbal agreements are scheduled for next month. Only some construction is being completed.
- Sue Ripp: We're only doing construction that is not associated with the pumice plain.

Improve Facilities/Coldwater Ridge:

- Raymond Yurkewycz: We've been working to expand access to the monument. Unless you're backpacking, there's no place to stay in the monument. We want to remodel the current building to meet education, experience, and dining needs. We want to build three lodges in the parking lot. We're also working on food service. We're focusing on the campground, the train improvements, and the modest expansion of the outdoor school. We're asking for funding, and we're hoping to complete the design and engineering in the fall or winter.
- Brandon Robinson: The architectural designs are inspiring.

- Raymond Yurkewycz: Everything costs \$45 million. Do we think we can raise \$5 million? We're starting small with \$5 million, but there's a big vision. We're trying to create something financially sustainable that meets the needs of visitors. I would like to coordinate with other folks to provide more recreation opportunities at St. Helens.

Adjourn

Appendix A: Meeting Chat Transcript

09/08/2022 09:31:01 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: can you all hear us in the room?

09/08/2022 09:31:17 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: no, it looks like you're muted?

09/08/2022 09:31:32 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: Ok, I am getting audio from the room

09/08/2022 09:31:32 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: how about now?

09/08/2022 09:31:33 AM from Karl Ahlen to Everyone: now we can hear you

09/08/2022 09:31:35 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: Yes! Now we can

09/08/2022 09:31:40 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: thank you!

09/08/2022 09:31:56 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: can someone online speak to check audio

09/08/2022 09:32:14 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: I heard a little something

09/08/2022 09:33:06 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: I heard you there pretty clearly

09/08/2022 09:34:00 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: I can hear you

09/08/2022 09:34:37 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: There is an echo, very hard to understand you

09/08/2022 09:35:00 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: sorry we a struggling with the sound a bit

09/08/2022 09:35:24 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: no problem, I can hear you and Chris, but there is a bit of an echo

09/08/2022 09:35:30 AM from Liza Wells to Everyone: good morning good morning good morning!

09/08/2022 09:35:41 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: can you still hear us?

09/08/2022 09:35:48 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: Is it echoing?

09/08/2022 09:36:08 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: it's echoing a little bit

09/08/2022 09:39:03 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: can probably live with it if only one person talks at a time, the mic is picking up everyone right now

09/08/2022 09:39:13 AM from Kara Whitman to Everyone: sorry, we are troubleshooting sound

09/08/2022 09:43:18 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: I can hear you pretty clearly

09/08/2022 09:43:25 AM from Hazel to Everyone: Yes!

09/08/2022 09:43:27 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: much better

09/08/2022 09:43:43 AM from Jon Major to Everyone: audio goes in and out for me

09/08/2022 09:44:13 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: Yes, no echo and can hear you clearly

09/08/2022 09:44:20 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: we can

09/08/2022 09:45:35 AM from Mark Smith to Everyone: Mark Smith, Owner\Operator Eco Park Resort

09/08/2022 09:46:07 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: Ashley Short, Cascade Forest Conservancy

09/08/2022 09:46:07 AM from kessina lee to Everyone: Kessina Lee, WDFW

09/08/2022 09:46:29 AM from Karl Ahlen to Everyone: Karl Ahlen USAC

09/08/2022 09:46:32 AM from Michele Palmer- USFS to Everyone: Michele Palmer- USFS Spirit Lake Project Manager

09/08/2022 09:46:33 AM from Colin Swanson Jaime Herrera Beutler to Everyone: Colin Swanson Jaime Herrera Beutler

09/08/2022 09:46:43 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: pretty colored leaves on the trees

09/08/2022 09:46:54 AM from Sue Ripp to Everyone: Sue Ripp - U.S. Forest Service

09/08/2022 09:47:01 AM from Jon Major to Everyone: Jon Major USGS Mushroom hunting

09/08/2022 09:47:07 AM from Liza Wells to Everyone: Liza Wells - USACE Portland District - apple pie!

09/08/2022 09:47:16 AM from Dawn Butler to Everyone: Dawn Butler, new director of development for the Ruckelshaus Center. Cooler weather and leaves changing colors.

09/08/2022 09:47:19 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: Brandon Robinson - CWCOG Planner - looking forward to sweaters and jackets

09/08/2022 09:47:35 AM from David Vorse to Everyone: Completing summer projects

09/08/2022 09:47:50 AM from kessina lee to Everyone: Looking forward to baking without making the house sweltering hot!

09/08/2022 09:47:50 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: Valerie Ringold USACE Portland District -- my birthday and Football!

09/08/2022 09:48:38 AM from Ted Perkins to Everyone: Ted Perkins, FEMA, cooler weather and foliage.

09/08/2022 09:48:51 AM from Erik White - Cowlitz Tribe to Everyone: Erik White, Cowlitz Tribe, Crisp mornings, hunting and fall salmon fishing

09/08/2022 09:55:02 AM from Liza Wells to Everyone: we can hear you on webex!

09/08/2022 09:55:12 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: I can

09/08/2022 09:57:57 AM from David Vorse to Everyone: Mark,

09/08/2022 09:58:36 AM from David Vorse to Everyone: Is this date the only one possible? Can it move a week out on the 20?

09/08/2022 10:00:48 AM from David Vorse to Everyone: How about in the 19th?

09/08/2022 10:01:26 AM from Liza Wells to Everyone: I can't make the 19th or 20th, so we would have to check on USACE folks for the panel.

09/08/2022 10:01:37 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: A survey would be good

09/08/2022 10:01:40 AM from kessina lee to Everyone: I'm not available on the 19th or 20th either.

09/08/2022 10:05:57 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: works for me

09/08/2022 10:06:04 AM from Liza Wells to Everyone: 12 works for me.

09/08/2022 10:06:05 AM from kessina lee to Everyone: 12th works

09/08/2022 10:06:06 AM from Ashley Short to Everyone: I'm not available the week of the 12th

09/08/2022 10:06:49 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: The 12th is Pre-PRB but if I'm needed just let me know

09/08/2022 10:07:02 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: Sorry I meant that for Liza :-)

09/08/2022 10:07:28 AM from David Vorse to Everyone: I am not available the week of the 12th, but I would love to join the tour. I think a poll would be a good idea.

09/08/2022 10:08:27 AM from Brandon Robinson - CWCOG to Everyone: There were also some hands raised in the Webex

09/08/2022 10:09:58 AM from Chris Page to Everyone: Thanks Brandon, I see Liza now

09/08/2022 10:16:44 AM from Colin Swanson Jaime Herrera Beutler to Everyone: I speculate it will be address after the elections

09/08/2022 10:48:14 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: Building homes on top of the Corps dike?

09/08/2022 10:48:45 AM from Valerie Ringold Portland District Corps to Everyone: or is it a private/county dike?

09/08/2022 10:51:11 AM from Chris Page to Everyone: Sounds like private; not County or Corps

09/08/2022 10:58:34 AM from kessina lee to Everyone: I have a conflict at 11 so I'm hopping off. Take care everyone!

09/08/2022 10:59:43 AM from Michele Palmer- USFS to Everyone: I also have a conflict and am dropping off- thanks for the info!

09/08/2022 11:30:19 AM from Jon Major to Everyone: Have to drop off. Been interesting to hear the project updates. USGS CVO will have a rep attend the field trip, so just keep me posted when the date is settled..

09/08/2022 11:39:45 AM from Colin Swanson Jaime Herrera Beutler to Everyone: agree with Sarah, always happy to be a resource

09/08/2022 12:01:06 PM from Ashley Short to Everyone: recording would be great!

09/08/2022 12:04:33 PM from Chris Budai to Everyone: is the site visit on 12 Oct or are you sending out a poll to find a date?