

## Lower Columbia Solutions Group MEETING NOTES

**June 18, 2012**

2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m

Meyer Memorial Boardroom, PSU

506 SW Mill, Ste. 710

Portland, OR

### Participants

Brian Lynn, WA governor's office, WA Dept. of Ecology, Convener

Mark Ellsworth, OR governor's office, Convener

Gabriela Goldfarb, OR governor's office  
Deb Marriott, LCREP

Alejandro Bancke, CREST

Hobe Kytr, Salmon for All

Herb Florer, Port of Astoria

Donna Nyberg, Rep. Witt's office

Allen Lebovitz, WA DNR

Mike Ott, USACE

Jarod Norton, USACE

Liz Smock, USACE

Jennifer Purcell, OR DEQ

### *Participants by phone:*

Caren Braby, ODFW

Kathy Roberts, USFWS

Peter Huhtala, Clatsop County

Pat Corcoran, OR Sea Grant OSU

Heather Reed, WDFW

Kristen Meira, PNWA

Ken Connell, Golder Associates

### Staff

Jim Owens, LCSG Project Facilitator

Lauren Beeney, Oregon Solutions/NPCC

### **Welcome, introductions, meeting objectives**

Brian Lynn welcomed the group and shared that the governors of Oregon and Washington had decided that the LCSG meetings should be co-convened by their offices, and to that end he and Mark Ellsworth had been designated as representatives and co-conveners and would be supported by NPCC.

Brian reviewed the objectives for the day which included getting an update on the MCR RSMP project, discussing options for keeping that effort moving forward and discussing next steps for the LCSG.

Attendees also did self-introductions.

### **MCR Sediment Management Plan Implementation Update**

Jim Owens from Cogan Owens Cogan provided an update on the recent activities and progress of the MCR project. Jim's summary is detailed in the handout, "LCSG MCR RSMP Report 6 18 12" and covers; the background of the project; the current status of plan implementation activities- including permitting and funding, both of which are key elements in the project being ready for implementation this summer; future activities; and LCSG issues/actions.

Jim emphasized the domino effect that many of the elements will have on each other, and noted that it is not certain that the project will be able to be implemented this summer. Timing issues around receiving a Bi-Op from NMFS, which will trigger the USACE releasing a FONSI and approval for moving forward, are very closely tied to a need by EPA to receive funds no later than mid-July. The funding for EPA is related to development of a Research & Monitoring plan for the summer, which will not be completed until it is verified that there will be divers available to visually assess the effects of disposal. The timing and needs of the project will be quite tight over the next few weeks, and both Jim and Mike Ott of the US Army Corps of Engineers were cautiously optimistic that all the needs would fall into place in the pre-determined time-line.

It was noted in the discussion following the presentation that the need to determine “how thin is thin enough” is significant, and is a necessary determination for implementation. It was also shared that the MCR project is a success for the LCSG and for the region, with many hurdles overcome and many resources leveraged from various agencies and organizations to stretch the small amount of funding available as far as it will go. It was noted that the neutral forum that was being utilized to facilitate the process was a major factor in the success of the project, which led to the discussion about continued funding.

Since 2009, just under \$195,000 has been spent on research and facilitation of scoping, writing and preparing for implementation of the Regional Sediment Management Plan. The cost to NPCC to continue to facilitate the process through September is estimated at \$7,500. Discussions about where those additional funds might be found did not provide many results. Brian Lynn offered to review the Department of Ecology budget to determine if there may be coastal zone funds that could be utilized. It was also suggested that the West Coast Governor’s Alliance may have funds available for a specific project, and it would be worth researching options through that organization.

It was shared that without the funding for facilitation through September, Jim Owens would not be available to continue facilitation and it would fall on the LCSG to put a program in place to analyze the data that is collected over the summer, to convene and support the management and technical teams, and to assist and organize congressional briefings requesting financial support for ongoing operations. The next steps are for representatives from Oregon and Washington to get together with the US Army Corps of Engineers to explore whether there is available funding to see the project through September.

### **Next Steps for LCSG**

Lauren Beeney provided a review of the “reverse assessment” that was conducted with LCSG members earlier in the year. Details are available in the document “2012 LCSG Reverse Assessment Report(3).” Lauren highlighted comments regarding ideas for future meeting format and content, the value of the LCSG, potential projects, funding options and other general feedback.

Brian Lynn requested feedback from the group about the summary, and specifically asked for feedback about the idea to move to an annual meeting- instead of quarterly or bi-annual as is the aim currently. He asked the group to consider available resources in considering how they would like to see the group move forward.

The discussion was very positive to keeping the LCSG together and meeting at least bi-annually if possible, potentially with electronic communication in between meetings.

It was noted that the upland disposal project is an ideal project to be addressed by the LCSG, along with general issues of contaminated sediment in the lower river. The Warrenton Upland Disposal Site has a

completed feasibility study and is the main obstacle to moving forward is funding. Mark Ellsworth highlighted the importance of the site in addressing the issues of contaminated sediment that those at the mouth of the Columbia River are faced with. He suggested to the group that it could be the next priority they focus their efforts on. Also in regards to contaminated sediment, it was mentioned that issues of contamination are affected by locations farther up river, and it might be worth considering inviting some up-river entities to participate in those discussions.

It was shared that the group has value in being able to work on issues together, and is working on a system for managing sediment. Without which, the ports and represented organizations would be left to their own devices which wasn't previously a successful model. Value was also noted in the group's ability to come up with creative solutions to shared problems and its specific mission.

There was a question about the agencies or entities that expressed less of an interest in participating or having the group continue in its current format which received a response of a potential need for education. It was also suggested that if an analysis of cost could be done- indicating cost for *not* collaborating and cost/savings found when working together, that could be a useful and powerful education and funding tool.

In terms of funding, it was noted that it wasn't worth sacrificing program management if the cost was that the group would no longer be supported. Organizations such as LCREP mentioned they might have the ability to provide staff time to support the group, but that cash was not as readily available. The previous project management format, where a state-agency staff member worked a portion of an FTE for the LCSG was mentioned and it was noted that it is an option worth pursuing from both states. It was also noted that the cost of project management didn't appear that significant, and it would be worth looking at different options to leverage the necessary cost to keep the group meeting on a bi-annual basis.

The possibility of requesting funding from the state legislature was also mentioned, and the response was that both states, but especially Washington, were looking to get away from funding groups and committees.

In wrapping up the conversation, Brian Lynn noted that important next steps would be for the state governments to once again get together and review what resources might be available, and put together a more robust budget and outline of what different scenarios could look like. He captured that the group seems to still have plenty of work to do, but there is a hurdle in figuring out how to do it. He reiterated the group's desire to want to get together more than once a year, and noted that if that wasn't possible, it would take some exploration to determine ways to stay engaged in between meetings.

It was mentioned that now would be a great opportunity for the states to show their commitment to the group and to the Lower Columbia River.

**The meeting adjourned at 3:30.**