

Steering Group – Update Summary for April 5, 2006

Due to a conflict with several Partnership members, as well as staff – many are attending the Monitoring & Restoration conference in Astoria – the April 19th Partnership meeting has been cancelled. Fortunately, many of the items that were to be on the agenda are primarily information to be shared. So, in lieu of an April meeting, the Steering Group decided that a summary updating everyone on recent work would be an effective substitute. The Steering Group is very excited about some of these developments and is looking forward to an opportunity to discuss them further at our next Partnership meeting on June 21st. If you have any questions or thoughts in the mean time, feel free to call or email.

IGA Update

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) is being drafted to facilitate coordination of funding, studies, and other required activities to successfully create the community vision and strategies for the future of Vancouver Lake and the surrounding watershed. While other agencies are welcome to participate, the current draft agreement is between the Port of Vancouver, City of Vancouver Department of Public Works, Clark County Department of Public Works, and Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation Department.

Corps of Engineers

A new Corps team member has been added to the Steering Group & Technical Group. George Medina is a project manager with the Portland District of the Corps of Engineers. George works for Martin Hudson in the Planning Branch as a project manager and will be the principle point of contact for this Section 536 project. His training and background is as an analytical chemist with a focus on environmental and hazardous and toxic waste analysis. This fiscal year the Corps will pull together a small team to develop and draft a Preliminary Restoration Plan (PRP). In effect, they will conduct a reconnaissance tour to identify existing and potential project features and in the process, and will develop an ecosystem restoration scope of work. An approved PRP will establish Federal interest and will facilitate further studies as program funds are made available, perhaps as early as next year. The Corps is working with Ron Wierenga and is looking to go out on-site later this month or early May. George expects that the development of the PRP should take between 6 to 8 weeks after a site tour.

Tech Group Update

The Tech Group is moving forward with interim work items that were presented at the last Partnership meeting. They are researching and summarizing funding opportunities, specifically potential funding sources, requirements and deadlines for applications. The information will help increase the diversity of funding options and will be useful in matching up specific tasks with potential funding sources as we move forward. The group is also working on the monitoring activity summary report that will identify monitoring locations for ongoing and planned projects in the Vancouver Lake and Lake River area. The report will help coordinate data gathering activities, limit overlap between projects, and leverage limited resources. The Tech Group has already been coordinating data gathering activities as a result of this effort. The report will be completed and provided at the next Partnership meeting and will be updated throughout the process.

Lastly the group met with Dr. Bollens at Washington State University-Vancouver to discuss the university's resources to assist in doing a literature review and biological evaluation of Vancouver Lake. Dr. Bollens indicated that WSU is very interested in working with the Partnership and that he would need time to determine how they may be able to help. They will meet with Dr. Bollens again at the end of April to discuss WSU's capability and availability, as well as the next steps, such as timelines and agreements/contracts. The Tech Group's goal is to have a proposal from WSU to submit to the Steering Group for review by June.

Ron Wierenga recently assisted the Washington State Department of Ecology with collecting fish from Vancouver Lake and Lake River for determining levels of toxic substances in their tissue. The study is a project of Ecology's Washington State Toxics Monitoring Program and is intended to evaluate levels of toxics, like PCB's and chlorinated-pesticides, in Vancouver Lake's sediments and fish. The sediment sampling is already complete and Ecology has nearly completed their fish collection. The results of the study will be used to evaluate the impaired listing status for the lake and determine the need for a water clean-up plan to address contamination. Results will also be used by the Washington State Department of Health to evaluate if a fish consumption advisory is needed. Ecology intends to complete a report by Fall of 2006.

Tech Group Protocols

The Steering Group felt that there needed to be some clarification around the Tech Group's role and protocols. The TG core membership is comprised of Ron Wierenga, Jeroen Kok, Thom McConathy, Patty Boyden, Victor Ehrlich and the newest member is George Medina of the Corps. This group will also include other members as dictated by the needs of the group.

The Tech Group has responsibilities to report directly to the Steering Group. It was agreed that proposed actions by the Tech Group should be documented for presentation to the Steering Group. This documentation can as formal as a white paper, or as informal as a bulleted-list. The level of information provided will be determined by the Tech Group. The Tech Group also has an indirect report to the Partnership.

Watershed Councils

The Steering Group re-visited the watershed council discussion. While the Steering Group noted that the unrestrained vision calls for a watershed council, they agreed that it was premature to form a watershed council for Vancouver Lake at this time. In reality, the Partnership is currently acting as a de facto council in many regards and creating such a group would duplicate many of its efforts. It was also noted that many of the same interests represented on the Partnership would likely be part of the ultimate Vancouver Lake watershed council.-

In addition, the Steering Group agreed the main focus of the Partnership now should be on Vancouver Lake and its immediate surrounding area, including Lake River. The scope of work currently being developed by the Partnership is on Vancouver Lake and Lake River in order to focus the effort of the lake management plan. It should also be noted that the Army Corp of Engineers support is limited to the Columbia River and its tidally influenced water bodies.

There are many issues in the contributing watersheds, all of which are very important on their own, beyond Vancouver Lake. While connected, the Steering Group felt that these contributing watersheds also need to be dealt with independently and their issues addressed, which will also benefit Vancouver Lake. The Steering Group agreed the Partnership has a role in advocating for those actions to be actively pursued. The group also heard from members that council formation is already proceeding in some contributing watersheds. Brian Carlson shared news that the City will be proposing to form a watershed council for the Burnt Bridge Creek Watershed. He expected that it would be up and running within several months. The City is looking at patterning the BBC council on the Oregon Watershed Council model, which is a non-profit, non-regulatory group with a mix of both private and public funding and participation. Ron Wierenga shared that the County has been contacted by a group interested in forming a watershed council for the Salmon Creek Watershed.

Lake Monitoring

Clark County Public Works will be offering their annual volunteer lake monitoring training on May 1st from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Vancouver Lake Sailing Club. Please contact Ron Wierenga at 360-397-6118x4264, ron.wierenga@clark.wa.gov if you would like to attend.