

Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership

Steering Group Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: May 18, 2011

Steering Group Members Present:

Patty Boyden	Port of Vancouver
Brian Carlson	City of Vancouver
Kevin Gray	Clark County Environmental Services
Eric LaBrant	Fruit Valley Neighborhood Association
Jane Teshler Kleiner	Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation (alternate for Pete Mayer)

Other Agency Members Present:

Jeff Schnabel	Clark County Environmental Services
Rob Guttridge	Clark County Environmental Services
Andrew Ness	Port of Vancouver
Brooke Porter	City of Vancouver

Project Management Team:

Phil Trask	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.
Sandra Coveny	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.

Public in Attendance:

Thom McConathy	Northeast Hazel Dell Resident
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Project Manager Update

Phil began the meeting with an overview of the agenda and introductions were made.

Funding Strategy Update

The project management team is in the process of updating the Partnership's Funding Strategy. A funding strategy was developed in 2008, but now needs to be updated and integrated with information from both the Outreach Plan and the Technical Foundation.

The new strategy will be more contemporary, include priorities, and be organized around short and long-term goals. Eileen is currently working with an outline and will have a draft version for the Steering Group to look at before the next Steering Group meeting.

Questions raised on the funding strategy:

Q: What is the relationship of the funding strategy to the outreach plan?

A: There are three planning elements: the first two are the Outreach Plan and the Technical Foundation with research strategy, both of which are complete, and the third is the funding strategy currently being developed.

Q: When can the group expect the funding strategy to be completed?

A: A draft funding strategy will be ready at the end of June, prior to the July Steering Group meeting. It is Eileen's main focus until then.

Q: Is this a strategy for an update to make a budget?

A: Not exactly: the funding strategy goes beyond the current operational budget; it will look at funding sources for research priorities and outreach first, and then look further out to potential funding sources for management actions that are still to be narrowed down.

Discussion:

A recommendation for research and management priorities should be included, as well as funding sources that might be best suited; opportunities with high potential, etc. Pros and cons of different sources would also be helpful, along with state, federal, and local options and their limitations.

Thom: A watershed based approach (or beyond watershed boundaries) should be looked at: when thinking short term we are not allowing for this opportunity. There should be brainstorming on ways in which the Partnership can be self sustaining sooner rather than later.

Andrew: A financial strategy will begin to show how much we are spending, and how much we need to spend to continue accomplishing our goals. By looking at this information, the group can prioritize efforts and create an annual budget, begin calculating the cost of the work in the strategy, organizing, and figuring out how to find funding sources and deciding if they fit our mission priorities.

Thom: An interim action plan is needed for the meantime. It could get us started and show people we are doing something. We are raising money, researching and working on other things. Phil mentioned a wetlands restoration project as an example of something that could be done now as an early action project.

The idea of taxing districts was raised as a potential funding source. It was agreed that it could be one of several options laid out in the funding strategy, but it probably would take significant effort to implement.

The Steering Group would like a subcommittee to form to help guide the funding strategy. A presentation on the start of the strategy will be presented at the Partnership meeting and then Eileen will ask for individuals to sign up for the subcommittee as interested. The subcommittee would investigate potential methods of funding. Jane volunteered to be part of the funding strategy subcommittee.

Financial Update

Jeff provided a financial update for the Partnership. There is currently \$440K in the bank. All partners have contributed \$50K apiece for the fiscal year. USGS will be submitting some large invoices, about \$200K, for their study. Overall, the budget is on track and projections are as expected.

Thom asked if the group will be financially sustaining at the end of two years. Jeff said that isn't known as the budgets for each funding partner are not out yet. We have commitments and budgets from the city and county through the end of FY 2012. The Port operates on a one year budget cycle, so while we don't expect a change, a budget has not yet been signed. Right now we are on target through 2011.

Technical Update

Updated Technical Foundation

Phil briefly discussed the final updates to the Technical Foundation. A final review copy went to the Steering Group on May 2nd. The Steering Group approved the May version as the final 2011 Technical Foundation Update.

Fish Monitoring Update

Phil gave a brief presentation of fish monitoring work that may provide information on salmonid use of Vancouver Lake. The Juvenile Salmon Acoustic Telemetry System (JSATS) employs acoustic transmitters and receiving nodes to track the behavior and habitat use of juvenile salmonids migrating down the Columbia River to the ocean.

The JSATS work is being conducted by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Portland District (Corps). The Corps has authorized the use of four JSATS acoustic receiving nodes for Vancouver Lake. The nodes were placed in early May, with one at the mouth of the flushing channel, one near the confluence of Bachelor Slough and Lake River, and two in the lake. It is important to note that only larger juveniles can be tagged. These larger fish are more likely to stay in the mainstream. We may learn nothing, or we may learn quite a bit. The cost to VLWP is limited to project manager time; the Corps has donated use of the nodes, and we received \$10K of PNNL time to install equipment and analyze the data. PCTA is covering other costs.

Thom asked if the transmitters are on the fish. Phil answered that, yes, fish are tagged from different areas of the Columbia River to track their migration and use of side channel habitat through the river. Back in the 1980s surveys documented salmon in Vancouver Lake; this could generate more current information.

Phil mentioned that groups outside of the Partnership are directing interest to Buckmire Slough for potential salmonid habitat restoration. CREST will be conducting fish surveys in Buckmire Slough and Vancouver Lake for this work. The fish survey information will be shared with the Partnership. The fish captured in the seining effort will be fin clipped for genetic information. Hopefully the monitoring will be a two year effort. We are more likely to see salmonids with these surveys over the JSATS work because smaller salmon are more likely than the larger tagged juvenile salmon to use flood plain habitats for rearing during their residency in the estuary.

Thom asked if they will also look at Burnt Bridge Creek. Phil responded that this isn't the focus of this effort, but will look for opportunities to explore there as well.

Outreach Update

Salmon Creek Watershed Council Meeting

Rob attended the Salmon Creek Watershed Council meeting on April 14th where Eileen gave a presentation on the Partnership. It was a good overview of the Partnership and was well received. The group was interested in how the lake works and the operation of the tide gate in the flushing channel. The group discussed how if salmon are found through the current efforts funding sources may open up to implement projects. The watershed council was interested in partnering with VLWP in the future.

VLWP PowerPoint Presentation Template

Phil asked if the presentation template, much of which was used for the Salmon Creek Watershed Council, was sent to everyone. Eileen had sent it to the PIO group for review. It was nicely done and Steering Group members would like to have a copy. Thom asked if it could be added to the website.

Outreach Event Committee

Phil said a Doodle poll is out to the Outreach Event Group for planning the Vancouver Lake-SOLV event scheduled for September 17. Eileen went to a small training session with SOLV that can help with event planning. Jane agreed that she will take Jeroen Kok's place in the Outreach Event subcommittee.

Upcoming Outreach Events

- Sierra Club Meeting (with Audubon) on May 24th – Jeff is delivering the presentation.
- West Hazel Dell Neighborhood Association Meeting on July 20th – Eileen can present unless there is a volunteer. Andrew will talk to Eileen about taking this over.
- July 10 Outdoor Festival – A signup sheet will be sent out to the Steering Group next week, and then to the full partnership. Kevin volunteered Brian and himself. Jane manages the booth for the park that day, so won't be able to be at the VLWP table.
- July 4th – The Felida neighborhood asked for partnership presence at their parade. Andrew said he will be there and can represent VLWP. He will bring VLWP materials.

Partnership Bookmarks

Andrew presented the new VLWP bookmark. It was created by the PIO group for events to tell people about the VLWP and direct them to the website. 10,000 bookmarks were printed. They will also be handed out at the park when people stop at the entrance booth. The bookmark was first distributed at the Alder Creek Paddle event at the entrance booth, but also at the Home and Garden Ideas fair, Vancouver Watersheds Council Group, Vancouver Urban Forestry Group and County Environmental Services and Watershed Stewards.

Jane mentioned the Sailing Club regatta will draw nearly 3,000 people this weekend, so more bookmarks are needed.

Alder Creek Paddle Festival

Jane spoke to the coordinators of the Alder Creek Paddle Festival and they estimated there were about 600 people there over the April 30-May 1 weekend.

Andrew noted that there were fewer visitors to the Partnership table at the Alder Creek Paddle Festival than there were at last year's REI event. Both events had approximately the same amount of people, but more people visited the Partnership table during the REI event, possibly because of the rain during that event. At the Alder Creek event, approximately fifteen people total visited the Partnership booth and engaged in discussions. Most of these visitors had never been to the lake before.

Next Steps/Close

Thom handed out a flier announcing a series of nature walks offered through Clark College which Thom is teaching. He will hand out fliers at the farmers market.

Thom asked if the website was being updated. Phil answered that Loretta of the City of Vancouver maintains the website. Andrew asked if there were specific updates the Partnership wanted; funds were approved for a website update in the past that did not yet occur. Eric mentioned the potential for a blog, current events, meeting minutes, etc. Andrew mentioned that there will be limitations to what can be on the website as a public agency website as opposed to a private website. The possibility of starting a Facebook page was also raised.

Agenda Planning

Phil presented potential topics for the Partnership Meeting Agenda for June 15th. Topics may include:

- An update from USGS on their research thus far;
- Randy Coats of Ecology may have material on his toxics study to present;
- A short presentation on the JSATS program;
- Funding Strategy – present and discuss elements of the emerging plan, recruit a funding subcommittee;
- Discussion about the September outreach event;
- A final copy of the updated Technical Foundation will be emailed to Partnership members, with a few hard copies available;

The group agreed to these agenda items.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meetings

The next meeting of the full Partnership is on June 15th at 4 pm at the Port of Vancouver offices.

The next Steering Group meeting will be on July 20th at 3:30pm at the Port of Vancouver offices.