

Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership

Steering Group Meeting Summary

Meeting date: August 25, 2010

Steering Group Members Present:

Ron Wierenga	Clark County Environmental Services (alternate for Kevin Gray)
Patty Boyden	Port of Vancouver
Jeroen Kok	Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation (alternate for Pete Mayer)

Other Agency Members Present:

Andrew Ness	Port of Vancouver
Jeff Schnabel	Clark County Environmental Services

Project Management Team:

Phil Trask	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.
Eileen Stone	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.

Public in Attendance

Thom McConathy	Northeast Hazel Dell Resident
Vern Veysey	Northeast Vancouver Resident

Unable to make meeting:

Brian Carlson	City of Vancouver
Lee McCallister	Fruit Valley Neighborhood Association

Project Manager Update

Phil started the meeting with an overview of the agenda.

He then mentioned that on Sunday, August 22, CVTV televised a brief show on Vancouver Lake and the Partnership. It was a very positive piece, covering the uses, issues, and what is being done to address the issues at the lake.

It was noted that for future outreach it is good for the partner members to carry the outreach message, as in the CVTV piece Gary Kokstis did a great job of covering the Lake's values – he had a positive take that resonates with the public.

The Steering Group asked for the video to be shown at the next Partnership meeting. It would also be good to show to city council, potential funders, and to use as looping video in the background of a booth at an outreach event.

In-reach

During the last three weeks Phil and Eileen have been meeting with partners on an individual basis. It has been good to get the perspective from individuals in a smaller setting, and see the diversity of thought. A consistent theme among partners has been that funding is difficult right now.

Many partners also feel that we need to show what progress has been made as well as what progress can be made early on that the Partnership can build upon. During the current interim period, some of the progress will be in terms of milestones, working towards an end game. Meeting milestones along the way shows that there is a level of success, to citizens as well as to potential funders. Knowing that progress has been made and that there is an end in sight helps others understand that continuing work on the lake is worthwhile.

Andrew commented that in-reach helps with the health of the group; partners who are investing their time need to see that there is a result from their efforts. It also allows them to bring the message out when talking with friends and neighbors.

Patty asked what the end product would be for outreach. Phil described a written summary of themes for different audiences, including showing how research results may alter the method of selection of alternatives which approaches make most sense.

It would be good to discuss our critical path at the next Partnership meeting. As a diagram of the critical path is developed, it would show facts, what we need to know, when we expect to know and what action we can take based on that knowledge, and the expected result of that action. This can show what uncertainties are there as well. We need to have confidence about the end game while keeping in balance of uncertainties.

Vern brought up his concerns about Lake River – Vancouver Lake and Lake River both influence each other and impact the residents: we should better understand Lake River. (USGS study will include gages at Lake River so inputs will be better understood after the study.)

Overview of Draft Outreach Plan –

Phil gave a brief overview of the draft Outreach Plan Eileen has been developing. This is in the form of a framework at this time. It will be developed further with the Public Information staff, and then feedback will be requested from other partners.

Thom raised a concern that the plan has been completed, or will be completed before other Partners get to work on it. He would like an ad-hoc committee to form to work on it.

The Steering Group stated that they felt that the project management team would continue developing the plan, then give it to the Public Information staff for feedback, then the Steering Group, and then Partnership to review and comment.

The individual meetings with Partners will continue taking place while the plan is being developed, so the Project Management team will incorporate feedback from their meetings, but the Partners will have ample opportunity for further input when the plan is more developed.

Phil described the diversity of opinion in the meetings with partners thus far in terms of how to approach outreach and what the important messages are that need to go out. This diversity will make the outreach plan stronger but it won't make it faster.

The outreach plan will be clear on where we are and where we're going. Key messages are part of the plan. The messages will be set up so that you wouldn't bring entire list of messages to one group: it would be dependent on the group's interests (e.g., how technical a person wants to get).

A draft outreach plan will go out to the Partnership in October with a request for input, and the plan would be finalized by the end of October/Early November.

Funding

Eileen met with Jeff Nejedly who works with Ecology's Centennial program regarding potential funding for Vancouver Lake through Centennial and other funding sources. The Centennial program is really focused on on-the-ground work instead of the background research. Conducting wetland or riparian planting would be a better fit for that program. He recommended that the Partnership also consider the Revolving Fund program, which has 50% forgivable principal. Putting some green infrastructure into the lake would be eligible under the revolving fund. Mr. Nejedly also recommended looking into projects at Vancouver Lake Park to the benefit of both the Park and the lake that might be eligible to receive funds through the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) program.

Group discussion explored possible on-the-ground work: Lake River plantings have potential, something in the area of the entrance to Vancouver Lake. We may want to check in with Jeff Whitman of Clark Public Utilities to see if there is a project that we could partner on. These would help in some way with water quality at Vancouver Lake, but the specific tie-in to nutrient/phosphorus levels in the lake will be developed by the USGS work.

For the Partnership to look to RCO funding, work on a trail expansion might be worthwhile, possibly tying in to Ridgefield.

The question was raised about if there are spots identified for planning restoration projects. Phil explained the bathymetry work that the Army Corps of Engineers completed for the lake can be analyzed further by his GIS staff to see what areas have potential. There is a berm that cuts off wetlands near Lake River; it might be reasonable to breach the berm and reconnect the wetlands to the lake in one or more areas.

The group asked about the Freshwater Algae grant program. That program did not provide grants for projects in fiscal year 2010.

There was discussion on other types of funding. We could survey individuals, while showing the short and long term funding needs and gauge level of support and as well as their ideas on funding mechanisms.

Discussion of Federal funds going into the area around Vancouver Lake: Bonneville is funding salmon-focused restoration projects in this area of the Columbia River. The Army Corps of Engineers plans to conduct a feasibility study for potential projects in and around the refuge.

The group is interested in feedback from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Natural Resources regarding restoration work at the lake in which they may have an interest.

Vern commented that it might be worth looking into a funding subgroup or eventually entity like a watershed district for long-term funding development.

Funding will likely be a discussion topic at the December Partnership meeting (probably too early for September).

Planning for September 15 meeting agenda

Washington State University – Vancouver will present on their third year of research.

US Geological Survey Staff will present on the start of their research project.

The project management team will conduct an overview of where we've been and where we are going: what's been accomplished by the partnership, the end goal and milestones along the way (request to identify the fisheries survey – where it stands in priorities/timing.)

The project management team will discuss the outreach plan; get input from partners on the framework for the plan.

Discussion of the outreach plan, with a potential PowerPoint discussion. Will look to get advice and ideas on from partners in the discussion

Technical Group Update:

Jeff summarized the meeting earlier in the day with Dr. Steve Bollens of WSU, which Phil and Eileen also attended. The meeting covered what research WSU has already conducted on the lake, and what research is possible in the future. WSU has a draft year three report along with two papers they are looking to publish on the major findings of the work. If the Partnership would like WSU to continue research this year Dr. Bollens would need to know within a few weeks.

Potential work includes:

1. Continue current population dynamics,
2. Deploy a new suite of electronic monitoring devices,
3. Genetic makeup of blooms: pinpoint which species need to be concerned about.

Altogether the projects would cost \$65,000, (\$25K, 15K, and 25K).

Ron commented that if full funding of the work is desired, it would have to go to the Board of Commissioners, but if the Steering Group wanted to go with part of it (up to \$25,000) that could be done with just Partnership funds (would need to clarify what level of Partnership funds are still available before committing any more. Jeff will email to the Steering Group the various options and go from there.

It was mentioned that conducting the algae sampling at the same time as the USGS work (in 2011) would be ideal in order to see the relationship between water flow/nutrient levels and algae numbers.

It was pointed out that the Technical Group had discussions in previous years about the function of the flushing channel and the tide gate: if closing the tide gate at certain times would be advantageous. This should be on the research list to be investigated within the bigger picture of Vancouver Lake. Ron stated that he is expecting hydrologic analysis of the tide gate/flushing channel from the USGS work, which should tell us how the flushing channel impacts the lake. The Technical Group will need to make USGS staff aware of historical data that should inform USGS' research.

Next Steps/Close

A request was made to stick to the meeting agenda in the future.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meetings:

The next meeting of the full Partnership is September 15 at 4 pm.

The next Steering Group meeting is November 17th, at 3:30 pm.

All meetings are at the Port of Vancouver offices.