

**Technical Group Members Present:**

Jessi Belston	Port of Vancouver
Tonnie Cummings	WA Department of Ecology
Annette Griffy	City of Vancouver
Joy Polston-Barnes	WA Department of Natural Resources
Thom McConathy	Partnership Member
Marty McGinn	Clark County Health Department
Gretchen Rollwagen-Bollens	Washington State University
Tim Rymer	WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Dorie Sutton	City of Vancouver
Jeff Schnabel	Clark County Public Works
Ron Wierenga	Clark County Public Works

**Project Management Team:**

Phil Trask	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.
Sabrina Litton	PC Trask & Associates, Inc.

**General Tech Group Meeting Business**

Phil Trask welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. A second draft of the Questions Matrix summary was handed out to the group. Since the last Technical Group meeting on February 28, the group had had time to review and revise their scores and add additional comments. The new matrix was a compilation of the revised scores. Again, each question's scores were averaged across all reviewers and each table was sorted by the "significance to scientific basis" column. An arbitrary line was drawn across each table roughly half way down the list of questions to illustrate the idea of a coarse separation of the questions into two bins. While the sorting process put some questions towards the top of the list, and others further downwards, Phil explained that it will require more effort to sort through the questions. The goal for the group today was to go through the revised tables and think about questions that should be above the line that are below, and questions that should go below the line that are above. In addition to the coarse separation, it was hoped that the group could think more about linking and sequencing questions into logical order. In this way the Technical Group can start forming the first draft of the Partnership's technical strategy.

Thom told the group that a narrative will be important when placing the questions into context. As the questions currently stand, many of the questions are cumbersome and static. Rewording the questions would become more meaningful. Phil agreed that the questions were relatively coarse and sometimes operated at different scales. He said that as the technical strategy is developed, a narrative will begin to make sense of the questions.

Phil reminded the group that they should not place too much emphasis on the current numbering system and ranking. Its purpose is to serve as a tool to get a conversation going and not to indicate that one question is more important than another.

**Discussion of Question Matrix**

The group began by reviewing Table 1, Biological Questions. Phil referred to the line drawn across the table and asked the group that if they were going to separate the questions into two bins, is there anything that is below the line that should be above, and vice versa. He said that all of these questions are important to the

Partnership, but in order to move forward with any new technical work, the Technical Group will need to determine which questions are more urgent than others to answer at this time.

One member noted that question Bio-1, *Is Vancouver Lake swimmable and safe for human contact*, seemed to be more of a management question and recommended that it be removed from this table and placed in the management bin. Several members agreed with this notion and consensus was reached on doing so.

It was asked by another member how the terms algae, bluegreen algae, plankton, and invertebrates were being defined. Currently they are all separated into their own questions but in reality the definitions of several overlap each other. It was explained that these questions had not been through any scientific editing prior to compilation and were taken straight from the Partnership. It was clarified by the group that the term invertebrates in this context refers to macroinvertebrate, and plankton refers to zooplankton. In the next version of the questions list, these clarifications will be made.

Ron said that he views the line on each table as fluid and moving depending on how much money is available. Tim said that lumping or splitting of questions will depend on the potential study approach. For example, if one looks at habitat, you are indirectly looking at species at the same time.

It was agreed by the group that a base level of understanding of the Lake is important. This understanding will mature as the Partnership moves forward in time. Which questions are base level? Secondary? Tertiary?

Thom said that in order to work with these questions appropriately, they need to be viewed in conjunction with the Partnership's vision and values. Joy commented that she looked at the questions with bluegreen algae as a focus as that was a main reason for the Partnership coming together in the first place. With bluegreen algae and water quality as a focus, you can address most Partnership issues through a proper lens. Thom noted that in addition to bluegreen algae, the Lake has also been closed due to fecal coliform and that is an important aspect for the Technical Group to be aware of.

Jeff said that he viewed the Technical Group role as being responsible for helping the the Partnership focus their technical efforts. The Partnership is looking to them to figure out what needs to be studied in order to determine a base level of knowledge. This foundation of information is needed before any management action implementation is considered.

Further discussion was held about reviewing the questions with respect to the Partnership's vision and values. It is important to make sure the Partnership's values are being addressed. Thom said that bluegreen algae is not the only focus of the Partnership and the group should revisit their matrix scoring in light of the Partnership's full vision in mind. Phil reminded everyone that this matrix is still a draft and that if any of the Technical Group members wish to review their scores after reviewing the Partnership's vision, they should make those changes by Wednesday April 2. Sabrina will send out the matrix with the Partnership's vision and values attached.

Phil focused the conversation back to the Table 1 and asked again if any questions should be rearranged. It was noted that Bio-2, 3, and 7 were currently being addressed by WSU. The group felt that Bio-13, *Are there any federal or state listed species in or around Vancouver Lake?*, should move below the line because with any management action implementation, effects on endangered species will be dealt with. It was noted that Bio-12, *How do fish, plant, and animal distributions change through time?*, is confusing because it is unclear what timescale is being addressed. This would be important for monitoring fish for example. Ron said that one thing he learned from the Corps recent biological synthesis, is that fish questions are expensive to answer. It was noted that any management alternative would likely involve fish surveys as part of the environmental review process.

Bio-8, *What is the type, amount and distribution of invertebrates in Vancouver Lake?*, was discussed as a question to be brought above the line. Invertebrates are important, especially aggressive exotics and endangered natives. There is a freshwater mussel workgroup that the DNR Natural Heritage Program is a

part of. Joy can direct people to where the info can be found. It was felt that invertebrates were enough of a priority to move it above the line.

Discussion moved on to Table 2. Physical Environment Questions. A Technical Group member noted that Phy-15, *Does the flushing channel affect lake conditions?*, is very broad and that maybe it should be dropped from the list or moved below the line. It was noted that it could possibly be combined into Phy-2, *What is the quantity and timing of flows within the flushing channel?*, which seems to be more encompassing. Thom commented that the flushing channel can have more effects on the Lake than just hydrology such as suspended and contaminated sediment. He also relayed to the group that EPA is discussing the option of possibly re-opening the superfund status of Alcoa and it will be decided this month.

It was suggested that Phy-14, *How much sediment has accumulated since dredging in the 1980's and development of the Columbia river hydrosystem?*, be combined with SQ-7, a sediment accumulation rate question, as it is a better place to discuss the role of sediment in the system.

As discussion moved to Table 3, Water and Sediment Quality, it was asked if question WQ-10 could be clarified. The question asks, *How does seasonal variation affect nutrient and contaminant concentrations?*, and it is unclear what variation is being talked about. It was also noted that it could be helpful if the term "contaminant" is further explained. Most members understood it to mean toxins like heavy metals or PCB's. It was said that to some it could also mean pathogens which are addressed in another question. More clarification of questions will occur in the next version.

### **Wrap-Up**

Phil reminded the group that if they are going to make any changes to their scores to do so by next Wednesday. Today's discussion scratched the surface of how to link and sequence questions together, and this is where the conversation really needs to head to next. He said that there are two ways the group can go about it; one, where Phil, Ron and Sabrina try and reorganize the questions and piece them together in a way that that is presentable to the group and from which they can then critique and modify, or two, come back together as a group and do it at that time. The group indicated that the first option would be better.

Thom again expressed his reservations about the scoring process and the importance of addressing Partnership goals. Phil agreed and noted the need to get away from the matrix format. It is difficult to work with the questions the way they are now and it was more of a tool to separate questions into those that are more urgent than others. None of the Partnership's questions will be dropped in this process. The purpose of these meetings is to determine where to focus energy next. He said that the goal will be to move away from the matrix into a more narrative description and a sequencing of related questions.

Phil thanked everyone for coming and for their valuable input into this process.