

Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership

Steering Group Meeting Summary

Meeting date: July 14, 2010

Steering Group Members Present:

Kevin Gray	Clark County Environmental Services
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
Ron Wierenga	Clark County Environmental Services

Project Management Team:

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

Project Manager Update

Phil started the meeting with a review of the agenda, commenting that this meeting was originally considered optional, as there was a Steering Group meeting in June, but with the start of the new contract there are important issues to cover which will help generate momentum. In general, the Steering Group meetings will be bimonthly, with more informal meetings with individual Steering Group members.

Funding Strategy

Phil opened a discussion on funding with questions for the Steering Group. In exploring various funding sources, how interested are we in drawing in private donations? If tax deductible donations are viewed as a good possibility, we could consider various fundraising avenues. A small event to start with could be an email auction or something similar.

It merits exploring if Clark County can receive donations from individuals and channel the funds to Vancouver Lake, and if so, are such donations tax deductible. If not, it might be worth exploring development of a non-profit 501(c)(3) foundation. However, it would take quite an effort to develop and maintain a 501(c)(3). With the amount of effort to put into such a venture, look closely at what such an effort would achieve that we couldn't achieve with our current organization.

One benefit of such a foundation would be that some grant sources, especially research funds, are only available to 501(c)(3) foundations, and not available to local government organizations or private firms.

Several concerns were raised regarding the potential formation of a foundation for Vancouver Lake. First: is a full board of directors needed for such a foundation, and would such a board be feasible with the current work the various partners are involved in? Also, how would the foundation interact with the Partnership? What would management of the two bodies look like? Other lake restoration projects have 501(c)(3) foundations; for example, Friends of Green Lake in Seattle. It would be beneficial to know how the Friends of Green Lake group interacts with government agencies.

Jeroen: We should look into groups that could give us more information on this. There are several local 501(c)(3) groups that have a shared mission with Vancouver Lake that we may be able to partner with, so that we may not need to develop our own 501(c)(3) group. Such groups include the Parks Foundation of Clark County, Vancouver Watersheds Council, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, and Salmon Creek Watershed Council. We should look at what kind of fundraising efforts they have. Having our own

non-profit could result in a competition for resources. Kevin commented that right now we might be better off pursuing funds from government agencies. He wouldn't want the Partnership to water down efforts of other 501(c)(3) groups that have similar missions.

Andrew noted that fundraising takes considerable outreach. At this point we don't have a base outside of the Partnership group to draw upon. It could be something we work on for a year from now. From a PIO perspective, it is nice to work with the current Partnership; a new body would require new management, including work on messaging.

Ron suggested that the general topic of fundraising would be good for the September Partnership meeting: what ideas do the partners have that they can bring to the table? How could someone donate, and how important is a tax-deduction in the decision to donate? Ask the broader Partnership if there is a way to tap into existing 501(c)(3) status. Phil mentioned that it could be worthwhile to ask a local non-profit, such as Columbia Land Trust, who has a great history in the region, for an hour of their time to share information along the lines of "Fundraising 101."

A discussion of Partnership ideas on potential funding strategies will be part of the next Partnership meeting, and also part of individual meetings with partners. Eileen and Phil will do more research into the questions raised prior to the September meeting.

Meeting Planning

There was a request at the last Partnership meeting to have EPA give a presentation at the September meeting. It would also be good to have a USGS presentation at either September or December meeting. For December flow instruments would be in place, although there wouldn't yet be results. September might be better with the intent to introduce the team and explain the project. It would also be good to have a presentation from WSU on the completion of their three year study.

PIO Group Update

Andrew presented a draft delineation of work between the project management team and the PIO group. Due to constraints on PIO staff time, the PIO group needs to function more like the technical group: to give guidance and review, but to leave the bulk of the work on writing the outreach plan for the project management team. The project management team would do more of the writing of documents and specific outreach events, with ideas and talking points from the PIO group. It was noted that Partnership members, including the Steering Group, should be involved in outreach, and be added to this effort.

In terms of current outreach efforts, Andrew recommends waiting on a large outreach event right now and instead planning one for the beginning of next summer at the lake. He sees the highest priority at this time as in-reach: Make contacts with Partners to discuss the three-year USGS study, the status of the budget, the ability of the Partnership to recommend alternatives after the USGS study, other funding options, and for the individual partners to identify who they see as important outreach targets.

Andrew began a draft outreach plan in June. He will make edits to the plan in its current form and send it to Eileen for the project management team to develop further. The plan could be presented at the September depending on the outreach discussions in the meetings with individual Partnership members. The PIO group would have two weeks to review a plan before it is circulated.

Phil asked if the draft plan includes goals and objectives and how to get there as well as how you know when you get there (in terms of the outreach plan, not for fixing the lake). One such measurement could be an increased number of people at events (could become less as accomplishments reached.) Andrew noted that the plan is not outlined in that manner right now.

Andrew sees as the first outreach deliverable an accounting of retroactive accomplishments to explain going forward with USGS. Also, an outreach timeline should be developed much like the research timeframe. It would show a schedule for a number of events.

Kevin stated that the plan should promote understanding of the value of the lake and generate advocacy. The first need for outreach is to solidify base; make sure our message is known among our friends, and then reach out to legislators and policy makers.

Ron identified the tools we need for outreach at this time: a banner, activity like buttons/button maker, handouts, key messaging, presentation (maybe two), planned calendar of events/meetings. Outreach is one of ways to get the Partnership involved in taking the message out to others. Get the members' thoughts on who we should be targeting in our outreach efforts.

Patty: it is essential that the partnership know the key messages, so that those involved in outreach are delivering similar concepts to the various audiences.

Jeroen commented that outreach is a long-term effort. In the short term, reach out to lobbying groups. Then target involvement opportunities that are already planned in the area in which we could take part – that would allow us to get message out while having more time to focus on big outreach and awareness efforts. He will get information from Brian Potter of Parks on Special Use permits at Vancouver Lake Park currently on the calendar through next July. This would help frame opportunities for outreach events.

Note on upcoming event: the Bird Fest in Ridgefield is the second week of October.

Jeff: as we move forward we need to remember that others have done this. We should be thinking of what resources can we tap into. What worked well for others outreach-wise and what didn't?

Partnership Vision and Management Techniques

Ron asked if we should we re-open our vision and goals and refine them with more information.

Phil noted that the management techniques presentation in December was delivered to the Partnership without much time for them to digest the implications of various techniques, and we have not yet followed up to get their feedback on the various techniques. It would be good to discuss the vision, tools, actions and accomplishments, and the interests of the individuals: is there a commonality among them or not? The studies can show which techniques can or cannot be used, and from those techniques, which parts of the vision might be achieved and to what degree.

Patty commented that it is difficult to narrow down a vision until we look at what we can really do and the costs for each.

Potential December meeting topic: Ask partners what they see as the three most likely management techniques for Vancouver Lake, along with which ones they think won't work and why. The goal is to begin to understand techniques at a meaningful level. Holding these discussions with each member prior to the meeting might bring more in-depth discussion. Understanding each member's ideas would help with our messaging as well.

Andrew mentioned that in looking at management techniques and research studies at the same time, it would be helpful to know which studies address which techniques. Ron noted that the project management team could discuss which studies cover which techniques as part of the meetings with individual partners.

It was commented that starting the discussion of management techniques three years before research is completed could be tough. It's good to narrow focus, but want to do without losing members. Patty observed that in asking partners which techniques are preferred there is a balance in not wanting to go too far too fast, and not wanting to drag feet.

Phil suggested that in refining the vision and selecting management techniques, it might be more that some techniques are moved off to the side, not completely off the table. The intent would be to try to move towards those techniques that are more likely to be part of the solution.

Technical Group Update

USGS is on-line to start sampling in September. Rich gave Eileen a list of requested monitoring/research data, including County monitoring efforts and Port gaging efforts at the flushing channel. Eileen will contact individuals soon in order to get the information to USGS.

Jeroen noted that getting updates from USGS at various points during their study will be important for our understanding of the lake and can help steer towards/away from some techniques. It would be tough to wait until end of three years before having an idea of what they are seeing.

Patty and Jeroen both pointed out that USGS will need access agreements to access the flushing channel and Vancouver Lake Park, respectively. Eileen will follow up on these.

Next Steps/Close

Planning for September meeting: the project management team will request presentations from EPA, USGS (request maps of sampling sites/pictures if possible), and WSU. Discussion topics: Outreach planning and funding strategies.

The meeting was adjourned.