

## ***Appendix D: Minutes from the Wahkiakum County River Summit***

**Hosted by the Board of Wahkiakum County Commissioners and  
the Wahkiakum County Community Foundation  
Rosburg School  
February 19, 2004**

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

Commissioner Mark Linqvist called the Wahkiakum County River Summit to order and explained the purpose of the summit was to bring all stakeholders of the Grays River Valley together to discuss environmental and permitting issues, and to provide a open venue to explain how each of the stakeholders are impacted by such regulations. Linqvist hoped the stakeholders would come away from the summit with a better understanding of local issues, as well as a commitment to cooperation for the future. Commissioner Linqvist introduced special guest, Congressman Brian Baird.

### **Opening Statements by Congressman Brian Baird**

Congressman Baird spoke on the importance of communication and collaboration at all levels of government and the need to work together. Baird noted the federal budgets continues to shrink and funds are becoming more competitive, making it more difficult to fund necessary projects and making it all the more important to collaborate resources where possible. Baird encouraged those present to have an open mind and to use the summit as a beginning point for future collaborative work.

### **Columbia River Basin Report**

#### **Overview of the Columbia River Basin**

Allan Whiting, Wetlands Coordinator for the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce gave an overview of the Wahkiakum County Flood Management Plan and regional work occurring along the Columbia River.

Whiting reported the Columbia River Estuary is part of the Columbia River basin, which is the second largest basin in the United States. The Columbia River is a fresh water dominated estuary that has a significant influence in the region. The river has been diked, dredged, filled, altered, and has undergone hydro modifications. It contains fourteen different species of salmon.

In historic drawings of the mouth of the Columbia, explorer Robert Gray found that the deepest part of the channel was only 27 feet deep, and the mouth was a huge complex of islands and flood plains. Today the mouth has been modified for shipping. Changes to the river can be attributed to dams built along the river, which directly impact sedimentation in the river, as the sediments no longer flush out of the system at the rates they once did. According to historical accounts, in 1880 the tidal marshes would get flushed out every few years during heavy rains.

### **Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST)**

Whiting reported the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce is a local council of governments that has been in existence for 30 years. CREST's primary work focuses on coastal zone management, estuary research, dredged material management, wetland mitigation, and estuary and watershed restoration. In terms of dredged material management, there is approximately ten million cubic yards of dredged material removed from the channel each year, with much of it deposited between river mile zero to river mile forty-six.

### **Wahkiakum County Comprehensive Flood Hazard Plan**

The Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan for Wahkiakum County will incorporate a water-based approach that formulates multiple solutions to achieve floodplain equilibrium and provide habitat benefits. The plan will characterize the historical and current variables affecting flooding in the watershed. The plan will also recommend an array of implementation project alternatives to provide flood control and habitat benefits, which can then be used to achieve funding for projects.

#### **Plan Development**

- Whiting reported that Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce spent considerable time compiling information from local residents about the behavior of the rivers and streams in the Grays River, Elochoman River, Skamokawa Creek, and Puget Island area. Comprehensive inventories of the issues were incorporated into the plan and were identified by local liaisons from the greater public.

#### **Goals of the Plan**

- To reduce the amount of flood hazard risk to private property and to encourage the flood hazard mitigation projects that enhance fish habitat and habitat for other species.
- To enhance public awareness about activities that increase flood risk to existing and future development.
- To increase the level of coordination and dialogue among community members and state and federal agency representatives to promote effective flood plain management strategies.
- To protect and enhance productive lands and the rural character of the area.

#### **Watershed Assessment**

- Whiting reported there is little historical flood data in the region.

- More work needs to be conducted on the recurrence intervals and 100-year flood levels in the area.
- The task force has determined the Grays River receives the most rainfall in Wahkiakum County followed by the Elochoman watershed.
- Soil in the region does not drain well which adds to the flooding problems.
- The task force continues to study the sedimentation, erosion and accretion of Grays Bay.

### **Proposed Action Items**

Whiting declared there is a lack of information on flooding issues in Wahkiakum County, and suggested more work needs to be done to support modeling that will assist in understanding how sediment is discharged from the Grays River system. More FEMA studies are needed and mapping protocols need to be developed to achieve new flood zone maps and flood elevation data sets so the information can be used for future land use planning and public education needs. Among the proposed action items, CREST included the following:

- Develop projects and cost alternatives for stream bank protection in critical areas.
- Develop a variety of erosion control measures along the Puget Island shorelines.
- Determine what is causing the sediment in Grays Bay and the Grays River system.
- Develop a relocation program with the county to move homes or elevate property.
- Recommend land use policies.
- Increase FEMA education and outreach.

### **Next Steps**

CREST will complete the draft Wahkiakum County Flood Hazard Management Plan soon and will send it through a review process which will include the steering committee, county staff, public agencies and the public. Whiting indicated the state will ultimately need to adopt the plan. Whiting hoped the plan would be adopted in May of 2004.

### **Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board**

#### **Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB) Purpose/Membership**

Gary Wade of the LCFRB explained the recovery board was established in 1998 by Governor Gary Locke to provide local citizens with an active voice in salmon recovery. The membership of the recovery board includes county commissioners, hydro operators, and local landowners. The technical advisory committee is made up of agency experts from all levels of government and the private sector. The LCFRB serves five counties, all of which are tributaries of the Columbia River, and is the lead agency for recovery, sub basin planning, and watershed planning for Watershed Inventory Resource Areas 25 through 29.

### **Sub-basin Planning and Watershed Planning**

The fish recovery board combined planning processes to increase efficiencies. The watershed planning is run by Department of Ecology. Sub-basin planning is provided for Bonneville Power Administration with future funding of habitat restoration funded by the BPA to meet requirements under federal hydropower laws. The work of the LCFRB should lead to the delisting of endangered populations.

The LCFRB is the lead entity for salmon restoration and protection. It is charged with developing a strategic and scientifically sound plan to provide a ranking of restoration projects. The plan will identify priority populations of fish and their restorations. The board works with local communities and non-profits and provides technical support and oversight of restoration efforts. The LCFRB recommended funding for 72 projects, with 4.5 million spent in Wahkiakum County and 17 million overall in the region. The board was instrumental in getting the Bonneville Power Administration grant to assess the geomorphic and hydrologic studies in the river. The board recognizes it needs the support of the communities in the region and must include community needs in the plan.

Mrs. Pat Reese asked Gary Wade the factors used to develop project priorities. The LCFRB identified a number of populations of fish that are critical, using local input, models and other information on habitat conditions to identify the most productive areas for fish and how those areas can be restored. The technical advisory committee reviews the projects and then sends recommendations to the board.

Mrs. Sandy Reider asked what the outlook for funding looks like in five and ten years. Wade noted the applications are sent to the state for funding. This year there is 26 million dollars in the salmon recovery board project allocation fund. The Lower Columbia could receive 1 or 2 million dollars for projects in the Lower Columbia. Wade confirmed that funding is at risk with future funding depending on whether the state and federal government continue to fund the efforts.

## **Bonneville Power Administration**

### **Study of the Upper Grays River Watershed**

Chris May, Senior Regional Engineer for Battelle discussed the Bonneville Power Administration study of the Upper Grays River Watershed. May noted most of the scientists performing the study work for Pacific Northwest National Laboratory out of Richland, Washington. The Bonneville Power Administration study is intended to address the needs of the

Grays River. The study will result in a list of recommendations for restoration and conservation and enhancement projects in the Upper Grays River. The study will include a hydrologic modeling of the geomorphic character of the river to understand sediment transport. The biological assessment focused on the chum spawning areas and other salmon areas. The project requires community input to gain a better understanding of local knowledge. Expected completion of the project is the end of 2005. May indicated the study is needed to develop a plan to achieve funding for projects.

### **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife**

#### **Corps of Engineer Section 1135 Study**

Lee Van Tussenbrook, Region 5 Director of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Martin Hudson, Chief of Planning for the Corps of Engineers reported the agencies are partnering on an 1135 project of the Grays River. Van Tussenbrook regrettably announced the funding for the 1135 project had been significantly reduced nationwide and that it was uncertain how much funding, if any, would be given for the Grays River project. Van Tussenbrook noted solutions to the problems of the Grays River will require outstanding communication, partnerships, and local support, as well as, good technical analysis for good projects. The projects must be good for both people and fish. Van Tussenbrook also noted the studies and solution are expensive and require funding, which presents a challenge because the local community, state government and federal government are financially strapped. Van Tussenbrook noted that pooling resources may be one way to achieve the work that needs to be done, and as a result, a partnership of stakeholders was formed that included Bonneville Power Administration, the Corps of Engineers, NOAA, Department of Ecology, Department of Natural Resources, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, the Grays River Habitat Enhancement District, Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force, Columbia Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, the Lower Columbia Economic Development Council and Wahkiakum County. The stakeholder group has met three times since September. It was determined the Section 1135 process would help with ecosystem restoration programs that could also bring stability projects for the watershed. Washington State is the local sponsor required under the program. The program requires a 25% match, which is estimated at \$950,000. Van Tussenbrook noted the state planned to coordinate with the Bonneville Power Administration to study the entire watershed.

The budget for the study is \$600,000. The Bonneville Power Administration study is estimated to cost \$400,000, totaling one million dollars for the Grays River watershed. The studies by CREST and the LCFRB, and the Grays River Habitat Enhancement District will be folded into the larger studies.

Van Tussenbrook reported a budget of three million dollars has been estimated for on the ground projects, stressing that none of the work is possible without community support.

Van Tussenbrook stressed the importance of community support and assured local residents and officials that WDFW staff is dedicated and will integrate other programs. The study of the Grays River compliments salmon recovery efforts without duplicating efforts.

One person in the audience asked Van Tussenbrook if the Beaver Creek Hatchery was scheduled for closure. Van Tussenbrook reported funding is in jeopardy despite the new regulations handed down by the federal government to mark the Chinook salmon. Van Tussenbrook noted that we need congressional support to fund the facilities.

Another individual questioned whether the Section 1135 study will study Grays Bay. Van Tussenbrook responded that the study can look at some of the actions of the bay. Someone questioned how integral the two studies were on one another. It was noted the studies are well integrated. Although the 1135 study may not occur, the information supplied by the BPA study will provide useful information.

### **History of Wahkiakum County**

To give a brief look into the history of Wahkiakum County, a group of local historians explained river life as it was once known in the county.

#### **Grays River/Rosburg/Deep River**

Carlton Appelo reported the area had been settled by fur traders from the Hudson Bay Company in the 1700s. Later explorers included Lewis and Clark and Captain Robert Gray who arrived on the Lady Washington. Grays River and Grays Bay were named after Captain Robert Gray. The Grays River post office was established in 1872, and later the Deep River Post Office was established in 1873. Appelo noted the primary mode of transportation between the communities and larger cities like Longview and Astoria was by boat. In fact, Mr. Appelo noted that he was born on a boat en route to the hospital in Astoria. The economy was first fueled by the fur trade, then commercial fishing and later commercial logging. Pioneer William Hume built the first salmon cannery on the Columbia in the area, and the first church was started in 1877. The church building was built in 1894, and was later moved up on a hill. Appelo spoke briefly about the brief gold rush of 1897 that occurred in Grays River.

#### **Grays River Valley**

Robert Larson, age 77, spoke about Grays River Valley. Larson noted the gravel bars in the Grays River were excavated during the years 1928-1930. The gravel from the Grays River was used to keep KM hill an all weather route. The Washington State Department of Transportation used the gravel bars regularly to help maintain the local roads. In 1935 a new road was extended from Grays River to Loop Road and WSDOT used the gravel from the river to build the road. When the gravel was removed, according to Larson, the flooding events decreased. Larson noted that locals were able to get gravel removal permits up until a few years ago. In 1960 a dike was completed along the Grays River and the original depth of the river along the dike was fifteen feet. Over the years gravel settled on the river floor and in some places the accumulation of the gravel rose above the dike. Removing some of the gravel may have reduced flooding. In 1972 a major flood on Fossil Creek Road occurred, causing the river to move 149 feet resulting in the creek escaping its channel.

In 1907 the Grays River was dredged to allow passenger and cargo boats up the river to unload supplies. The boats had a five-foot draft, and the channel was 10 feet deep. Today, the river is no longer passable.

### Town of Cathlamet

George Hanigan spoke about the Town of Cathlamet, noting that it was settled by James Birnie in 1846. Birnie built a trading post called Birnie's Retreat. Local bands of Indians lived in and around Cathlamet and used beaver pelts for trade and salmon as their primary source of food. In 1856 the Eagle Cliff cannery opened. As a result Cathlamet continued to grow as a settlement for fishermen and loggers. In another 10 years, a cannery was developed in Cathlamet, which caused boat builders, and net makers to establish businesses. The logging industry was dependent on the Columbia River to transport logs to market. The manner of transport was rafts of logs being towed on the river. It was common for log rafts to be tied up in the sloughs, some as large as 200-300 feet long. Large log rafts called cigar wraps were often shipped to northern California. Cathlamet depended on the river to transport everything. The town was served by sternwheeler vessels from Portland to Astoria. Hanigan recalled memories of travelling on a mail delivery vessel which delivered mail to Skamokawa, Dahlia, Astoria, and Altoona, from 1920s to the 1950s, when their mail contract terminated. The mail vessel hauled 20 people each day. Until 1928 there was no land connection between Cathlamet and Longview and Cathlamet to Ilwaco. Logging roads were the only other source. Until that time businesses located in Cathlamet served the population. In 1928 a highway was built to Longview. Several years later the highway was extended from Cathlamet to Skamokawa, and the Megler ferry service to Astoria was established. Prior to 1938 all transportation between Cathlamet to Puget Island was by boat. The Julia Butler Hansen Bridge was built and eliminated the need for boat service between the town and Puget Island.

Throughout the century, there were only a few breaks in the docks along the Cathlamet waterfront. Thriving business populated the waterfront, along with houseboats. The docks were used to mend commercial fishing nets, and storage of boats and equipment. Eventually the commercial salmon industry decreased, and the gill net fishing seasons were reduced by regulations, causing local fishermen to become dependent on fish earned in Alaska. Only a few of the businesses and docks remain. The logging industry also decreased because of regulations for old growth. Hanigan reported a port district was formed in 1960 for the purpose of building a marina, which became the Elochoman Slough Marina. The people on Puget Island had water access and did not need the marina, so boundary lines were meandered to exclude Puget Island and Skamokawa. The marina was sponsored by Port District 1 and passed in 1961. By 1972 the marina was constructed. Today that marina provides 175 rentals for boaters, and during the summer holidays up to 200 people use it overnight. It is one of the leading tourist attractions in the county.

### Puget Island

Kayrene Gilbertson gave a history of Puget Island, noting that it was once a gravel bar on the Columbia. It is now 7 miles long and 3 miles wide. The efforts to make Puget Island a livable site at the turn of the century were massive, given the fact the work was done manually and without mechanical equipment. Puget Island was first used as a summer destination location for families. The Cathlamet Indian tribe was known to go to the island to harvest plants for winter food. People built their homes on the island to escape the heat and enjoy the breeze. Fishermen found the river teeming with fish, and the island sloughs were good moorage for boats. In the 1880s people started to settle more. In 1894 the Columbia flooded, destroying the island and its

inhabitants. Only 100 people returned to the island after that flood. Most homes were built on posts above ground. In the early 1900s early settlers dug a 40-foot ditch around the island to make a continuous dike, and they built wooden tide boxes to allow for the flow of the water. Steam driven pumps were built to remove the freshet water. Until 1948 there was no major flooding on the island. Gilbertson noted that multigenerational families still live on the island and it took enormous efforts to make it livable. That is why the Puget Islanders are sensitive to regulatory agencies declaring what can and cannot be done on the island. Gilbertson proclaimed that the local residents attended the summit to show the agencies they are here to work together to protect land and be good stewards.

Paul Vik spoke about the settlers of Puget Island and how sociological and historical implications have shaped the attitudes and opinions of those who settled on the island, past and present. Vik explained the large diking systems on the island and cited areas like Groves Slough where the slough is silting in and the tide gates are not working. The district has not been successful in getting the needed permit to remove the silt. The islanders also have a problem with nutria, and aquatic weeds. Other concerns include the erosion on the south side of the island. Vik recalled the Army Corps of Engineers pumped dredge spoils onto the island to assist with the internal drainage system. Later the Corps came to the property owners on the southwest end of the island promoting free sand which would increase the size of their beaches in an effort to narrow the river to cause a scouring effect through the channel. Many on the south side of the island signed up for the opportunity to have sand pumped onto their beaches. Ten years later the Department of Natural Resources informed property owners that they did not own these new beaches, causing confusion and disappointment among residents. The Corps regularly came through and replenished the beaches as part of the maintenance of the navigation channel. Because of new regulations, the Corps can no longer replenish the beaches. Instead sand is being deposited elsewhere forcing the Cathlamet and Clifton Channels to fill in, while at the same time, erosion is getting worse along the south side of the island. The actions of government and regulations do not make sense to the people of the island. Vik noted the attitudes of the people on the island have been formed over the years because of the actions and non-actions of government.

### Skamokawa

Steve McClain explained the history of the Town of Skamokawa, which stands for “smoke on the water”, referring to the fog that often forms over the water. Skamokawa’s history goes back 2,300 years. There is a site in Vista Park, along the Columbia River where artifacts were found. The park is a natural camping site. Lewis and Clark and Captain Robert Gray were known to have visited Skamokawa. In 1844, John Kutch established a trading post in Skamokawa, and in 1852 the post office was established. Like neighboring communities, Skamokawa was dependent on natural resources to fuel its economy. Fishing, logging, and farming were the primary industries. The primary source of transportation was by boat as there were no roads leading to or from Skamokawa to the outer reaches of society in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In fact, homes faced the water much like homes face roads today, because water was the transportation system. McClain noted Skamokawa’s population neared 1,000 at the turn of the century. The people relied on local businesses like barbers, meat cutters, shake and shingle mills, lumber mills, and fish markets to support the community. During the depression in the 1930s businesses closed and people moved away. Eventually schools closed in the Skamokawa

and Rosburg area and students were redirected to Cathlamet or Naselle. More recently, government regulations hit the agricultural and fishing industry hard, putting even more people out of work. In the 1980s a small group of people decided to revitalize Skamokawa. Today, Skamokawa is a small community that has decided to focus on tourism.

#### Water Dependent Wahkiakum County

Irene Martin spoke about how dependent the towns in Wahkiakum County were on the rivers that run through it. In the 1800s through the middle 1900s boats were the primary transportation mechanism in the county. Access to water and resources that water provided was critical to the well being of those in the county. Martin provided pictures of events dating back to the late 1800s in Wahkiakum County. Those pictures included a photo of the Pillar Rock Packing Company, the steamer Harvest Queen loading shingles, a sternwheeler taking cans of salmon to market, photo of Hunting Island, a photo of two cigar rafts, a photo of the Deep River Water Carnival in 1913, the Skamokawa Regatta in 1908, and old mill sites in Skamokawa. There were photos of gillnet boats in Brooks Slough, and an 1880 photo of women rowing their boats across Skamokawa Creek to the market. Homes in Skamokawa faced the water because that was how people traveled. Activities and incomes depended on water. Research showed the main market for local lumber was China. Martin indicated the road built between Cathlamet and Skamokawa linked Skamokawa to the outside world; however she noted the people still need access to the water in order for the county to be viable.

#### Gorley Farm

John Gorley who owns the Gorley Farm spoke about the history of his farm and what happened to it due to the unfortunate situation where a permit was not issued to fix a threatened dike. In 1964 the Gorleys and the Soil Conservation District began constructing a dike around the farm. The intent was to slow down the velocity of the Grays River past the farm. Slowing of the current would act as a catch basin to make the sediment drop out. The original streambed is now 15-20 feet higher than it was in 1960. In November of 1999, twenty three inches of rain fell in the Grays River Valley, causing logs and other debris to move downstream, catching on the dike and eroding it by 25 feet over the Thanksgiving holiday. Representatives from Wahkiakum County PUD, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Campbell Timber visited the site to find an immediate solution. The proposed solution included trenching along the upper side of the dike, but because of environmental regulations, the project was not permitted. On December 13 and 14, 1999 the valley experienced heavy rainfall once more, with over ten inches of rain falling, causing the dike to erode 7 feet per hour. Finally the river broke through the dike, destroying the Gorley's farm, a neighbor's homes, and the Western Wahkiakum Water system and damaging other property and roads. The neighbors, including their infant child, had to be evacuated via a Coast Guard helicopter as the river raged on either side of their home. Mr. Gorley noted that he would like to see improvements made in the future to permitting processes to keep tragic events like this from happening in the future.

### **Economic Stakeholders Timber Industry**

#### Timber Industry – Cathlamet Timber

Mark Oregel, Manager of Cathlamet Timber noted the new fish and forest rules have greatly improved logging road construction and road maintenance to the benefit of fish; however Oregel had concerns that the rules are not easily modified to address certain needs and realities. Oregel noted that he would like to see a mechanism to allow for the amendment of the rules when necessary.

#### **Timber Industry – Jerry DeBraie Logging**

Bill Olsen of Jerry DeBraie Logging, the largest private employer in Wahkiakum County, spoke about timberland management and road maintenance program. Olsen noted that in the last seven years new regulations make it impossible for the private landowner to manage land without a consultant. Olsen does not agree with some of the buffers on class four and five streams because many of the buffer strips blow over which erodes the banks and sends sediment down to the class three and two streams. In Olsen's opinion, the buffers on class three and four streams are a waste of natural resources. Olsen noted it would be helpful to have this rule reconsidered because of the effects he has witnessed in the field.

Olsen reported the private landowners have made significant changes to roads by installing sediment traps, culverts, and stalling harvesting of timber in the rainy season. The timber industry have bent over backwards to fix problems they caused in earlier decades.

### **Shipping Industry**

#### **Brusco Tug & Barge**

Henry Brusco of Brusco Tug and Barge reported being in the tug and barge business since the early 1950s, up and down the west coast. Brusco is aware of the problems of the waterways of the west and believes that the federal government has become too involved in local decisions. Brusco believed local government needs to get control back locally to save jobs.

### **Commercial Fishing Industry**

#### **Salmon for All**

Oliver Waltman, Executive Director for Salmon for All, indicated the local commercial fisherman have been required to change the way in which they fish for the benefit of fish, by changing the types of nets used, and installing live wells on boats. Waltman noted the fishermen are trying to make a living off of the natural resources; however federal regulations are diminishing commercial efforts. Instead there appears to be support for recreational use and sport fishing for the metro areas of the state. Waltman noted the dollars earned by commercial fisherman stays in rural communities and bolsters the economy. Waltman noted that commercial fishing is a rural county job and wished the powers to be would recognize and support this fact.

### **Port Districts Economic and Recreational**

#### **Port District No. 2**

Steve McClain of Port District No. 2 in Wahkiakum County noted that Ports have a large range of responsibilities for economic development. Both local ports are known for recreational

activities, and public access. The ports have partnered with Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce and several ports in the Lower Columbia River to study and plan for projects that need to occur to maintain waterways. Port District No. 2 has submitted a dredging project permit application to maintain Skamokawa Creek as a navigational channel. McClain noted that some of the regulations make little sense. For example, the Corps is allowed to dredge during the summer; however the port cannot conduct a small dredging project on Skamokawa Creek during the same time frame. McClain noted it would be helpful if the regulatory agencies could develop a standard permit process where permits can be renewed. McClain noted the hydraulics permit requires three different biologists to approve one single project and often times the biologists have individual ideas about how a project should be permitted. McClain noted it complicates the permit process, costing time and money.

#### **Diking District No. 1 of Puget Island**

Gordon Oman of Diking District 1 on Puget Island reported the diking district has a long cooperative relationship with the Corps. In 1949 through the cooperation of the district, the Corps filled 60 percent of the dike ditches on the island. Since that time, the district has tried to maintain the dikes. Oman noted seventy percent of the diking district's budget is spent on pumping the water out of the island to maintain the water level to maintain septic systems. Oman indicated the district is very concerned about the deepening of the river channel because of the increased erosion occurring along the shipping channel. Oman hoped the erosion problems along Puget Island would be addressed during the channel-deepening project.

### **Conservation**

#### **Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership**

Scott McEwen of the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership reported a study is occurring from the mouth of the Columbia to the Bonneville Dam. In terms of funding, McEwen indicated that restoration programs are well funded, indicating that he would like to see more restoration projects funded in the local area and suggested projects coming out of the CREST flood hazard study could be funded by the next funding cycle.

#### **Columbia Land Trust**

Ian Sinks, Steward Director from Columbia Land Trust, reported the land trust is a non-profit, private conservation organization that holds interest in land for conservation purposes. The land trust's mission is to conserve the vital habitats in the Columbia River region, to work with landowners to find out their goals and how it fits with the CLT's goals. CLT has invested in the Grays River area and currently owns 500 acres. Their plans include purchasing farmland and breaching dikes to restore property for habitat. The CLT has voluntarily agreed to remain on the county's tax roles as to not impact the county's revenue.

#### **Ducks Unlimited**

Chuck Lobdell of Ducks Unlimited spoke about the Lower Columbia River as an important region for waterfowl. The mission of Ducks Unlimited is to fulfill life cycle needs of waterfowl. Within the Lower Columbia, Grays Bay is important to waterfowl. Ducks Unlimited acts as a funding partner, and can leverage funds and can engineer and design projects.

### Nature Conservancy

Lynn Cornelius of the Nature Conservancy reported the Conservancy identifies and protects significant ecological lands. The Nature Conservancy has been involved in Grays River for 10 years and owns 92 acres at the mouth of Grays River, as well as some land on Puget Island. Cornelius noted that as conservation interests have grown, the conservancy is now interested in supporting efforts for conservation and flood control.

### Grays River Habitat Enhancement District

Delvin Fredrickson of the Grays River Habitat Enhancement District expressed concern about the lack of projects versus the numerous expensive studies being conducted throughout the region. Fredrickson noted it is important for the people of the valley to see results and stressed the Grays River Habitat Enhancement District has initiated a process to work with agencies to develop solutions to address the needs of the river.

## **Regional Economic Development**

### Columbia River Channel Coalition

Themee Holznagel from the Columbia River Channel Coalition noted the coalition has worked to build consensus among many diverse groups surrounding the channel-deepening project. The channel is to be deepened to 43 feet to allow for trade and job opportunities in this region. The project is necessary to sustain over 40,000 jobs with an average wage of \$46,000 per year, jobs that depend on maritime cargo. The project will allow 300 more cargo ships to enter the upper river ports, ships that can carry 6,000 tons per ship more, or \$900,000 more cargo. At this point the project received all state and federal environmental approvals.

An enhanced monitoring and adaptive management plan will insure any impacts that occur will be addressed immediately and will continue at the conclusion of the channel project. At this time both Washington and Oregon have appropriated 27 million dollars and the federal government has appropriated 10 million dollars towards the project. The next step is to complete a project cooperation agreement, and then land acquisitions need to occur. Once the project cooperation agreement is signed the environmental restoration projects will occur. The coalition has worked with Wahkiakum County and filled the county owned sand pit. The coalition looks forward to supporting concerns or addressing issues that come out of the process in the future.

## **Agriculture Industry**

### Aegerter Farm

Tony Aegerter a third generation dairy farmer on Puget Island noted the government has regulated farming practices for salmon enhancement. In 1990 there were 24 productive farms in Wahkiakum County, now there are only four. The four farms that remain have committed to building huge storage facilities and have become proficient in nutrient management. Aegerter noted that as a farmer, his main concern is keeping the dikes working and making certain the Columbia River doesn't breach the dikes and flood the island.

### Burkhalter Farm

Gary Burkhalter a dairy farmer on the lower Grays River, raised concerns about excessive regulations. Burkhalter's family has farmed the land for generations and noted that the regulations caused many farmers to go out of business. Burkhalter noted those farmers who remain have spent considerable amount of money to meet the regulations imposed on them; however he is concerned that the regulations will change, costing the farmers even more money. Berkhalter pleaded with the regulatory agencies to not reset the benchmark. On a different topic, Berkhalter noted the farmers rely on grass to feed their cattle. Too much rain and flooding kills the grass which causes a hardship on the farmers. Burkhalter also noted the trapping laws have caused an explosion of beaver in the area, which are damaging property.

### **American Rivers**

Wahkiakum County Commissioner Mark Linquist opened the afternoon session by introducing David Moryc of American Rivers. David Moryc explained that American Rivers is a national conservation organization that fosters a stewardship ethic. American Rivers began working on the Columbia River Estuary five years ago. American Rivers identified the need and funding for habitat restoration projects for fish and wildlife and communities. As interest of the estuary grows, there is more interest by American Rivers; however at the same time Moryc has noticed a disconnect between priorities and missions of the regulatory agencies versus the realities on the ground. Moryc identified that the lower Columbia River region is different then the rest, because it is mostly private property. As a result, there are constraints on restoration, land acquisition, and permits. Moryc indicated that he recently visited Idaho and found the issues there are very similar and that there is a lack of communication and trust between locals and the government. Moryc suggested the challenge is to see how the agencies can balance the needs of the stakeholders and the requirements of their missions.

### **Regulatory Agencies Federal, State and County**

#### **Bonneville Power Administration**

Jessica Wilcox of Bonneville Power Administration noted the BPA is experiencing budget issues, caused by the endangered species act and regulations of the Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Council. BPA is committed to keeping rates down and satisfying it's customers. Wilcox noted that representatives from BPA are present at the summit to listen, learn and meet stakeholders.

#### **Corps of Engineers**

Dave Martin from the US Army Corps of Engineers reported the Corps is responsible for enforcing the Clean Water Act. The Environmental Protection Agency requires the Corps to administrate that program. Martin noted the Corps works under directives, with the first directive requiring compliance with the Clean Water Act. Meeting the needs of the public is secondary.

Before 1999, the Corps was able to process permits in a timely manner, however regulations changed with the Endangered Species Act which required numerous regulatory agencies to

coordinate permit processes which, along with budget cuts, and staffing levels, slowed the permit process for all permits. Martin indicated the Corps has made substantial progress in turn around time recently, by adding a staff person to help process the permits. The Corps has also completed three programmatic consultations and is preparing to issue five or six new regional general permits that includes Endangered Species Act issues within the permits. It is the hope of the Corps that consolidated permits will speed the permit process. Martin noted the Corps had been behind on work for some time, but is beginning to catch up. Martin also indicated the Corps is taking a different approach in working with the public and will focus more on educating and helping versus regulating. Martin noted the Corps can improve programs further by using Wahkiakum County as an example.

### *US Fish and Wildlife Service*

Lynn Childers, of the US Fish and Wildlife Service noted there are several areas of responsibility the service is required to perform. Ultimately, the agency is responsible for working with people to encourage development and improvements that will protect fish and wildlife resources. The three divisions under the agency include the Endangered Species Division (ESD), the Federal Activities Division, and the Habitat Restoration Division. The first two divisions provide technical assistance to federal agencies to help them develop and permit projects that meet project goals and protect and enhance wildlife in an advisory role, not a regulatory role. The Habitat Restoration Division works with private landowners to restore and enhance habitat. The agency can also provide funds to partner on restoration projects. Childers cautioned that funds are limited and are not a primary source. Childers mimicked the concerns of the Corps in that federal funds are limited and staffing is slim; however the 2004 budget contains more funds for local partnerships.

### *USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*

John Kindig, Resource Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service noted the agency began as the soil conservation service in the 1930s. The agency has an office in each county in the US. Kindig noted Wahkiakum County is served out of the Longview office. The agency works closely with local residents, and districts and is funded through farm bill programs which provide cost share programs, financial assistance and technical assistance. The agency works with dairy producers, and is expanding to do more work with forest owners. Last year much of the funding available through the agency went to wetlands programs and the farmland protection program.

### *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*

Steve Manlow, Habitat Program Manager for the WDFW reported the region he works in extends from Klickitat County, to Naselle, and Lewis County. Manlow noted the WDFW is a regulatory agency that is responsible for the implementation of the state hydraulic code, which is one of the oldest laws on the books. The hydraulic code protects fish life and habitat and is very specific about those protections. In general, anytime someone works in a stream or bank that could interrupt the flow of the water, it requires a hydraulic permit. The agency is responsible for turning the permits around within 45 days of receipt. In this region, there are approximately 600 to 1,000 hydraulic permits processed each year, with the majority of those permits turned around in under 30 days. In terms of permits that are approved versus denied, Manlow noted most of the permits get approved; however some do get denied.

Manlow noted WDFW isn't unlike the other regulatory agencies, in that it is resource and process challenged. In terms of resource challenges the agency must come to agreement on designs that will meet state and local goals. The agency cannot issue an HPA unless it achieves a no net loss of fish life or habitat. The way the agency accomplishes this is to go through a mitigation sequence. The agency tries to avoid impacts to streams; however if that cannot be accomplished then the agency has to find a way to compensate for that resource. Other challenges include applications that are submitted without complete information. Those applications are often returned.

Manlow cited the Grays River Gravel Bar Removal Project as a good example of a project requiring mitigation. The project did have an impact, so the agency had to work with the project manager to achieve a workable plan and mitigate. Manlow noted the key from the state's standpoint, is to meet the biologist in the field and find out what the application needs before submitting the application. Manlow indicated when proactive steps are taken, the permit process goes much smoother.

WDFW has streamlined measures under the Streamline Enhancement Bill adopted in 2001. Certain project types provide a short cut process, eliminating the requirement for the applicant to go through the county's SEPA process. The department has also been working on the general HPAs, developing permits that cover a broad area. For example, if an organization planned to replace twenty culverts, the organization would be required to submit one permit application for the entire project, instead of twenty individual applications.

#### *Department of Natural Resources*

Fran McNair of the Department of Natural Resources explained the agency is both proprietary and regulatory. The Department of Natural Resources manages forestlands under the Endangered Species Act and the Forest Act. The Department of Natural Resources also is the primary state agency that protects against forest fires. The agency manages 2.4 million acres of aquatic lands in fresh and marine water. This includes tide lands, shore lands, and bed lands. Department of Natural Resource's role is to be environmental stewards and to support navigation. Much of the aquatic revenue is brought in through goeduck harvesting and marina use. The Department of Natural Resources used to manage a grant program for aquatic lands, but has turned that program over to the IAC. McNair noted that when one wants to use a piece of state aquatic land, he/she must have permit authorization.

McNair stressed the Department of Natural Resources wants to be part of local planning, especially when work is being done in navigatable waters in the region.

The agency also works on activities that relate to flood control, and is looking at mitigation banking through the legislature. It is involved in gravel removal as well, noting that any gravel removal must be authorized by the agency. If gravel is removed and used for public purposes there is no fee; however if the gravel is sold then the department collects a fee. In addition to these practices, the agency also works with companies who do easements for utility crossings. It is the department's role to ensure public benefit to the citizens of the state.

### Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

Rick Keniston of WSDOT reported the state is responsible for some of the highways in Wahkiakum County. Those roads include SR409, SR4, US101, and SR401. Keniston noted that WSDOT supports flood prevention efforts because the efforts ultimately protect state roads. All highway projects require a biological assessment and all paving projects have some storm water issues. The agency works closely with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on fish passage culverts. Keniston noted that funding for the fish passage projects is limited, limiting the number of projects to four every two years. Keniston indicated that WSDOT is considering building regional watershed facilities that could handle storm water runoff, and plans to explore this idea and look for partners. Locally, WSDOT projects that will be occurring in Wahkiakum County include the Svenson Curve realignment project and the repaving of SR409 and Puget Island Bridge. Over the next two years, SR4 will be repaved as well.

### NOAA Fisheries

Laura Hamilton of NOAA Fisheries reported that NOAA is a federal environmental regulator which is also facing budget constraints. Hamilton explained the agency is working to streamline its permit process, especially those permits that deal with fish recovery and restoration. Hamilton recommended any projects that could be billed as fish restoration projects should be applied for under fish restoration because the permit process is much speedier. Hamilton did not elaborate on the functions of the agency.

### Wahkiakum County

Chuck Beyer, Permit Coordinator for Wahkiakum County reported that he is charged with reviewing and issuing all county shorelines, critical area permits, and SEPA permits, among other permits. Beyer noted the county permit office is usually the first step in the joint aquatics resource permit application process, and as a result, he spends a great deal of time educating the public about permit requirements. More often than not, incomplete permit applications are submitted for review. Beyer agreed a collaborative approach to permitting and greater attention to turn around times and streamlining permit processes benefits the public. Beyer reported the turn around times on permits has sped up at the state and local level.

### Department of Ecology

Perry Lund, Biologist for the Department of Ecology reported that he works in the shorelines and environmental area, covering a region from the Olympic Peninsula to the Columbia River, to the Cascade Crest. Department of Ecology enforces the State Shorelines Management Act and the state Water Pollution Control Act, which require protection of shorelines throughout the state. Lund noted there is an urgent demand to prevent inherent harm to the shorelines. Lund is active in planning for and fostering reasonable usage of the shorelines and noted the language throughout the law that allows for that delicate balance. The Department of Ecology is directed to find out the best way to protect shorelines, while taking into consideration all interests. The priorities the Department of Ecology works under include recognizing and protecting statewide interests, protecting the nature of the shorelines, increasing public access, and increasing recreational opportunities. The shoreline act is administered at the local level, and was adopted by Wahkiakum County in 1981.

## **American Rivers**

## Brain Storming Session

After listening to the three panels representing historical views, economic stakeholder views, and regulatory agency views, David Moryc of American Rivers led a brainstorming session to identify what key issues continue to surface during these discussions. As issues were identified, people were encouraged to ask questions.

- Historical context is important. The local residents desire to be viewed as good stewards with connections to the land and water.
- Permits are too costly, in terms of time and money, and need to be streamlined.
- There was favoritism towards the idea of creating generalized permits and automatic permit renewals for qualifying projects. In example, one permit could be issued to replace twenty culverts, instead of twenty separate permits.
- There has been a shift in priorities in relation to economics, resource extraction, and population trends.
- There is strong public involvement and local pride. Locals want to see projects occur now and need to see results from the many studies that have occurred.
- There is concern that once the benchmarks are met, the standards are set even higher.
- There is a desire for the biologists working for various agencies to collaborate and work together to streamline permit processes, rather than subjecting opinions into the permit process.
- There was concern about the future of young people in Wahkiakum County. The concern was based on a social study that showed a higher than normal suicide rate amongst youth in the county. The youth realize they have to leave a place they do not want to leave because there is little hope for a future. The changes that occurred caused the demise of the local natural resource industries. Irene Martin urged those who make the decisions affecting the quality of life in rural America, to recognize that they are also affecting the future of the young people.
- Tom Doumit noted that many permits are contingent upon funding. Doumit suggested we step away from tying funding and permitting together and disengage the process to find other funding sources. It was noted that federal money has extra regulatory requirements associated with it, so if one can find other sources of money, then the extra regulations tied to federal funding do not have to be met.
- Tom Doumit questioned whether there is more than one way to incorporate more than one goal in a funding package to allow for projects to address more than one specialized issue.

- One commercial fisherman raised concern that urban values dominated the summit, suggesting the agencies are disenfranchised from the local fishery and instead foster sports fishing.
- There was concern that the sediment in the rivers is excessive and there should be efforts made to increase the depth of the rivers to restore fish runs and decrease flooding.
- There was concern that the Corps does not recognize “recreation” as a benefit when calculating the economics behind projects. The marina and entrance channels need to be dredged but the process of getting permits is tortuous. Because of environmental constraints, the economy has been hit hard, which has encouraged some to turn to tourism as one solution; however to develop that resource the channels have to be dredged. It was proposed that the Corps recognize recreational benefits as one economic factor when calculating the cost benefit ratio.
- There was also concern that it takes too long to get permits. One entity stated they have been waiting over one year to get a ruling on samples from the river bottom so dredging can occur.
- Early involvement by the regulatory agencies in projects was identified as a key element to success.
- Communicating, collaborating, and educating was also identified as a key to success.
- There was concern about diminishing returns on studies. The public raised concerns over the limited funding going to studies rather than on the ground projects.
- It was recognized and acknowledged that the agencies do care; but they are restricted by regulations. The real question becomes, how we work together for the benefit of people, fish, and wildlife.

In response to some of the concerns about the Corps of Engineers, Dave Martin of the Corps noted the permit process is complicated and the Corps struggles with trying to make the best decisions with the limited resources available. Recreation is considered as an economic well being of an area. The Corps is working to streamline permit processes and to be more proactive by establishing regional general permits and hiring more staff to process those permits. Martin recognized the frustrations that exist and assured the public that the agencies present coordinate amongst themselves a great deal and they attempt to speak as one voice when possible; however each of the agencies work under a different authority and under different laws. The agencies are trying to come up with a unified approach.

### **Executive and Legislative Authorities**

#### **Wahkiakum County Commissioners**

George Trott Wahkiakum County Commissioner recognized the county has a lot of issues to overcome. Trott suggested small projects could occur within the larger channel-deepening project. For example, Trott suggested maintenance of pile dikes along Puget Island could occur as part of the navigational maintenance plan. Trott encouraged the agencies to work with others to achieve on the ground results.

Dan Cothren Wahkiakum County Commissioners indicated that some environmental groups are making it difficult for people to take care of their land. Cothren suggested the county and others begin collaborating with environmental groups to begin the process of communicating and educating one another in regard to impacts. Cothren indicated the rural counties appear to be used for mitigation because the urban counties have already destroyed habitat making it difficult to balance needs under regulations.

#### **Town of Cathlamet**

Brett Deaton, Councilman for the Town of Cathlamet reported the reason why Cathlamet exists is because of its fishing industry and its dependence on water.

#### **Senator Patty Murray's Office**

Mindi Linquist of Senator Patty Murray's Office noted that part of her job is to travel the region to look for solutions to problems. Linquist felt the summit was a huge step in the right direction, and noted that communication is key to making projects happen on the ground. Linquist reported that she has heard a lot about streamlining permit processes and would report that information to Senator Murray.

#### **Office of Governor Locke**

Michelle Danley, Public Liaison for the Office of Governor Gary Locke noted the governor is aware that the lifeblood of the state is water. Of the 18 people who work on his policy group, 13 work on water issues. Danley encouraged the community and the county to work collaboratively and to think "outside the box" to come up with creative solutions. By approaching multiple studies and projects together it shows collaboration which is one good way to get funding. Danley encouraged the local government to work with local representatives and federal representatives on legislation as needed to address the needs of the local community.

#### **Department of Ecology**

Beryle Fernandes, Regional Director of the Department of Ecology reported the Department of Ecology has been going through introspection. Fernandez assured the public that she has heard what they were saying and the Director of Department of Ecology has directed staff to come up with steps to streamline the permitting process. Staff are required to look at timeliness, clarity, and predictability. Fernandez encouraged the public to hold the Department of Ecology accountable to accomplish this task. Fernandez encouraged early consultation on projects so the Department of Ecology could be involved from the beginning, thereby making processes flow smoother.

#### **Grays River Habitat Enhancement District**

Tom Doumit of the Grays River Habitat Enhancement District noted that people are part of the habitat. Unfortunately people were not valued until very recently. Doumit indicated the same types of issues we all face today occurred in 1942, it is time to move forward.

#### *Wahkiakum Conservation District*

Darin Hought of the Wahkiakum County Conservation District offered to work to rebuild the local partnerships.

#### *Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments*

Steve Harvey of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments reported the council works together at the local and regional level. It provides assistance to governments. It has staff on hand that work with small cities as planners. The council also does advocacy work for members. Harvey noted much of the frustration expressed today dealt with the lack of financial resources and inadequate staffing. Harvey acknowledged it takes manpower to research and go after opportunities. It takes people to be aware of grant opportunities. Harvey mentioned there is a national wetlands grant available ranging from \$50,000 to one million dollars for wetlands and salmon recovery. There are other opportunities, but it takes a lot of local staff and volunteer time to track these funds down. Harvey recommended the county look internally for resources within the community and offered the assistance of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments.

#### *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission*

Ron Ozment noted the negative energy that once existed between agencies has been redirected towards collaboration. Ozment remarked that what is happening today, is being watched statewide. Two years ago the legislators mandated a task force to review the permit processes. As the stakeholders worked through the process, a greater understanding was met, and a comprehensive report was written. Out of that report came legislation to streamline permits.

#### *Coast and Harbor Engineering*

Dave Simpson of Coast and Harbor Engineering, reported working with Wahkiakum County on several projects having to do with water resource projects. Simpson indicated since the Endangered Species Act came into affect and biological assessments became standard, the demand for specialists increased because the permit requirements are so specialized. Simpson recalls that permits are obtained more readily when there is a collaborative approach, when site visits occur first, and problems are identified prior to anything else taking place. After these steps are taken, expectations are known, making the process flow more easily. Simpson suggested the permitting process should start with a site visit by all stakeholders. Simpson noted the Integrated Permitting Process under SB5694 was passed by the legislature last May. There is opportunity under this legislation to implement the new permitting process by experimenting with a pilot project. There has been \$250,000 appropriated to help implement the pilot project.

### **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of the summit, Commissioner Mark Linquist thanked those present for participating. The common ideas that came from the summit included the need to educate one another, communicate better, and work collaboratively to accomplish studies and projects. Participants also learned the regulatory agencies were actively taking steps to streamline the

permit processes and that those agencies are under tight budget constraints and lack adequate staff to process permits rapidly. Participants learned that early involvement by regulatory agencies in the initial steps of projects requiring permits usually results in a smoother permit process. Local input was recognized as essential and beneficial to regulatory agencies. One commonality shared among participants was the desire to be good stewards of the land.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Holly A. Pfenniger  
Clerk of the Board

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark E. Linquist  
Chairman of the Board

