

CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN

FLOOD AUTHORITY

Flood Authority Update

May 2009

The Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority is an organization of local and Tribal governments in the Chehalis River Basin. The goal of the Authority is to provide a forum so these jurisdictions can work together to reduce flood damage in the Chehalis River Basin.

History of the Flood Authority

The Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority was formed in response to the 2007 flooding event throughout Lewis, Grays Harbor, and Thurston Counties and on the Chehalis Reservation. The Authority was formed by an Interlocal Agreement between eleven jurisdictions on the river basin in April 2008, to evaluate flooding issues throughout the Basin. House Bills 3374 and 3375 appropriated \$2.5 million by the legislature for this effort. Shortly after its formation, the Flood Authority hired ESA Adolfson to provide facilitation, staff support, and technical services.

Since its formation, the Flood Authority has become an important forum for jurisdictions in the Chehalis River Basin to discuss flooding and seek common solutions to flood-related problems. The Authority has also taken a number of important steps toward reducing flood damage:

Stream and Rain Gauge Project In October 2008, the Authority unanimously agreed to authorize the evaluation of stream and rain gauges in the basin. ESA Adolfson worked with local jurisdictions, the National Weather Services, and USGS (U.S. Geologic Survey) to evaluate the current gauges and locate where additional gauges would be most helpful. ESA Adolfson made a final presentation on the project at the March 19th, 2009 Authority meeting, and the information gathered for this project will become part of an Early Warning System project.

Flood Plan In November 2008, the Flood Authority agreed to prepare a Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan, which will look at flooding throughout the basin and recommend projects that can be done to reduce flood damage. ESA Adolfson is preparing the Flood Plan, and the Authority will receive the first complete draft of the plan in June.

Public Meetings The Flood Authority held public meetings on February 11, 2009 in Chehalis and February 12, 2009 in Montesano. At these meetings, the Authority solicited feedback from citizens on what the Authority's goals should be and what flood-related problems people have experienced. Future public meetings are anticipated.

Public Values Survey The Flood Authority hired Elway Research to conduct a survey of Basin residents to determine their opinions on flooding. The survey was conducted by telephone basin-wide in March 2009, and the results of the survey will be used to determine goals and actions for the Flood Authority.

Upstream Storage Feasibility Project At the February 19th Authority meeting, Lewis County PUD presented a proposal to build two upstream storage facilities on the Chehalis River and the South Fork of the Chehalis River. The Flood Authority has agreed to fund part of the second phase of a feasibility study for this project.

Basin-Wide Studies and Projects Package The Flood Authority has agreed to fund a package of studies and projects throughout the Basin that, together with the upstream storage feasibility study, will provide information to help the Authority make decisions on which projects to support.

Recent Actions

Upstream Storage Project A subcommittee of the Authority met on April 14th to prepare an agreement with the Lewis County PUD to fund the second phase of the feasibility study. At their April 16th meeting, the Flood Authority approved the agreement. The Lewis County PUD and their consultant, EES Consulting, have begun the study, which is expected to be complete in 8-10 months.

Basin-Wide Studies and Projects Package The Flood Authority's Board Advisory Committee worked with ESA Adolfson to put together a package of studies and projects basin-wide that will reduce flood damage and provide information needed to support larger projects in the future. The package includes an early warning system, updated and accurate models of flooding in the basin, an analysis of ecosystem services, and a feasibility analysis of modifications that could be made to the Skookumchuck Dam. The Flood Authority approved this package at their April 16th meeting.

Recent Presentations On April 16th, the Flood Authority heard a presentation from Mark Stewart of Washington State Emergency Management on mitigation grant programs for which local jurisdictions can apply to in order to fund recovery from flood events. The Flood Authority also heard a presentation from Tony Briggs of TransAlta on the operation and potential flood storage benefits of the Skookumchuck dam, which is on the Skookumchuck River upstream of Bucoda, Centralia, South Thurston County, the Chehalis Reservation, Oakville, and Grays Harbor County. Finally, the Authority heard the final report on their public values survey from Stuart Elway of Elway Research. The survey report can be accessed on the Authority's website.

Meeting notes can be found on the Authority's website (<http://lewiscountywa.gov/communitydevelopment/chehalis-river-basin-flood-authority>).

Upcoming Meetings

Authority work session on May 21st at 9:00 AM at the Veteran's Memorial Museum in Chehalis

- Presentation on ESA Adolfson's proposed scope of work for facilitation, staff support, and technical services for July 2009-June 2010
- Presentation from the Cowlitz-Lewis Economic Development District on the Lewis County Disaster Flood Strategy
- Authority discussion on flood-related regulations throughout the basin
- Authority discussion on recommended actions to reduce flood damage in the basin

Authority business meeting on May 21st at 1:30 PM at the Lewis County Historic Courthouse in Chehalis

- Discussion of a scope of services and contract for Earth Economics to conduct an economic analysis of ecosystem services throughout the basin
- Officer elections for Chair and Vice-Chair positions
- Flood Authority budget for July 2009-June 2010
- Discussion of recommended actions

Board Advisory Committee meeting on June 5th.

For more information, contact

Spencer Easton
ESA Adolfson
360.878.9682
seaston@esassoc.com

Pat Anderson
Lewis County Community Development
360.740.2677
pat.anderson@lewiscountywa.gov

The Authority's web site:
<http://lewiscountywa.gov/communitydevelopment/chehalis-river-basin-flood-authority>

Members of the Flood Authority

Grays Harbor County
Lewis County
Thurston County
The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis
Aberdeen
Bucoda
Centralia
Chehalis
Montesano
Oakville
Pe Ell