

Chehalis River Basin meeting

March 6, 2017

3:02 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, Glenn Carter, Dave Muller, Jim Kramer, Heather Page, Bob Montgomery, J. Vanderstoep

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Members of the group introduced themselves.

Jim Kramer gave an overview on the dam proposal. He said the governor wants to continue working on an analysis. He said the recommendation is to apply for permits and do a project-level EIS in the next biennium. The workgroup recommended pursuing the feasibility of the dam, he said, as well as natural ways to slow the water.

Jim Kramer said the recommendation was to apply at the multiple levels. He talked about having the county or flood control zone district sponsor the proposal.

J. Vanderstoep discussed a proposal before the state Legislature.

Jim discussed a Discussion Points handout (enclosed).

Heather Page discussed the need for a project sponsor, and she discussed the permitting process. She said a decision would be needed. She said Ecology likely would be the SEPA EIS lead or co-lead.

Jim said that normally with SEPA, the applicant would pay. In this case, the state would pay, he said, and having Ecology take the lead may prove beneficial. He said there is money to pay for a consultant.

Dave Muller said he recalled working as a co-lead on a past project.

Heather said permits, including a shoreline permit, would be needed. She said a SEPA review would still be needed.

Glenn Carter asked what would happen if the county took the EIS lead. Heather said it may help the county schedule-wise to be the lead.

Heather said the risk is that if the county takes the lead, people may direct their displeasure at the county rather than the project.

J. Vanderstoep said the first question is, "Who is going to apply for this?" Then it would be, "Are you the sponsor? The lead?" he said.

The group discussed the fact that having the county take the lead would give the county a better hand on scheduling. The flip side, J. Vanderstoep said, is that having it come from the county may draw more questions than having it come from Ecology would.

Jim said having Ecology take the lead gives a better chance of having the proposal viewed objectively. He said working as a joint lead would give the county a voice in the process.

Jay discussed the Flood Authority. He said no one in that group likely would raise their hand to be the sponsor.

Glenn said the county wants to understand the permitting process, as between the county or the district. He said legal counsel would prefer to have it handled by the Flood Control Zone District.

Heather used the Seattle waterfront project as an example. She said Seattle was the EIS lead.

Jim said there are questions about elections and fees for a flood control zone district that can wait until the project is further along. He said previous talks didn't include specifics. He said it would be best to complete the project-level EIS first.

Glenn asked who would review the proposal if Ecology and county were co-leads. Anchor QEA said Ecology and the Army Corps of Engineers.

The group talked about the pros and cons of Lewis County or the district being the sponsor and co-lead. The group also discussed the pros and cons of having Ecology act as the co-lead.

Jim said the county could choose one of five options, including an option providing flood control during major flood events, one that stores water year round, and one that could store water in the future. He said technical help could be hired using the state process (using Anchor QEA) or the county could look at who it would want to hire. He said that regardless of lead, co-lead, etc., the county would want to hire someone it could trust.

Glenn asked the following: If the county were to be a joint lead with DOE, would that make it a joint lead with the Corps? Bob Montgomery said it would depend. He said that there would be benefits to joining the SEPA and NEPA processes.

Heather said she has seen many start out as joint leads only to have DOE and the Corps split before completion. Jim said there's a benefit cost-wise if it's joint.

J. Vanderstoep asked what timeline would be needed for the designation of a sponsor. Jim said July 1 would be the deadline for choosing the sponsor, announcing it, and hiring an owner's representative to spearhead the project. He said he'd like the decision made by mid-April.

Dave said he had hired an engineer for the Cowlitz Falls project. He said the job was listed as "project engineer," and the individual reported to the Board. He said it was a mixed bag because one outfit did the preliminary work and another firm finished the design and permitting work. He said he later hired another engineer as a construction oversight person for the PUD.

Dave said it might make more sense for the county to start the process.

J. Vanderstoep said that the district or county would have to have initial resources. He said at a later point, it would be good to have that borne by the flood control district. He said perhaps expenses could be paid by the state in the fledgling years.

Jim and Heather discussed the needed local permits, such as grading and filling, shoreline, etc.

J. Vaderstoep said it seems realistic for Lewis County to be the project sponsor. He said the SEPA lead could be the county or the Department of Ecology, or the DOE and the county could be co-leads.

Glenn reiterated the two main issues: Who would be sponsor and who would take the lead (or co-lead)?

Heather discussed a timeline, budget, and schedule.

Commissioner Stamper asked if the county could take the lead and then hand off the baton.

Heather said that as the sponsor, the county may still want representation as a lead or co-lead.

Glenn said the sponsor is the person promoting the project. The lead is the entity that would regulate it. He said DOE would be the regulator, either as lead or co-lead.

Jim said the group could meet again in a couple of weeks.

Commissioner Jackson asked if there are any dams similar to the one being proposed for Lewis County. Bob Montgomery said there are some that are similar.

Commissioner Jackson left at 4:06 p.m.

Jay discussed the Mossyrock dam and the plans to lower the lake. He said the proposed dam would be built to withstand a 5,000-year earthquake. He also said the range of operational costs has been pegged at \$500,000 to \$1 million. He said that amount, spread out over five districts, would make the costs nominal. Commissioner Stamper talked about the fact that the people living in the flood control zone would shoulder the costs.

Meeting ended at 4:14 p.m.