

Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership

Steering Group Meeting Summary

Meeting date: July 28, 2009 3:30 pm

Steering Group Members Present:

Patty Boyden	Port of Vancouver
Pete Capell	Clark County Dept. of Public Works
Pete Mayer	Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation
Lee McAllister	Fruit Valley Neighborhood Association
Dorie Sutton	City of Vancouver Dept. of Public Works (alternate for Brian Carlson)

Public in Attendance:

Thom McConathy	Citizen
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Other Agency Members Present:

Andrew Ness	Port of Vancouver
Ron Wierenga	Clark County Dept. of Public Works
Mykalann McNeel	Port of Vancouver

Project Management Team:

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

Project Manager Update

Phil Trask opened the meeting with a discussion of the closure of Vancouver Lake on July 22 by Clark County Public Health due to elevated levels of E. coli bacteria and cyanobacteria. All were notified of the closure the previous week.

Phil informed the group about the revised nutrient budget/water balance proposal from US Geological Survey (USGS). USGS had previously submitted a proposal for work the Partnership described under the Centennial Grant application. As discussed at previous meetings, the project did not get funded under the Centennial Grant process. USGS was asked to revisit the proposal based on Technical Group review of the first proposal and the current funding situation. The main change in the proposal was some greater details in areas where clarification was requested. Another change was to start the project this October and to take a more gradual approach to the project, taking advantage of potential future funding sources that would not be available at the beginning of the project. Also, at this time USGS was able to identify more clearly what level of funding match they would likely be able to provide for the project at each stage, which increases in future years. The total cost to the Partnership would be \$351 thousand.

The group reviewed the proposal and budget in general terms. The project as described would last a total of three and a half years. The project would provide the Partnership with important information on the hydrology and chemistry of the lake (two of the six study areas described in the Technical Foundation). After that point the Partnership could start making management decisions, or information gained may point to a need to look more closely at inputs from stormwater, tributaries, or other potential nutrient sources. The Partnership may choose to use the information for modeling as well, but the type of information gained from the project is considered necessary for informed lake management.

Phil then gave an overview of an alternative approach that he received from other consultants. This approach is slightly different than that of USGS in looking at the nutrient budget/water balance question. The biggest difference between the two is the latter proposed a shorter study, with one year of data collection, where USGS proposed two years of data collection. This scope of work added sediment sampling for development of a phosphorous budget. Also, the groundwater inputs would not be measured directly but calculated through a water balance equation. The consultant believes the inputs from different areas of the lake bottom can differ dramatically based on substrate in an area, so that direct

measurement is problematic. The total cost of this approach to the Partnership was less than the USGS proposal. Other consultants were offered the opportunity to develop an approach. If a private consultant is used, a request for proposal or request for qualifications will be necessary.

A Technical Group meeting will be set up to review the revised USGS proposal, discuss the consultant proposal in general and make a recommendation to the Steering Group on how best to proceed, whether it be partnering with USGS or generating a RFP/RFQ. Knowing information about potential collaborators could give the Partnership better standing when applying for funding sources. It is also helpful in forming a more realistic budget for proposed studies.

The Steering Group affirmed that the nutrient budget/water balance work needs to be done in order to move forward in addressing Vancouver Lake's cyanobacteria and water quality issues. The sooner the results are known the sooner we can make informed management decisions for the Lake. There are some funds in the Partnership account, and the three agencies (Clark County, City of Vancouver, and Port of Vancouver) anticipate continued with annual contributions. These funds may be used to start research. Ron will review the finances of the Partnership, including planned expenses, and update the Steering Group.

Phil discussed the potential for using and modifying the groundwater seepage model previously developed for the Port and Clark Public Utilities. The Project Management Team talked with the consultant, who proposed changing the boundary conditions for areal recharge, river stage and lake stage based on lake gages. The model would predict monthly net flow and total inflow and outflow. This would be at a cost of \$9700. This work will be a discussion item for the Technical Group and how and when it might fit into the water balance effort.

Patty raised the concern that for any work performed there needs to be a clear understanding of and agreement to due dates so that delays in study findings do not delay lake management.

Pete Capell asked about the pros and cons of funding the start of a project and then applying for funding. Others felt it could show strong commitment, which was a comment in the Freshwater Algae grant award.

Potential Funding Sources

Phil told the Steering Group about NOAA's Harmful Algal Bloom Program funding opportunity. Congressman Baird's office notified Loretta Callahan about it. This could fund needed research in Vancouver Lake. However, for this funding program freshwater lakes that are not part of the coastal zone are not eligible. Eileen contacted NOAA staff to check on the definition of "coastal" as it varies with different agencies and program, and within this program's definition the coastal zone does not extend as far as Clark County or Vancouver Lake (tidal influence does not affect the determination).

Ecology's Centennial Clean Water Grant process is scheduled to open on September 1, with proposals due December 1. Phil stated that staff will make some changes to the current proposal and with what we have learned over this year a refined grant proposal will be submitted. Project Management staff also plan to meet with Ecology program staff to better inform proposal development.

Ecology's Freshwater Algae Grant program is scheduled to open October 1, with proposals due November 1. This program makes it clear that they give a lower priority to projects that have been funded previously, making the likelihood that a Vancouver Lake Partnership project getting funded is unlikely after receiving funding last year. The program also focuses on education and outreach regarding algal blooms. The Project Management team will contact the program. We will also contact Tom Gonzales to see if Clark County Public Health is considering applying. Public Health might consider proposing educational and outreach materials regarding Vancouver Lake to further Public Health's mission as well as increase the public's knowledge about Vancouver Lake issues.

Schedule for Contract Deliverables

Phil handed out a draft schedule for the development and completion of contract deliverables prior to the December 31st end of contract between the Estuary Partnership and the County, to which PC Trask & Associates is subcontracted.

The Project Management Team has started putting together the requested Five Year Research Plan. It is currently simply forecasting when various tasks of the six research areas defined in the Technical Foundation would take place. This plan will be best informed with input by a limnologist in addition to the Technical Group. The limnologist would be able to give more realistic cost estimates to the projects to better inform the Partnership in undertaking research activities for Vancouver Lake. Patty stated it seems like a good idea to get a Limnologist's input. Ron will look at the hours needed and possible cost of hiring a limnologist prior to a decision being made. Plans are to have an outline late August, share a draft with the Technical Group in September, and have the Steering Group see it once more to provide input before finalizing. Under this schedule the final plan would be presented to the Partnership at the October 21st meeting.

The Management Alternatives Document is very conceptual right now. Plans are to discuss a draft with the Technical Group mid-October, and share it with the Steering Group prior to and after the Technical Group before completing the document and presenting the final document to the Partnership on December 16th.

Patty asked about the contract end date. The agency members of the Steering Group will get together to discuss contracting approaches for after this contract expires.

Technical Group Update

Ron commented that the Technical Group issues were incorporated into the earlier discussions. The Technical Group will look to meet mid-August to review the Nutrient Budget and Water Balance proposal and make a recommendation to the Steering Group.

PIO Group Update

In Loretta's absence Phil informed the group of the notification process for the recent closure of Vancouver Lake. Loretta sent the closure notice to the Project Management Team, which forwarded it to the entire Partnership the following day. Phil asked the Steering Group if such a timeframe was acceptable, anticipating similar timeframes or possibly longer depending on staff activities. If such notices require immediate circulation, PC Trask will revise its part of the process to avoid any delays. Agency members will consider the appropriate source of such notifications to the Partnership and the expected notification timeframe.

Pete Mayer gave an overview of the Clark-Vancouver Parks and Recreation process. Their weekly marketing/public notification meetings provided the staff with a timely update for the lake closure. From the Parks' point of view there is good internal communication between the City and County.

Andrew raised a concern of the PIO group that the public notice on the closure of Vancouver Lake had no mention of the Vancouver Lake Watershed Partnership and the Partnership's work to address lake water quality issues. This missed an opportunity to educate the public about the Partnership. In the past, County Public Health used a PIO-provided paragraph regarding the Partnership on such notices. The PIO group will work to get a new paragraph to Public Health to make it part of any notices regarding the Lake.

The PIO group often gets questions from the public on how the Partnership is moving forward. The process of learning about the lake's processes takes a long time, and some in the community are frustrated by what can seem like a lack of action before management actions start addressing the Lake's problems. Thom mentioned that it might be good to inform the public about the many people and agencies that are in the Partnership and their time spent in making progress for Vancouver Lake.

Patty asked for the PIO group to develop a general scope and budget for materials and press releases for informing the public. This would be for the Steering Group to consider, which will be important when considering the considerable technical effort contemplated. Andrew will follow up with Loretta to develop such a scope of work & budget.

Pete Mayer asked if there was anything onsite at Vancouver Lake Park, like a kiosk, letting people know about the watershed ecosystem, the Partnership, and lake issues. There is a sign that discusses the establishment of the Park but not specifically about the Watershed Partnership and its work to address lake issues. Andrew mentioned the postcards the PIO group developed in May for handing out at the entry gate when users enter the park. The PIO group does not know how many postcards have been handed out to date or if more postcards are needed. They will follow up. An interpretive sign would be valuable in getting the message out, and may also assist in getting future funding for Vancouver Lake projects if potential funders know that the public is being educated about lake issues.

Expanding the PIO group beyond its current two members would help with outreach. Pete Capell mentioned that the County is starting interviews for the third PIO group member to replace the previous County member.

Next Steps/Close

Planning for the next Partnership meeting

Phil posed potential topics for the Partnership meeting, which would be a discussion of progress being made in topics discussed with the Steering Group, without any end products at this time and without outside presentations such as EPA, Public Health, or WSU. The Steering Group decided to cancel the next Partnership meeting as project tasks are not at the point of a presentation. A newsletter will go out to the Partnership in place of the meeting to update the members on progress made and next steps.

Phil thanked the group for attending and closed the meeting.

Next Meetings:

Steering Group Meeting on August 25, 2009, 3:30 - 5:00pm

Full Partnership Meeting on October 21, 2009, 4:00 - 6:00 pm (note: August 19th meeting cancelled)

All meetings will be held at the Port of Vancouver Administrative Offices.