

WCTU Conservation Committee report
March 13, 2010

The 2010 WCTU Conservation Committee is comprised of WCTU Chapter presidents and interested WCTU members.

During our monthly, one-hour conference calls we present our status reports and discuss any specific challenges we're having with our projects

Current status of WCTU-sanctioned committees:

- **Chehalis Basin Flood Control and Hydro** – Ric Abbett:
 - Attending monthly Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority and Chehalis Basin Partnership Meetings – Bruce Treichler
 - Tracking and sharing related media articles – Jim Wilcox
 - Will provide public comment regarding preliminary FEMA Chehalis Basin floodplain maps (Lewis County) – following March 15 release
 - Will fly the Upper Chehalis Basin and several of its tributaries to observe and record impacts of past and current land use practices – April 3
 - Bob Vadas, Paul Sparks and Bill Abrahamse discussed the potential of off channel impoundments as a tool that could be utilized as we work to oppose mainstem water retention facilities in the Chehalis River
 - WCTU opposition to taxpayer funding of Chehalis Basin engineered flood control projects along with WCTU support for the restoration of natural Chehalis Basin processes - letter approved by Bill Abrahamse and delivered by Ric Abbett via e-mail to Washington Legislature – House Capital Committee
 - Kate Miller, Bruce Treichler and Jim Wilcox met 3/12 with representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation to share common concerns and potential solutions regarding Chehalis Basin flooding.
 - Five Chehalis Tribe representatives attended our two-hour meeting, that was followed by lunch that was followed by a Chehalis Basin field trip Those representatives from the Chehalis Tribe were their Tribal Chairman, Natural Resources Director, Governmental Liaison, Environment Program Specialist and Fish Biologist.
 - Significant discussions during the meeting:
 - The WCTU position regarding natural solutions via engineered solutions to Chehalis Basin floods
 - Chehalis Tribe agreement with the WCTU position
 - Chehalis Tribe delivery (as a Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority member) of the WCTU position paper for discussion during the March 18 Flood Authority Meeting - to be attended by Bruce Treichler
 - Confirmation that Weyerhaeuser's steep slope logging practices in 2007 was the primary cause of several downstream bridges and roads being destroyed following the 500-year, December 2007 rain and wind event. It was also confirmed that

the proposed site for the reservoir above Pe Ell where this irresponsible logging occurred will be inundated by the proposed reservoir, thus removing liability from Weyerhaeuser.

- Politically-sensitive strategic discussions regarding Chehalis Tribe positions associated with Chehalis Basin flood control

- Opportunities for future collaboration between Chehalis Tribe and WCTU:
 - Their desire to get their tribal fishermen away from nets and involved with effective, selective harvest practices to send the natural spawning trout and salmon upstream. This is the right thing to do. In addition, they plan to market their harvested hatchery fish as a "Green" product given their effort to protect and restore natural spawning salmonids.
 - Restoration of the Upper Chehalis basin, riparian zones and floodplains
 - Approve preliminary FEMA floodplain maps
 - Explore the opportunity to convert the TransAlta site, once the plant is closed to a corporate / industrial park and then relocate businesses in Chehalis Basin floodplain to the new corporate / industrial park.
 - Tighten regulations regarding tribal fishing at the mouth of the Chehalis. This is an issue that several WCTU members would support given past fishing practices by the Quinault Indian Nation to harvest the Chehalis River fish. WCTU should be very cautious about official positions of support in this fishing rights / harvest dispute between the two tribes.

- In addition, at least two Chehalis Tribal representatives at today's meeting are interested in flying the April 3 LightHawk-sponsored flights over the Upper Chehalis Basin.

- Next steps:
 - Provide condensed WCTU position paper and press release to specific media outlets
- **Climate change – Impacts to natural spawning trout and salmon – Jim Wilcox**
 - Presentations during June 12 WCTU Spring Meeting from: WDFW, USFWS, USFS, Tribal Natural Resources, University of Washington, alternate energy industries (tidal, wind, solar, nuclear, etc.)
 - Theme of 2010 Spring Meeting: Climate change – Impacts to natural spawning trout and salmon:
 - Keynote speaker: Senator Maria Cantwell or Senator Patty Murray
 - Keynote speaker: Chris Wood (WCTU CEO), Jack Williams (TU scientist)
 - Assistance with invitations, press releases and planning will be appreciated.

- Paul suggested that a larger venue be selected for these important and timely presentations
 - As previously decided, a larger venue could be utilized in the future if WCTU leadership determined that the interest is there and that we could generate funds by hosting it.
- **Columbia Snake River salmon restoration** – Sam Mace (Not available / no report)
- **Elwha River restoration** - Bill Robinson (presented by Jim Wilcox in Bill's absence)
 - Restore self-sustaining populations of natural spawning coho, Chinook and steelhead.
 - Utilize new hatchery for ten years to provide clean water refuge while sedimentation is being flushed downstream, a six-year process.
 - Action plan:
 - Develop on page list of talking points to clarify planned operation of the hatchery
 - Strive to identify, fund and implement adaptive management studies and monitoring plans to achieve coho, Chinook and steelhead restoration
 - Meet more with Olympic National Park, tribes and other stakeholders to continue to solidify plans
 - WCTU-hosted Elwha River restoration presentations / panel discussion during January 8, 2011 WCTU Winter Meeting in Seattle.
- **Hatchery Reform** – Paul Sparks (brief mention of Elwha hatchery and Cowlitz hatchery along with concerns regarding privatization of some of Washington's hatcheries – regarding hatchery reform)
- **Wild Steelhead Coalition** – Dick Burge (Not available – no report)

Side issues addressed by members of the WCTU Conservation Committee:

- King County – Large Wood Placement – boating safety
- TU – Bull Trout Critical Habitat scientific comments
- Wild Olympic Peninsula Rivers
- Volcano Country Wild and Scenic River designations – Ric Abbett
 - WCTU signed as a partner on this American Rivers-sponsored initiative
 - TU National staff may endorse this initiative as well.
 - Clark County TU endorsed it previously
- Diseased hatchery steelhead – egg disposal
- Toutle River siltation
 - Don will be our lead on this issue
- Preliminary FEMA floodplain maps
 - Chehalis Basin
 - Green River
 - Skagit River