

Chehalis Basin Local Actions Program • Implementation Advisory Group

MEETING 3 SUMMARY

Date: Monday, January 11, 2021
Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST
Location: Zoom online meeting

Purpose of Meeting

- Review Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) work plan and schedule
- Continue discussion of regional/national programs using structure relocation, acquisition, and retrofits for flood damage reduction and feasibility of implementing a floodplain acquisition program in the Chehalis Basin

Meeting Notes

These meeting notes are intended to be a public record of key points, questions, and discussion topics raised during the meeting. They are not intended to be transcripts. The meeting was recorded on Zoom.

IAG Workplan and Schedule

Jim Kramer (meeting facilitator) reviewed the IAG’s upcoming workplan and schedule (see table below) and summarized IAG Meeting 2 on December 16, 2020, which included discussion on land use recommendations and implications (continued from IAG Meeting 1); an overview of current and future 100-year floodplain estimates; and an initial presentation and discussion of floodplain acquisition programs. The OCB Team will refine the land use recommendation from the feedback of the IAG and bring back to the revised recommendations for discussion with the IAG.

IAG Meeting	Date	Meeting Topics
Meeting 4 CANCELLED	Wed., Jan. 13, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow up discussion on possible floodplain acquisition programs• Preview information from Technical Advisory Group (TAG), including structural approaches and implications, erosion issues, and floodplain storage
Meeting 5	Thu., Jan. 21, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow up discussion on possible floodplain acquisition programs• Preview information from Technical Advisory Group, including structural approaches and implications, erosion issues, and floodplain storage
Meeting 6	Thu., Feb. 11, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow up discussion on Meeting 5 topics• Implementation
Meeting 7	Mon., March 22, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IAG information and the Chehalis Basin Board
Meeting 8 (may be with the TAG)	TBD in March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report back on the Board’s discussions and next steps

Quinault Indian Nation Taholah Village Relocation Master Plan

Kelsey Moldenke (Senior Planner, Quinault Indian Nation [QIN] Planning Department) presented an overview of the QIN village relocation master plan. Taholah Village is located at the mouth of the Quinault River at the Pacific Ocean and is threatened by sea level rise and tsunamis associated with an earthquake. The QIN’s relocation master plan outlines the steps the nation is taking to relocate the Village further uphill (above the inundation zone). Creating the relocation vision and plan involved

several actions, including soliciting extensive community input; identifying development needs (housing and community buildings); considering ways to include art and culture; and designing energy efficient and climate appropriate infrastructure. Funding is one of the biggest barriers in moving forward with the plan; there is a general lack of capital funding sources, and there is no grant program specifically designed for relocation. QIN's next steps include grant writing and fundraising; developing strategies to help people relocate; developing engineering and architectural plans; and implementing a building moratorium in the current Village location.

Key comments, questions, and discussion topics regarding the QIN relocation master plan included:

- The current Taholah Village population is approximately 600-650 individuals who live in 170 homes.
- The cost of relocating is estimated to be \$65 million for just the infrastructure; the infrastructure costs will likely increase as planning continues. The costs don't include the cost for a homeowner to construct and purchase a new home because it is unclear how much it will cost to construct homes in the new village and how many residents will want to move to the new village based on the voluntary approach.
- QIN began designing its relocation plan in 2014 and had been discussing the possibility of relocation with community members for several years beforehand.
- One of the first major steps of the relocation plan was purchasing the land where the community could move. QIN owns the land and plans to lease homes to individuals.

Panel Discussion on Floodplain Acquisition Programs

Jim Kramer moderated a panel discussion on floodplain acquisition programs. The three panelists were:

- Katie Spidalieri, Senior Analyst at Georgetown Climate Center, lead author of the Georgetown Climate Center's [Managed Retreat Toolkit](#);
- Kelsey Moldenke, Senior Planner from QIN Planning Department; and
- Toby Levey, Vice President of Real Estate Transactions at Forterra, who has supported a planned acquisition/relocation program in Hamilton, WA.

The panelists discussed five broad topics: program drivers and incentives; program implementation factors; community outreach; program governance; and creative solutions. IAG members asked questions throughout the discussion. Key comments, questions, and discussion topics on floodplain acquisition programs included:

- *Key drivers for the development of and participation in floodplain acquisition programs* include community awareness and acknowledgement of risk (programs are often developed in post-disaster recovery situations); emotional investment in the community (people are more emotionally invested in their existing communities than where they might be going); and broad education and outreach efforts so community members understand risk and mitigation/adaptation options that are available to them. It is important to focus on the quality of life and community in relocation/acquisition in addition to protecting the residents from flooding.
- *Key incentives for participation in floodplain acquisition programs* include financial incentives in addition to offering the fair market value for the property (e.g., relocation funds or bumps above fair market value) and support services for the relocation process (e.g., case management support for real estate transactions, community design/visioning).
- *Role of decision makers:* Acquisition programs (and overall floodplain management programs) are most successful when they are supported by decision makers who are motivated to provide leadership and vision and move forward with actions that are in the best long-term interests of

the community. Without this type of leadership, programs may be challenged by trying to overcome short-term interests of elected leaders concerned about near-term rates, or private-property owners who may distrust authority. When an acquisition program is primarily focused on private property, program managers should be aware of the role decision makers can play in influencing potential program participants (sellers).

- *Proactive vs. reactive acquisition programs:*
 - Although acquisition programs and buyouts often occur in post-disaster situations, there is an active conversation about how to develop more proactive programs. Examples of proactive programs are in Louisiana ([link to LA SAFE site](#)) and Norfolk, Virginia ([link to description of Norfolk Vision 2100](#)), where jurisdictions are forecasting 40- to 100-year impacts of climate change on communities and making long-term plans and investment decisions.
 - Education and outreach are critical components of a proactive program, along with having defined housing alternatives available for sellers. For example, an affordable housing development is available for the 900 at-risk households currently located in Hamilton, WA's floodplain to seamlessly relocate.
- *Changes in property values and tax bases:*
 - There is not much quantitative information about how property values change due to repeated flooding. (Katie referred to a study by Dr. Linda Shi for Boston's Metropolitan Area Planning Council that explores municipal fiscal vulnerability to climate change [[link to study](#)].) However, changing property values is often a barrier to acquisition programs because converting land uses can drastically affect property taxes. One way to avoid shifts in the local tax base is to relocate sellers in the same jurisdiction.
 - Washington has a Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program that addresses the loss of tax revenue when land is converted for conservation benefits. New Jersey had a similar program ([link to description of NJ's PILOT program](#)) that incentivizes local governments to create open space by mitigating the impacts of lost tax revenue and land maintenance costs. With these state programs, it is important to have political support for ongoing funding; no new properties have been eligible for the New Jersey PILOT program because of decreased funding.
 - American Rivers has researched economic outcomes of floodplain restoration, including changes in tax revenue ([link to American Rivers initial report](#)).
 - There were questions raised about the challenges to support low-income renters in an acquisition/relocation program.
- *Successful connections with potential sellers/communities:*
 - It is important to paint a clear picture of the future that includes quality, affordable housing and community infrastructure (e.g., schools) that are comparable to the seller's current situation, as well as the addition of a community asset (e.g., restored floodplain).
 - Most successful programs take a hand-holding approach and really consider social displacement and community connections. This kind of approach often includes case workers to guide sellers through every step of the selling and relocating process.
- *Successful program implementation factors:*

- Language choices and terminology are important. For example, potential sellers have more positive reactions to the phrase “floodplain acquisition” than to “buyout” or “relocation.”
- The more program staff who are local and/or connected to the area, the better.
- Programs need a staff with diverse skill sets who can fill multiple needs associated with buyouts, including connecting with communities and walking sellers through the process (case workers) and real estate transaction and bank specialists.
- Most successful programs have a consistent funding source separate from FEMA or other federal sources. This includes funding for staff to manage a long-term program that will involve long-cycle grants.

Following the panel discussion, IAG members were divided into three Zoom breakout groups to begin discussing the following questions: *Do you think the key drivers and incentives exist or can be in place in the Chehalis Basin to initiate and implement a major floodplain acquisition program? What is current missing?* The IAG regrouped at the end of the meeting and breakout group facilitators summarized key discussion topics with the whole group, which included:

- Initial reactions in terms of prerequisite conditions/acquisition program drivers that are already in place in the Basin:
 - OCB is a major asset in that it is a consistent driver of overall programs, organizes funding mechanisms, and serves as an information repository.
 - Community members who experienced the flooding in 2007/2009 understand the magnitude of disaster, but people tend to forget over time or have their attention diverted to more immediate issues so there will be less interest as time passes.
 - There is an existing, diverse portfolio of different types of land uses in the Basin, and the CFAR pilot phase has engaged local governments regarding technical support.
- Drivers and incentives that are missing:
 - A shared understanding among communities in terms of the threats they’re facing. Eighty-year projections may not be the most important concern when many are dealing with challenging economic issues and the understanding of the future threat differs among Basin residents.
 - A clear vision of the potential future, including viable relocation places with affordable homes and quality infrastructure, and a clear multi-year timeframe to engage and plan before implementation.
 - Comprehensive benefit-cost analysis and a connection with economic development efforts.
 - Strong education and communication components to help potential sellers understand the further we get from flood events, assessed values increase. Need to communicate increased risk of flooding in future and the risk of lower values due to risk of flood. Education and outreach about a floodplain management program and its benefits could help overcome people’s distrust of government and provide a sense of security.
 - Financial and/or business incentives to overcome possible economic development impacts.
 - Support for local governments for program administration and management, including decommissioning and long-term management of properties.

- Other ideas:
 - Owners of agricultural lands may be less likely to sell their properties than homeowners. In these cases, other tools, such as conservation easements or land swaps, could be helpful.

Next Steps

IAG Meeting 4 was scheduled for Wednesday, January 13, 2021, but was cancelled due to widespread power outages in Washington. The next IAG meeting is on Thursday, January 21, 2021, from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM, PST.