



Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

Section 9

Implementing the Strategy through the Salmon Recovery Grant Program

December 2022 update

Overview

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) supports funding for projects that implement local salmon recovery goals and which are technically sound and locally supported. The SRFB relies on community groups working at the watershed scale to come up with project ideas to submit for funding each year. For projects in the area that drains to the Chehalis River and Grays Harbor, this work is undertaken by the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity. This document describes the work of the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity and serves as a guide for those working to help advance salmon recovery in the watershed. More information about the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity program can be found on the website www.chehalisleadentity.org.

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A Guide to Salmon Recovery

Salmon require healthy and resilient watersheds with diverse habitats to support the freshwater phase of their life cycle. Human modifications to both rivers and land put stress on the species that have adapted to these environments. Although salmon populations in the Chehalis watershed are far healthier than many places in Washington State, their habitats have been degraded over the past century by human modifications to both rivers and land. They were heavily impacted by modifications during the 20th century including actions that splash dammed rivers, harvested trees to the stream bank, “cleaned” streams of fallen timber and log jams, and built roads across unstable hillslopes. Today, land use practices have improved under state and federal regulations, but the legacy impacts to salmon habitat remain. In addition, continued impacts to watershed

health occur in agricultural and rural residential areas due to the lack of native riparian trees, spread of invasive plants, and stream fragmentation from road systems. Stresses on these systems will continue to increase because of human demand on the land and of the rivers as well as by climate-induced changes. Given the complexity of these stressors, strategic planning is needed to figure out what restoration and protection actions to focus on in order to best recover wild salmon stocks.

In 2011, the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity released a strategy that includes seven priority goals for recovering salmon. The “Chehalis Basin Salmon Habitat Restoration and Preservation Strategy for WRIA 22 and 23” identifies and prioritizes actions that protect and restore habitat for salmonids that occur in the freshwater and estuarine environments.

Organizations and agencies with the capacity and interest in developing and implementing restoration and protection projects (aka, project sponsors) are encouraged to help meet these goals.

- **Attain a Healthy and Diverse Population of Wild Salmonids.** Diversity can only be maintained if all species of salmon in the Chehalis survive and thrive. This means we need to support the species most likely to go extinct without our help (wild salmon stocks that are listed as “depressed”, “threatened” or “endangered”).
- **Restore, Enhance, and Protect the Grays Harbor Estuary.** The Chehalis River flows into the Grays Harbor estuary, a saline bay that is rearing habitat for many types of wild salmonids. Maintaining this “salmon nursery” will take addressing the loss of shoreline habitat and degraded water quality in Grays Harbor.
- **Restore and Preserve Properly Functioning Riparian Areas.** Riparian areas- the zone between land and water- are critical for salmon survival. Restoring and preserving these area starts with assisting landowners to reduce the impacts of their livestock, and assisting forestry operators to address the legacy of poor forestry practices around creeks.
- **Restore Habitat Access.** Undersized culverts on public and private lands create a barrier to salmonids attempting to migrate between spawning grounds and the sea. There are over 2,700 documented barrier culverts in the Chehalis. Replacing dysfunctional culverts in order to allow salmon passage is a high priority throughout the Chehalis Watershed.
- **Restore Properly Functioning Hydrology.** Ditching, filling and armoring streambanks has led to extremes of high flows in the winter and low flows in the summer, as well as downstream flooding and excessive bank erosion. Reversing these alterations to streamflow will help improve wild salmon habitat.
- **Restore Floodplain and Stream Channel Function.** Floodplains provide fish with habitat for feeding, spawning and rearing, as well as refuge from high velocity flood waters. Levees, dikes, revetments and roads have disconnected valuable floodplains, off-channel habitat, wetlands and sloughs. Projects that restore floodplain function are a major priority in the Chehalis Basin.
- **Prioritize Habitat Projects and Activities within Sub-basins That Provide the Highest Benefit to Priority Stocks.** Since funding is limited, the Lead Entity needs to work to find projects that have the highest potential for yielding the greatest benefit to priority salmon stocks.

All projects are encouraged to have a community engagement component. Projects should, at minimum, include steps to address community interests and concerns. High quality projects also involve citizens in becoming physically involved in designing, implementing, or monitoring the project, or include project elements to educate the local community about the project's goals and benefits and how it contributes to salmon recovery in the Chehalis Basin.

Project Recruitment

Developing voluntary restoration and protection projects on private lands is the foundation on which salmon recovery in the Chehalis Basin is built. Without willing landowners, the rest of this program would be obsolete.

In the Chehalis Basin, **landowner outreach** and project development happens through the various groups (cities, counties, tribes, conservation districts, RFEs, NGOs) who are eligible to sponsor a SRFB project. Staff at these organizations develop relationships with landowners in the basin and develop project concepts that help meet salmon recovery goals. Staff put together the project applications every year. The Lead Entity accepts **Conceptual Project Forms** all year, and encourages project sponsors to submit a project idea as soon as they come up with it, whether they are ready to implement it or not. Further **project refinement** occurs between potential project sponsors, technical experts, and interested citizens happens at meetings of the Lead Entity's steering body, the Habitat Work Group.

The Lead Entity's Watershed Coordinator puts out a **Call for Proposals** each year once SRFB funding availability is announced. The call is sent out electronically to all sponsors in the basin who have submitted applications in the past, and is also announced through press releases submitted to local newspapers, and is announced on the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity website.

The most effective **project recruitment** happens through one-on-one conversations between sponsors and landowners, among sponsors, and between sponsors and the Watershed Coordinator. Habitat Work Group meetings are an important venue where these conversations take place.

The Watershed Coordinator conducts **outreach** to recruit more project sponsors and partners in implementation on an ongoing basis. New players and potential project partners are increasingly showing interest in work in the Chehalis Basin. The Watershed Coordinator initiates one on one meetings to share the vision and mission of the Lead Entity and to discuss opportunities for the potential project partner to get involved.

The Watershed Coordinator undertakes additional project development outreach directly with landowners and other stakeholders. This occurs through participating in related natural resource programs and activities taking place in the Chehalis Basin. Including:

- Coordination with the Chehalis Basin Partnership as they implement the recommendations in the Watershed Plan Addendum (aka, Streamflow Restoration Plan). This is a key opportunity to implement the Lead Entity's strategy regarding streams with water quantity limitations in the Chehalis Basin, and will lead to projects developed to address the quantity limiting factor.

- Participating on Grays Harbor and Lewis County Voluntary Stewardship Program committees as a way to identify new projects that enhance critical areas on agricultural land.
- Participating as an ex-officio Steering Committee member of the Chehalis Strategy’s Aquatic Species Restoration Plan.

Evaluating “Fit to Strategy”

Project sponsors are encouraged to engage with the Lead Entity early and submit conceptual project ideas for screening and **fit to strategy**. Presentation of project ideas by project sponsors to the Habitat Work Group is ongoing throughout the year, but is concentrated in the November to February period. Early discussion of projects is a screening step for both fit to strategy and **feasibility**. This assumption is that by the time a project is submitted to the Lead Entity as part of the SRFB grant round, there has been a determination that the project helps the Lead Entity meet the goals of its strategy. The work remaining is to prioritize allocation of limited funding.

As the next step of review, SRFB project applications are evaluated for fit to strategy through the project ranking criteria. All criteria evaluate a project’s merits for successfully contributing to salmon recovery. **Questions representing a first cut for fit to strategy** are:

1c) Is the proposed action cited in or supported by adopted conservation and recovery plans, habitat assessments or other relevant documentation? (max 2 pts)

Inclusion of the recommended action in the project’s relevant Management Unit, as defined in the strategy, can be considered for full points here. Reference to more recent data supporting project actions are encouraged.

5a) Is the project a high priority action? (max 4 pts)

Actions that address Tier 1 concerns in the Lead Entity strategy are currently considered high priority.

17) Will the project incorporate a long-term education/outreach program? Will the project foster a community conservation ethic through citizen involvement? (max 4 pts)

Education is identified as a priority in the Lead Entity strategy. Projects are evaluated for how well they incorporate community education and engagement elements.

Developing a Long-Term Project List

The Chehalis Basin Lead Entity’s intended approach to developing a project list in advance of a grant round is described in Section 10 of the strategy.

In 2020, RCO asked Lead Entities to develop a Planned Project Forecast List (PPFL) that included viable project concepts that could be implemented with increased SRFB funding over the three subsequent grant rounds. This led to an exercise that helped the Lead Entity meet one of its goals, which has been to **grow a list of projects that implement the Lead Entity’s strategy above and**

beyond what is submitted during any given SRFB grant round. The exercise solicited enough information about each project to create an entry for it in Salmon Recovery Portal (<https://srp.rco.wa.gov/>). Going forward, Salmon Recovery Portal can continue to grow the Conceptual Project database.

In creating the PPFL, Lead Entities were asked to provide a rough assessment of project fit to strategy. This provides a good framework for basic review of proposed project concepts. In reviewing the conceptual project idea, Lead Entity committee members should answer the question: *“Does the project implement a recommended action to address a Tier 1, 2 or 3 limiting factor to salmon in the Chehalis Basin?”*

Followed by the question: *“Is there any known strong local opposition to this type of project taking place at this time?”* If the first answer is “yes” and the second “no” there is sufficient reason to include it on a planning list. The complete project readiness criteria will be accounted for once the project is proposed for funding.

Grant Program Criteria

Often, many strong project proposals are submitted in a single year. A strong set of criteria is needed to evaluate the projects and assign a project score in order to determine which ones are the highest priority. The criteria and questions asked when reviewing proposals are included here. A full project ranking sheet is available on the Lead Entity website: www.chehalisleadentity.org.

Overall Benefit

Critical Need (6pts). Does the proposal address a threat to salmonid habitat and clearly articulate how the threat will be addressed?

Species (6pts). Will the project protect or restore habitat for multiple salmonid species and/or rare populations?

Life History Benefits (6pts). Will the project benefit multiple salmonid life history stages?

Watershed Processes (6pts). Does the project protect or restore natural watershed processes that will improve habitat-forming and/or biological processes?

High Priority Areas and Actions (6pts). Does the proposal address a high priority action in a high-priority geographic area?

Quantity of Benefit (6pts). Does the proposal quantify project benefits for target species? Will the project result in a major improvement or preservation of habitat function or species abundance/ diversity?

Synergy with other Actions (6pts). Does the project build on prior investment and is the proposal part of a strategic approach to achieving habitat goals? Will the project result in a clear

net benefit greater than the proposed project alone because of this strategic approach?

Certainty of Success & Project Readiness

Approach (3pts). Is the proposed action consistent with proven scientific methods?

Scope & Goals (6pts). Does the project scope appropriately cover all project elements necessary to develop, implement, and complete the project? Does the proposal include quantifiable actions, goals and SMART* objectives? Is the project's scope appropriate to meet its goals and objectives?

Budget and Cost Effectiveness (6pts). Is the project budget realistic and does it contain sufficient detail? Is the project cost-effective?

Team Experience (3pts). Does the project sponsor have a demonstrated ability to complete projects as proposed, on time and according to budget?

Schedule/Sequence (3pts). Does the proposal include a logical sequence of actions and is the milestone schedule realistic?

Permits (3pts). Are permits required for the project to proceed? If yes, what is the status of permit approval and is the permitting plan/schedule reasonable?

Landowners (3pts). Do the participating and affected landowners support the project?

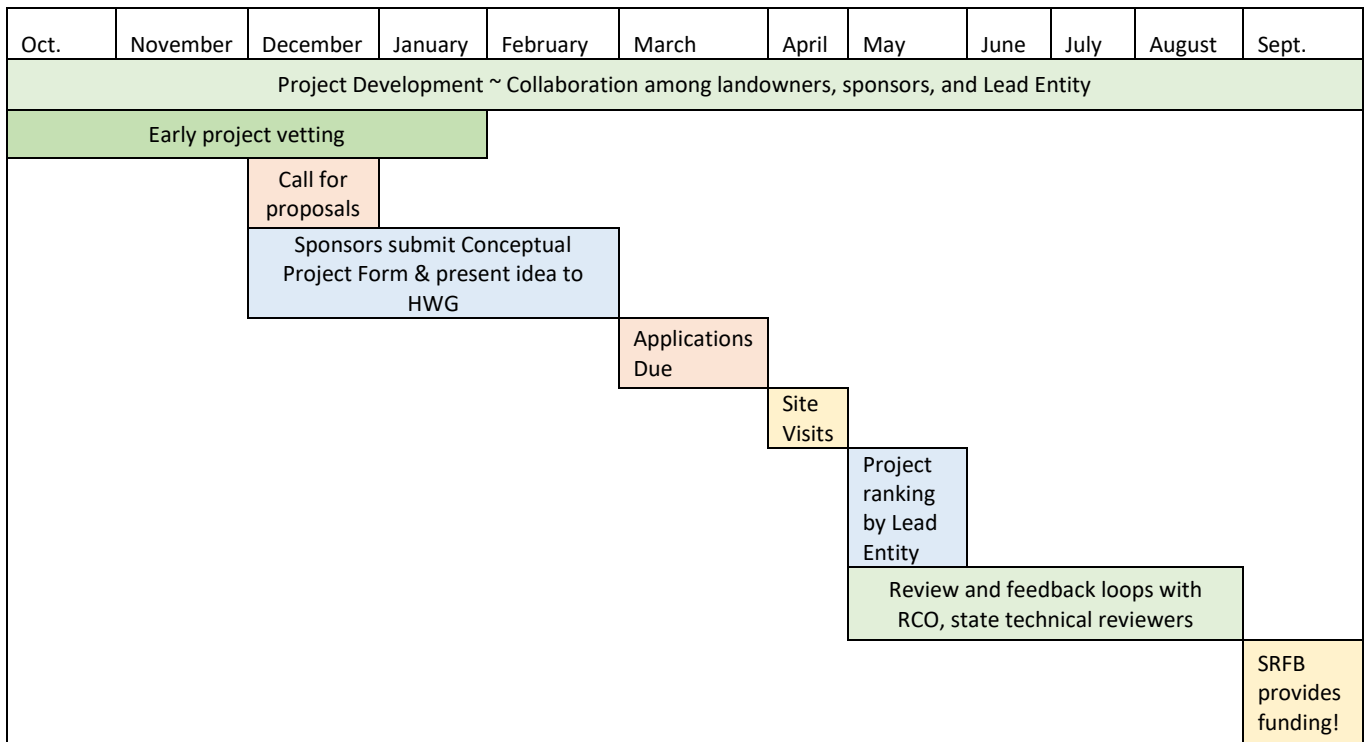
Support Local Values (3 pts). Does the proposal demonstrate a high level of support from local stakeholders (i.e. social, economic, and cultural groups, and/or adopted plans and policies)?

Long Term Education and Outreach (4 pts). Will the project incorporate a beneficial education/outreach program? Will the project foster a community conservation ethic through citizen involvement?

Partnerships (4 pts). Will the project benefit from a diverse, multi-stakeholder partnership?

SRFB Project List Development

The review process for Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) grant applications submitted by project sponsors begins at the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity level and ends with the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Below are the steps taken by the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity to develop its annual project funding list. Statewide information on RCO requirements and processes are included in Manual 18.



Step 1

Most prospective project sponsors have completed extensive groundwork for a project proposal by November of each grant cycle. Project sponsors have selected ideas based on having a high benefit to salmon, high certainty of success, and a close fit to goals and general actions of the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity strategy. As they refine these ideas, they fill out a Conceptual Project Form, available on the Lead Entity website (www.chehalisleadentity.org) and submit it to the Lead Entity Coordinator. Since these forms can be submitted all year, the sponsor needs to indicate that they would like to submit the proposal for SRFB consideration to start the official review process.

Step 2

Soon after receiving the Conceptual Project Forms and the sponsor's intention to apply for SRFB funding, the Lead Entity's Habitat Work Group discusses and provides feedback on the proposals to the project sponsors at their monthly meetings. Typically, the sponsor is invited to present the proposal at an HWG meeting. These presentations may occur up to the due date to submit applications in February.

Step 3

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board process officially begins in October of each year when the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity sets the process and announces the review schedule for receiving applications under the program. The Chehalis Basin Lead Entity Coordinator is a central figure in managing this process.

Tasks that the Lead Entity Coordinator is doing in October through December include:

- Informing prospective grant applicants about the program and revisions, if any, to Manual 18
- Announcing the SRFB schedule, including the submission date for a complete application in PRISM
- Recruiting members for the Local Review Team, who will review and recommend ranking of the projects later in May. Members of the Habitat Work Group, RCO staff, WDFW staff, local citizens, and other salmonid experts typically comprise the Local Review Team.

Between the end of November and February, potential project sponsors are preparing applications in PRISM which later allows the Local Review Team and state Technical Review Panel to comment on the application. Details on what to include in applications in PRISM are outlined in Manual 18, and include at least:

- A project location/vicinity map, a detailed site or parcel map
- Site or aerial photos, if available
- Design plans or sketches that convey the intent of the project
- A detailed project description
- Estimated budget
- Evidence that the project is a high priority within the Lead Entity Strategy

Step 4

Site visits usually occur around mid-April. The Lead Entity Coordinator, the grant manager from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, and members of the Local Review Team attend these visits. During the visits, which occur over two consecutive days, the Local Review Team members are encouraged to actively discuss the projects and note general feedback and questions they might have for the sponsors. After the visits, the Lead Entity Coordinator collects Local Review Team written feedback and questions about the project and provides them to the sponsor through PRISM, generally within a week of the site visits. The state Technical Review Team will provide feedback in PRISM at a later date. Project sponsors use this feedback to improve their

applications.

Step 5

The Local Review Team meets in May, at a time that works for everyone on the team. They rely on their professional and local experience and the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity criteria as the basis for evaluation of each application. A note taker is encouraged to attend these meetings so that the conversation around each project is well documented.

Since the review members rank and score all projects during an intense one-day period, there is often a need to finalize the scores during a follow-up call. The Lead Entity Coordinator reviews scores, looking for any math errors or remaining questions from the notes and makes the call on whether to convene the committee shortly after the ranking meeting.

At their June meeting, the full HWG in its role as Citizen Committee reviews the project list. If there are any concerns with the project ranking, they may ask the Local Review Team to reconvene, respond to the HWG comments, and adjust the list as necessary. If there are not concerns, they will vote on the final Lead Entity Project List. Depending on the amount of money allocated to the Lead Entity, there will be a cut-off point as to which projects are recommended move forward within a recommended project list. Projects below that funding line have the option of being recommended as Alternates should additional SRFB funding become available.

Step 6

The Coast Salmon Partnership, in its capacity as the Regional Organization, prepares and submits to the Recreation and Conservation Office in August its regional assessment of the Lead Entity's project list. Prior to this recommendation, the CSP reviews all regional requests. If there are some Lead Entities with a greater need than amount of funding available, the group will attempt to fill that need from another Coast Lead Entity that can't use its full annual allocation. This process allows excess funding to stay within the Coast region, rather than being allocated elsewhere in the state.

Step 7

At their September board meeting, the full SRFB convenes for final funding approval. They consider the Lead Entity recommendations, comments from Coast Salmon Partnership, reports from the Technical Review Panel and RCO staff, and public comments before making a final decision on grant awards.

Table: 2023 SRFB Grant Round Timeline for the Chehalis Basin Lead Entity.

Date	Action	Description
December 9	Call for Proposals	Call for proposals for salmon projects in the Chehalis Lead Entity region for SRFB funding in 2023. Coordinator will distribute press release and post all materials on website.
December - February	Submit Conceptual Project Forms	Sponsors submit Conceptual Project Forms to the Lead Entity Coordinator. The more thorough the conceptual project form, the more feedback can be provided for strengthening the proposal. Staff will review proposal for “fit to strategy” and provide early feedback.
December - February	<i>(Optional)</i> Pre-Application Meeting	Sponsors may set up a pre-application meeting with the Lead Entity Coordinator to discuss their project, it’s fit to the Lead Entity Strategy, and funding options.
January 9	Habitat Work Group	Conceptual Project presentations before Habitat Work Group (HWG). The goal of these presentations is for the committee to gain an understanding of the basic components of each project and provide feedback and ideas for potential improvements.
January 9	Call for Team Members	Call for community volunteers to join the Local Review Team. Will include press releases and/or ads in local print media to solicit volunteers.
February 6	Habitat Work Group	Conceptual Project presentations before HWG.
February 6	Review Team Membership	Establish final Local Review Team (10-12 members at most)
February 24	DUE DATE: Conceptual Project Form	Deadline to submit the Conceptual Project Form to Lead Entity Coordinator if SRFB funding is desired. Applicants will receive a PRISM # to begin the formal application process.
March 6	Habitat Work Group	Conceptual Project presentations before HWG.
March 31	DUE DATE: Complete Application	Deadline for Project Sponsors to enter Complete Application into PRISM Online.
April 3		LE Coordinator distributes application materials to Local Review Panel team.

April 3	Habitat Work Group Meeting	Regular meeting
April 12-13 (pending)	Site Visits	Project site visits. Local Review Team, SRFB Review Panel members, and RCO grant manager visit each project site.
April 18-19	Salmon Recovery Conference!	Learn from your peers at the Salmon Recovery Conference in Vancouver, WA!
April 30	Feedback	Lead Entity Local Review Team provides feedback to the sponsors via the PRISM online module.
May 1	Habitat Work Group Meeting	Regular meeting
TBD	Local Review Team Project Ranking Day	Local Review Team meets to rate the proposals submitted by project sponsors on their technical merits, benefits to salmon, certainty that the benefits will occur, and certainty that the project can be completed within the grant timeframe and within the proposed budget, community values considered, community support, and partner support. Only Local Review Team members need attend. This meeting will result in a ranked project list.
TBD	Comment forms from RCO to applicants	Applicants receive SRFB Review Panel comments identifying projects as “Clear,” “Conditioned,” “Needs More Information,” or “Project of Concern.” RCO staff accepts “Clear” applications and returns “Conditioned,” “Needs More Information,” and “Project of Concern” applications
June 5	Habitat Work Group	Local Review Team presents the ranked project list. If the HWG has any concerns with the project ranking, they may ask the Local Review Team to reconvene, respond to the HWG comments, and make adjustments as necessary. If there are no concerns, they will recommend a Lead Entity Project List, including alternate projects to be considered for funding.
June 6 or 7	Conference Call (optional)	Lead entity coordinators may schedule a 1-hour conference call with project applicants, RCO staff, and one SRFB Review Panel member to discuss “Needs More Information,” “Project of Concern,” or “Conditioned” projects.
June 26 - noon	Due Date: Applications due.	Applicants submit final revised application materials via PRISM. See Application Checklist .

June 26	Due Date & End	For applicants with Cleared project – Submit your application online. This is the end of the process!
July 10	HWG Meeting	Sponsors share their project status and responses to Review Panel comments. Whole HWG has one more opportunity to discuss project list, accounting for SRFB Review Panel comments and sponsor response. List will be submitted as recommended at this meeting.
July 12 & 13	SRFB Review Panel meeting	SRFB Review Panel and RCO staff meet to discuss projects and complete comments.
July 20	Final comment form	Applicants receive the final SRFB Review Panel comments, identifying projects as “Clear,” “Conditioned,” or “Project of Concern.” The Monitoring Panel will provide final comments for monitoring projects.
July 27	Coast Salmon Partnership	Coast Salmon Partnership Board decides on moving unallocated funds between Coast Lead Entity ranked lists. This only applies when one Lead Entity doesn’t use its full allocation. Final Board approval of ranked list.
August 1	Habitat Work Group	Regular meeting
August 3	Due Date: accept SRFB Review Panel condition	Applicants with “Conditioned” projects must indicate whether they accept the conditions or will withdraw their projects.
August 4	Due Date: Lead Entity ranked list	Lead entities submit ranked lists via PRISM.
August 11	Due Date: Regional submittal	Regional organizations submit their recommendations for funding, including alternate projects (only those they want the SRFB to consider funding), and their Regional Area Summary and Project Matrix.
September 13 & 14	SRFB funding meeting	Salmon Recovery Funding Board awards grants. \$\$\$\$\$.