

# CHRN Annual Meeting

## Meeting Notes

### Session 1: Welcome

**Jonathan Loos**, WA Dept of Ecology, presented first.

- He mentioned the integrated flood resilience from inland to the coast, building a statewide vision and strategy, the flood hazard crisis and opportunity, and the 28 federally declared flood disasters since 1980.
- The Floodplains by Design (FbD) program started in 2013, with a focus to create a coalition, reduce flood risk, improve working lands, and restore habitat. The WA Dept of Ecology administers the FbD grant program.
- There has been \$359 million invested in projects since 2013! Projects typically take four years to complete.
- They try to network information with organizations.
- They have the theory of transformation, embrace coalitions to problem solve, and work to agree on solutions.
- Jonathan mentioned more information about the December 2025 atmospheric rivers: 16 counties impacted; 100,000 people evacuated; 4,000 homes destroyed; and record flood stages in three major rivers. Several projects were mentioned: Clear Creek Acquisition and Reconnection; South Slough Acquisition; Lower Canyon Creek; and Lower Dungeness River Floodplain.
  - He said we are learning. In 2025 we crystallized immediate needs and systemic changes and recognized that floodplain management investments are paying off. But we need more vision for flood resilience: fund immediate needs, speed up the solutions, stop the problem/disrupt the cycle, build capacity. There are two upcoming events: PPAG on June 25, 2026 and Flow and Flourish on November 5 and 6, 2026.

**Guillaume Meyer**, University of Washington Climate Impacts Group, talked about climate change adaptation in 2026.

- To help illustrate the changes, Guillaume showed plan covers from several years. He showed the first national climate report in 2000 vs the one in 2023. He showed the Washington state climate change report from 2012 and 2024.
- He noted that adaptation is an interactive process. He said we can't predict. We use planning, observation, learning, and actions. He said the climate resilience building blocks are authority, knowledge, capacity, and motivation. He noted that we have green skills not green jobs.

## Session 2: Sea Level Rise Panel

This panel was facilitated by Olivia Zimmerman (WA Department of Ecology).  
The session started with lightning talks by each of the three presenting groups.

First presentation: Charlotte Dorn, Climate Resilience Planner, WA Dept of Ecology

- Shoreline Management Act rulemaking
  - Updating implementing rules, establishing sea level rise planning rules for local govts
  - SMA is a cornerstone law, adopted in 1972
    - Three primary pillars- public health, access, use
    - Ecology's role is to connect these pillars to local community activities
- 2023 amendment to SMA (90.58 RCW); required Ecology to update state guidelines
- Timeline
  - May 2024: rulemaking announcement
  - Summer 2025: preliminary draft rule
  - Fall 2026: formal rule proposal - public hearings around the state; preliminary draft has been substantially re-written
  - Spring 2027: rule adoption
  - July 2027: begin local SMP updates
- Working with Climate Impacts Group, Sea Grant, others to build awareness
- Upcoming periodic review schedule:
  - 2027-2029
  - 2028-2030
  - 2030-2032
- King, Pierce, Kitsap, Thurston, Snohomish Counties are major coordinators w/state on this effort

Second Presentation: Candace Penn, Squaxin Island Tribe, Natural resources; Erica Marbett, Squaxin Island Tribe

- Where the creek meets the tide larger storymap available online
- King tide 2022 caused major flooding in culturally significant locations (ex. Port Blakely)
- Coastal flooding project, Arcadia Point
  - Project work with Guillaume Mauger; used tidal data and predictions to estimate sea level rise probabilities
    - 0.3 to 0.8 ft by 2099
  - Used visual aids (graphic of water heights compared to boot height, XtraTuf shortie vs. knee-high) to help people understand the SLR probabilities
  - Port Blakely currently inundated 15 days/year; predicted to double with SLR
  - Skookum Creek expected to be impacted; concern is the current incision of the channel and proximity to the tribe's casino

Third Presentation: Andrea McClennan, Herrera, coastal geomorphologist; Katy Saunders, MAKERS

- Whatcom Future Shorelines: Integrated Coastal and Riverine Planning for Rising Waters
- Objective of project was to integrate best available science to understand range of climate impacted changes across riverine and coastal areas in Whatcom County
- Answering big questions around equity and land use policy
- Translating science into a pilot adaptation plan
- Climate vulnerability assessment
  - Identified hazards present
  - Assessed exposure, sensitivity, vulnerability
  - Exposure + sensitivity - adaptive capacity = vulnerability
- Identified near and mid-term scenarios for the various hazards
- Expect floodplain to expand, more road miles exposed to flood hazard; also many critical facilities and 9,000 other structures
- Used Birch Bay as a case study in pilot adaptation plan
  - Goal of pilot was to balance strategies: protect, accommodate, avoid, relocate with tradeoffs
  - Implementation realities to consider: land use, code updates, planning beyond emergency response

#### Panel Q&A

1. What enabled you to be successful in sea level rise planning / what are characteristics of good planning?
  - a. Andrea: consider geomorphic response
  - b. Katy: consideration of land use in impacted areas and future growth
  - c. Charlotte: can you show that you've moved the needle?
  - d. Candace: Tribes really focus on forward thinking and how the lands are impacted
  - e. Erica: skill sets of contractors, federal funding
2. What are your biggest barriers/gaps? Any unmet needs that CHRN can help with?
  - a. Katy: putting language of climate impacts into the language of land use planning
  - b. Charlotte: funding gaps; CHRN is full of various types of capacity, this community can use its expertise and creativity to make forward progress
  - c. Candace: deep south sound tidal gage(s) will help provide the data that is critical to tidally-driven work; permanent tidal gages
  - d. Andrea: saw limited capacity of public works dept at Whatcom County, saw similar limits of capacity at other communities during the December flood event; need more public access to shorelines
3. What guidance would you share w/communities working to advance their own SLR planning?
  - a. Erica: pick a local structure/place that the community cares about and build a story around that
  - b. Charlotte: state working on developing guidance around SMA updates; focus studies on local goals / desired outcomes
  - c. Katy: understand that promoting relocation and changes in land use take a long time and a lot of communication, important to build a comprehensive vision

- d. Andrea: ask the community what their priorities are, acknowledge that flood hazards are already known.
4. How are you incorporating community voices and considering vulnerable communities?
  - a. Candace: Parks have signage, have used the new knowledge to guide outreach
  - b. Erica: Blend outreach with stories around important cultural phenomena
  - c. Charlotte: local govt sounding boards, meetings with tribal staff, evening public listening sessions
  - d. Katy: pay attention to where vulnerabilities exist and the nuances that come with them in the local community dynamic; affordability drives people toward more hazardous areas sometimes (cheaper housing in the floodplain)
5. How do you balance upstream management with coastal impacts?
  - a. Candace: Coastal communities along the Salish Sea are all facing SLR to some degree
  - b. Erica: Squaxin Island reservation is in full-scale restoration efforts; headwaters are in forest land so they don't expect development upstream
6. How are you approaching taking your vulnerability assessments into implementation, especially considering reduced federal support?
  - a. Candace: Tribe began working on SLR in 2018, research showed that Squaxin island will eventually become multiple islands due to SLR inundation; This drove the Tribe to better understand impacts to the community and salmon habitat (scouring of redds, etc.)
  - b. Erica: Reconsidered long-term maintenance of some buildings on shoreline
  - c. Charlotte: state recognizes that there are multiple levers to pull when it comes to considering vulnerabilities
  - d. Andrea: Whatcom County has a lot of different groups working to address different issues, working to further outreach and get more support

## Session 3: CHRN World Cafe

*No notes—this was an interactive session.*

## Session 4: CHRN Connections

*No notes—this was an interactive session.*

## Session 5: Lightning Talks

### **COHORT:**

- An interagency team to address coastal hazards and coastal resilience across disciplines

- Comes together to provide technical support and assistance. Funded through climate commitment act.
- Engaging with coastal communities centered on different hazards such as flooding, erosion, sea level, rise, landslides, and earthquakes
- Work collaboratively with communities and Tribes on identification, co-creation, and implementation of resilience projects, planning efforts, and other capacity building activities.
- Provide different support that address local community needs.

### Holistic mitigation engagement

- Community priorities centered in everything they do
- Direct technical assistance such as capacity building, training and outreach,
- planning assistance
- cocreation of projects

### Three tiers in terms of leveraging support

- Targeted project support such as hands on collaboration, technical analysis, document development, frequent meetings
- Advisory support such as providing guidance, reviewing documents, etc
- Peer network support
- COHORT has supported >75 projects

### **Dawn Spilsbury (Facet)**

#### Sea level rise vulnerability and risk assessment

The scale of the project was all of pacific county

#### Phase 1:

- Looked at projections and worked with county and staff
- Chose probability levels and storm frequencies
- Mapped projected SLR increases
- They over projected the impacts of pacific county. The county was doing a bay to bay report using different projections, so had to communicate with the community why they were using different projections
- Extreme storms +4 feet for 2050 and +5 feet for 2100. For the coast it was +10 feet. Then they looked at assets. Looked at if something was likely to be inundated by 2050. Categorized into high, medium, and low. The community said thats great, but the maps

weren't capturing flooding seen by rivers or wave runnup. They had to include this for the second phase.

Phase 2:

County wanted attention to Tokeland, Long Beach, Naselle, and Chinook.

- What was different this time was looking at different types of flooding.
- Assessed asset vulnerabilities such as critical facilities, stormwater, drinking water, roads, draining infrastructure, septic/sewer systems.
- Discussed saltwater intrusion
- Reviewed CIP/TIP for priorities
- Consulted with combined technical committee
- Shared though community outreach

The outcomes for this:

- Mapped areas at high risk of 5 types of flooding. How you address different types of flooding needs different approaches.
  - Biggest one in Tokeland was coastal.

Came up with a list of general recommendations:

- Road signs in areas where water may extend over roadways
- Increase base flood elevation minimum standard
- Identified areas where pumps or catch basins are necessary to reduce impacts from overland flooding
- Maintain levees, tide gates, culverts, and relationships with districts
- Prestaging emergency equipment
- Incorporate projections for SLR and precipitation events
- Develop master plans for areas that are most vulnerable

3 projects that came out of this assessment:

1. City of Ilwaco green stormwater infrastructure
  - Work with city and partners to develop probable projects
  - Design components include urban tree canopy and infrastructure
  - Community education with local community center
2. Tokeland community resilience plan
  - Work with Tribe and community to develop possible strategies
  - Assess and prioritize strategies
  - Have actionable plans for implementation

### 3. Seaview culvert inventory

- Complete culvert and stormwater inventory
- ID potential areas of improvement

### **Alexandra Johnson (Duwamish River Community Coalition)**

- Created in 2001 when Duwamish river was a super fund site. Work has expanded to include youth mental health, job training, climate justice, clean air program.
- Grounding in the original waterlines map. What natural land used to look like.
- In 1892 myriad of tribal communities along Duwamish river. Settlers straightened, deepened, and widened, changing it from 9 to 5 miles. Now one of the most toxic sites in the country. This was planned and not an accident. Straightened the river to attract industry.
- Inundation of industry. Over time whoever has owned the land has tried to zone over residential communities to even further push people out. Community has fought back. Robust industry of environmental justice. Sea level rise risk is high along the river. SLR matches with residential areas leading to flooding.
- In december 2022, 30 homes were flooded. Close to 10 of the homes, families weren't able to return. Took community by surprise. This has become an annual risk for people.
- The root causes of historic floodplain. Don't forget that this was the original pattern of the river.
- The quick timeline of the environmental movement. Starting in the 1920s created a cascading effect of displacement for indigenous and residential communities. Around 2001, DRCC was formed focused on anti flooding and displacement.
- How did we get here from over 90 long houses and tribal communities having a beautiful connection to the land to today where the Duwamish tribe is not given recognition and not able to return to the land. What can we do about it?
- Common spectrum to look at that shows the range of adaptations. Nonstructural to nature based solutions, to gray structures. Argues with ECY about source control sites relating to pollution. Seattle public utilities puts out flood barriers.
- Duwamish longhouse as a recognition of that land and a land back example. Its a great experience. DRCC partners with the river access paddle program to get youth and POC

out on the river. Herons nest is also a land back opportunity to return land to the tribe and introduce indigenous species to the area.

- Duwamish peoples park used to be an asphalt company, the port of seattle was the owner at the time. They wanted to pave it over to cap the contamination to make it a parking lot. Community petitioned that the port of seattle voting down their own plan in favor of the park! Habitat restoration habitat including a salmon habitat site. Nature based example that is wonderful to highlight and look at.
- Port of seattle is proud of this effort as and example of regional governments coming together.
- Have worked with communities about voting and making educated decision about what they want the environment to look like.

### **Christine Lynnet and Sandra Girgis (Tacoma and Commencement Bay)**

- Building a culture of adaption through the commencement bay resilience and restoration master plan

Project overview:

- Started project by receiving a national fish and wildlife grant. Robust steering committee and consultant team. Hoping to make a coordinated bay wide master plan with nature based solutions and hazard protections.

What is the plan going to be doing?

Over 40 different plans bleeding into master plan

Strong partner focus, city of tacoma, port of tacoma, etc.

- Guide strategies
- Coordinate partners and communities
- Set the foundation
- Identify opportunities and make it action oriented and for future implementation
- Provide a roadmap for real projects, permitting recommendations, financial roadmap

Strategic priorities:

- Good that steering committee came up with joint strategies together, agree on strategies they wanted to see together

History of the bay:

- Lots of different competing but hopefully complementary activities moving forwards

Why are we doing a resilience and restoration plan?

- Lots of flooding, erosion, habitat loss, rising groundwater issues
- Will be integrating shoreline management program into this plan, prioritizing nature based solutions

Bay wide challenges and opportunities:

- Great steering committee and partners. Looked through a numerous number of studies. Refined to a set of projects recommended in other reports or by other departments. These were at the bluffs, tideflats, by the river. Went from over 40 sites down to 12 sites and move forward with 4 catalytic projects which are now in project design. Informed by typologies around the bay. Around marineview drive. Historically sediment moved from north to south. Now interrupted by marine view drive. Tacoma tideflats area was also looked at. Also sediment and erosion issues along ruston way.
- Narrowing in on ruston way, how do we improve long term maintenance along this section. Public safety is a big risk in this zone. Falling shoreline infrastructure and erosion issues. Cummings park is a project partnered with the city of tacoma and parks tacoma. Looking at integrating nature based solutions to solve for the erosion issues. Integrating salt marshes as well as paths and overwater walkways. Improve a sediment deposit site to provide space at high tide.
- With all projects trying to include multiple benefits such as floodplain preservation, public access, and integrating cultural values.
- Some sites designed currently. Future of ruston way will include holistic nature based solutions integrated into a concept. Spit at cummings park with salt marsh. Walkways that go over the water.

Resilience and restoration at commencement bay is both about adapting to change and resorting to systems that make the bay thrive.

**Andrew Schwartz and Angela thorpe**

Story time!

- South county task force is in its infancy. year plus into this with no funding. Community engagement.
- Behind the beauty the town is facing a systemic challenge, town sits within a FEMA designated floodplain. This places restrictions on development. Though local planning directs counties growth into these areas.

- Downtown Brinnon sits in the floodplain. Think about paradox, designated for economic growth, though have extreme restrictions not allowing that. Leaves community vulnerable to flood disasters. Default answer was to cross fingers and not have a 100 year flood. This seem unacceptable. Need to figure out how to turn a no to a yes for the survival of the community.
- January 2025, south county task force. Goal simple but massive. Bring community, tribal, agency partners together to talk about solutions around the river.
- Flood resilience in Brinnon, need to look at whole picture, including major infrastructure elephant in the room. Waste water sewer system in the town. Today that system only services the state park along the river. The main sewer line runs right to the center of town. Doesn't connect to any places in the town. If a major flood event were to happen, septic systems would be compromised putting entire flood canal ecosystem at risk. The community center right in the floodplain needs repairs, can't get permits to repair it though.
- This past july, task force organized site visit, walked river bank by downtown. Back at community center, open discussion. Took an opportunity to ask a question. Are we wasting our time trying to find a solution to Brinnons problems? No! (said the professionals)
- Building trust from public agencies and residents is a slow process. The community doesn't feel anything has happened. The opportunity to speak at CHRN, this is action. At this point, given all the hats he wears, executive director of north hood canal chamber of commerce. His life is a non-stop meeting. Nothing lasting gets done without genuine action, community support, and agency collaboration. Appreciative of everyone in this room and all the efforts everyone else within the state is taking to address these issues.
- Partnering with agencies such as north olympic development council, jefferson government, state agencies, tribal partners. It doesn't seem sensible to him or others in brinnon to sit back and wait for a 100 year flood. Had a fire recently. River flooding and fire issues. Common sense tells him, fix the roof before it rains! South county task force is dedicated to finding practical solutions through outreach, partnership, and collaboration.
- NODC has a grant to help with this work. Can't start talking about economic development without talking to the community about fixing this issue about fixing the flooding. Has become a part of a large group of people to figure out how to fix these flooding issues with many compounding factors that take options off the table. Now we can help the community think about what they want to do through community engagement.

## Session 6: Coastal Resilience Fair

*No notes–this was an interactive session.*

## Session 7: Closing Remarks

- It is the 50th year anniversary of the WA State Coastal Zone Management Program
  - 1st CZM program to receive fed approval
  - 6 main work areas
  - Padilla is sister program, part of national network
  - Helps out in many different ways through convening, funding, grant coordination, wetlands management, project review
  - Well known around the country as leader in coastal resilience, due to work that Ecology/ CZM is able to support
  - Partnering with Emergency Management, WA Seagrant, WashDOT–able to make connections and share knowledge
  - 133 local governments across state coastal zone are frontline communities and orgs doing this work
  - Tribes in WA long time leaders in coastal resilience, some of the first SLR and climate vulnerability assessments, leading the way on upland relocation
    - Important to hear from tribal staff on successes and future needs