

**Waterfront Recreation Committee
Minutes
February 13, 2007**

Attending: Members Steve Gates, Lori Stirn, Michael Schock, Laney Gale, Doug Archbald; Commissioner Sherry Bohn; Staff Members: Michael McElwee, Linda Hull, Mike Doke, Laurie Borton, Linda Shames; Others: Andrew Jansky (Flowing Solutions), Bob Leitch (Corps of Engineers) Media: None

Absent: Richard Sassara, Ann Frodel; Commissioner Hoby Streich

Introductions / Meeting Expectations & Outcomes: Sherry Bohn opened the public meeting at 6:05 p.m. and welcomed the audience of approximately 60 people. Bohn said the purpose of the meeting was to gather facts and information about the impact of the larger delta on recreation, listen to concerns, identify issues for resolution, and plan for next steps. She asked those who speak to state name and address (none did) and to keep comments as brief as possible so that the meeting could end by 8:00 p.m.

Overview of Situation / Photos: Michael McElwee stated the Hood River debris from the November 2006 upper valley landslides created the expansion of the Delta area. Since November, the Delta has expanded even more. The Port is analyzing its current state: How big is it? How wide is it? What are the elevations? The aerial photos taken on January 22, 2007 will be used for topographical mapping and survey work. Gathering this information will assist in planning for its uses and management, both long-term and short-term. By working with Mr. Jansky, the Corps of Engineers, and State Lands the Port is studying ownership issues, dredging responsibilities and the future of the Nichols boat basin area. For this summer's recreational season, however, the area will not be dredged. The Port is pursuing federal funding for feasibility studies of the lower Hood River reach and its long-range impacts on the Delta. This might be an opportunity to enhance the recreational experience here in Hood River. The Waterfront Recreation Committee will be discussing those issues brought up at this meeting to determine how all waterfront users can utilize the area cooperatively. McElwee told the audience he appreciated their attendance tonight and participation in the process.

Andrew Jansky, Flowing Solutions, Slide Presentation: Andrew Jansky outlined his experience with water mechanics and fluvial action. He will be able to calculate the volume of materials and elevations once the survey mapping is completed. Jansky's slideshow depicted the Delta area from 1930 to current state, showing that the Delta region is a result of the Hood River (moving faster) and Columbia River (moving slower) meeting together and existed before the dam system was built. The Delta also changes with the movement of the sand itself by water and wind. Even if the area were dredged, it would continue to fill in over time as nature tries to reestablish its balance and equilibrium; similar delta patterns exist all along the Columbia River.

The major Hood River flow events in 1996 and 2006 caused significant change to the configuration of the Delta. The high Columbia flows existing today for fish transport are also eroding and changing the sandbar conditions. As the Delta searches for equilibrium, it is continually changing and large weather events are unpredictable. Jansky estimates that 750,000 cubic yards (cy) have been added onto the top of the existing sandbar with the 2006 flow event and an additional 26 acres (750,000 cy) of sandbar have been created. Cost to remove this sand varies by method (\$3-\$10 cy); the costs are large and the event recurrence is unpredictable. Two main issues identified by Jansky were Recreation (opportunities, separation, uses, safety), and Commerce (Event Site, tour boat access).

Identification of Issues for Recreation / Alternative Approaches: McElwee said most of the Delta area appears to be owned by the Division of State Lands (DSL). Its representative was unable to attend this meeting. McElwee stated there is a public process to determine specific rules of use, which may be a long and involved process, or an agreement can be made among the user groups in how to use it. After asking for input, the following issues and questions were brought forward for discussion: (from Laurie's flipchart notes)

- **Delta Composition**

Logs, debris, rocks/boulders: Jansky said logs add stability to the sand and are beneficial to fish habitat; however, they are dangerous to recreational users. Floating them off in the water is a beneficial and will stay in the eco-system. The recent high pool levels are also the result of changed fish management by the Corps of Engineers. All work must go through a permitting process for any project below top of bank by DSL, Corps, and Fish and Wildlife. It is also not a static beach area and conditions day-to-day will change.

- **Future Planning: Permits Required & Timeline Issues**

- ❖ Can logs be repositioned?
- ❖ Can channel be dug to the west?
- ❖ Can new channel be recreated?
- ❖ Can material be sculptured?
- ❖ Can the Bonneville pool be lowered and water held back at The Dalles to create a volume of water to flush debris off?
 - Feasibility study would be needed
 - Effect of shift, if any, unknown
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have fish and power agreements that need to be considered
- ❖ Can material be moved to create beach at Lot 6?

- **Congestion & Public Safety**

- ❖ User conflicts with more people accessing the Delta from the Event Site
- ❖ Debris covered by higher water levels present danger to windsurfers & kites
- ❖ Swimmers, picnickers, pets in same area as gear and kite lines
- ❖ Beginners in area more appropriate for advanced level
- ❖ Compression of users into a single area-no wake zone?
- ❖ Contained low water gone for beginning kite instruction on west side of spit
- ❖ No place for schools' jet skis in boat basin
- ❖ Who's Liable? Land access is through Port property – public safety issue
- ❖ Marina entrance not affected

- **Short-term Planning**

Multiple lines of demarcation, by use of cones or flags, to specify uses

- ❖ Differentiate cones or flags for public use, for students of schools
- ❖ Water levels will impact zones
- ❖ What about windsurfing race events that need the whole area?

Self-enforcement by all user groups

- ❖ Formation of authorized group of persons who would meet daily (?) to determine conditions

Educate by use of signage/brochures/website links

- ❖ Create Port emergency budget for communication
 - Speed zones
 - Use designations
 - Rights-of-way
 - Turning radius (use jibe buoy?)

Event Site/Sandbar Canal

- ❖ Use floating dock for safe crossing
- ❖ Use of water taxi? (i.e., Port of Everett)
- ❖ Use motorized vehicle to shuttle people and gear?
- ❖ Who governs the use of motorized vehicles on the sand?
(Jones Beach at Clatskanie, Port of St. Helens: negative example)

- **Policies needed for high water / low water**

- ❖ Diverse group of users and "real time" policies needed

- **Lot 6**
 - Bring City into the discussion
 - ❖ Can Lot 6 be opened for use?
 - ❖ Can Port lift restrictions so the City can begin using Lot 6 as a park for recreational access?
 - ❖ Users should contact the City Manager, the Mayor, or Councilors

Nichols Boat Basin

- Water Quality (relative to health issues) – who tests – DEQ/Health Department?
 - ❖ Basin used by swimmers, waverunners
- Flush Water
 - ❖ Create channel to the Hood River?
 - ❖ Pump?
 - ❖ Aerate?

Other

- What is the parking capacity?
- Designate sandbar north of marina beach as the dog area?
- Use of swimming buoys?
 - Water levels change
 - Sand is unstable – hydraulic action takes a long time to stabilize
- Use of volunteer lifeguards; beach patrols; rescue business (would need to be Port concession?)
 - Liability questions

Next Steps

McElwee said the time for any in-water work (dredging, excavation equipment) ends annually on February 28; however, the Port will be evaluating any projects that need permitting for next year's timeframe and have those prepared. He will be meeting with DEQ tomorrow and will ask the boat basin water quality questions.

Steve Gates said the Committee's next steps would be to take this information from tonight along with the contour mapping data and suggested delineation of space needs for various users and any other new information and meet in mid-March. The goal would be for the Committee to recommend a logical and rational set of guidelines for uses around the Delta area.

McElwee emphasized how important it is to communicate among all the entities and stakeholders. The Port will post a Delta Sandbar webpage with photos, mapping information, and FAQs regarding the issue. The new website will have a forum for Port issues but it is not completed at this time. Audience members were encouraged to email additional questions and other concerns to porthr@gorge.net, if not addressed tonight.

Sheriff Joe Wampler stated his office has one marine deputy on duty in the summer season and only for the weekends and they are limited by budget constraints to provide any enforcement or rescue assistance. He believes signage is a must and that the schools and/or watersports people should continue to help in rescues. The buoys tend to get intentionally broken because they are in the way of people using the water, so they might not be a good idea.

McElwee said the user groups need to communicate with their members and be prepared to work together to solve any conflicts during the summer season. The six schools will be meeting when all owners are here in the spring because they have separate issues regarding their concessions.

Next Meeting: Mid-March: Date to be determined.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.