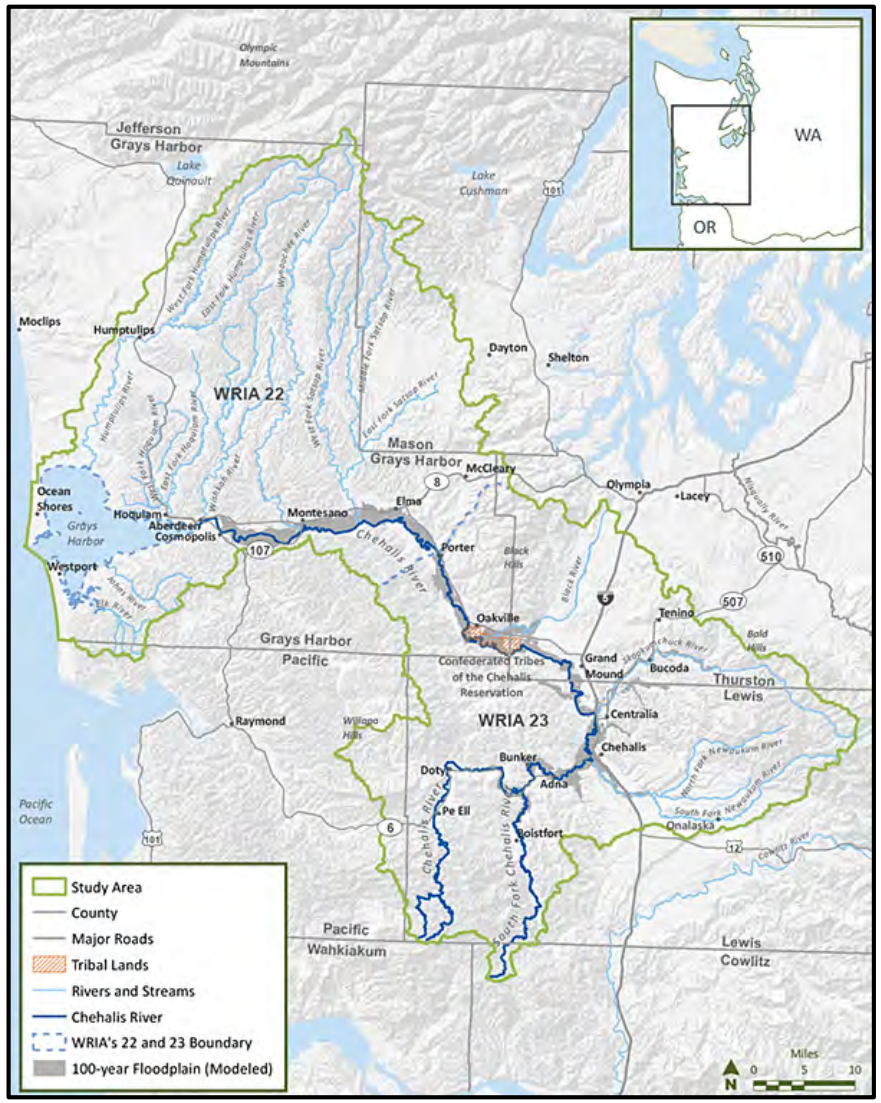
Why the Chehalis, and Why Act Now?

Salmon Recovery Conference

April 2019

Chehalis Basin Snapshot

- 2nd largest basin in state
- I-5 corridor
- Uniquely fertile



Basin Challenges

- Major flooding
  - 5 of the largest floods in basin history occurred in last 30 years
- Climate change
- Low level of historical investment
- No ESA listed salmon species – but close?
- Aquatic species are on the decline

What is Not Working

Lack of suitable habitat, food availability

What is Not Working

Riparian areas outside of managed forests significantly degraded

What is Not Working

Summer temperatures are hot, and getting worse

What is Not Working

Lack of large wood in streams

What is Not Working

Invasive species are abundant

What is Not Working

Development pressure due to population growth

What is Not Working

Land use practices/policies

What is Not Working

90% of floodplain wetlands have be degraded or lost

Effects of Broken Attributes

- Lower survival rates of salmon and other native species
- Limited wetland habitat for all species
- Unnatural erosion rates and incision
- Spring Chinook are currently at critically low levels
- Salmon harvest opportunities are severely limited

What is Working

Forest practices have been improved

What is Working

Most diverse basin in the state for amphibians

What is Working

Significant runs of wild and hatchery salmon

What is Working

Important cold-water springs and tributaries

What is Working

Opportunity for restoration is one of the most significant in the state

Why Now?

Inaction = $3.5 Billion

Climate change and development will threaten all populations – resulting in a further “declining baseline.”

The hole will only get deeper, and prospects for success less certain, unless actions are taken sooner than later.

Approach

Chehalis Basin Strategy

- Collection of actions to address flooding and degraded river habitat.
- Basin-wide and includes near and long-term actions
- Two broad actions types:
  - Flood damage reduction
  - Habitat restoration

ASRP Vision

To provide for a future where the Chehalis Basin can support healthy and harvestable salmon populations, robust and diverse populations of native aquatic and semi-aquatic species, and productive, self-sustaining ecosystems that are resilient to climate change and anthropogenic stressors, while also honoring the social, economic, and cultural values of the region.

Large wood on the Humptulips

Upper East Fork Satsop wetland complex

Aquatic Species Restoration Plan

Four Major Strategies

- Restoration
- Protection
- Institutional Capacity
- Community Planning & Involvement

Questions