History

- 14 federally declared disasters since 1971
- 5 of the largest floods in recorded history in last 30 years
  - 2007 and 2009 were 13 months apart
- Extreme flooding and declining health of the Chehalis River and the aquatic species
- Recent state attention to identify a comprehensive, basin-wide solution
Current Status

- Statewide interest on the Chehalis Basin
- Governor and a Governor’s Work Group examining various large and small scale projects to address flooding impacts and habitat loss
- Decisions are being made at a larger agency level.
Thurston CD Role

Hear from landowners about what they need to lessen flooding impacts on their properties and to their livelihoods.

Use this feedback to be a voice for landowners and reflect their ideas, concerns and needs to the decision-makers during this process.

Bring funding from the massive effort of the Chehalis Basin Strategy to local, small-scale projects that make a difference within our community.
The Sessions

- Labeled the events as Community Listening Sessions
- Sent invitation letters to every landowner in the floodplain of each watershed
- Served food
- Positive messaging
  - “Share your flood concerns, discover solutions, and help Thurston CD identify and prioritize potential projects…”
  - “Landowners attending this meeting will assist in prioritizing future projects that Thurston CD will pursue to improve the natural resources within the Scatter Creek area and the Chehalis Basin”
Format

- Quick introduction to who we are and what we do, followed by presentation on the Chehalis Basin Strategy
  - Emphasized our non-regulatory role
  - Explained our goal of finding local projects to implement on the groundwork.

- Majority of the time spent in small groups receiving feedback from landowners
  - Used questionnaire to focus questions
  - Examples:
    - “How have you been affected by flooding?”
    - “Do you experience bank erosion on your property?”
    - “Do you have suggestions to improve the flooding issue on your property?”
Community Feedback

- Bank erosion and loss of land were primary concerns
- Frustration expressed about lack of funding to address erosion and flooding
- Too many studies, not enough action
- Concern over noticeable decline in salmon over the years
- Desire for farm pads and other flood protection structures
- Frustration expressed at disconnect between County Government and local ag producers
- Concerns with logging methods upstream
- Frustration expressed that landowners have intimate knowledge of land and are rarely consulted
Results

- 80+ attendees over the four meetings
- Landowners opened up and shared their issues
- Attendees felt a part of the process
- One landowner in the final selection process for a large scale habitat restoration project
- Two landowners added to a voluntary list of Thurston County floodplain acquisition
- Many landowners interested in farm pads-- raised areas within a floodplain.
  - Historically not permitted according due to Thurston County regulation
  - Brought the issue to Thurston County and agreed to work together to look at new designs
  - Wrote for and received a grant to fund a needs assessment, design work and implementation.
Results

- Presented the list of frustrations and concerns to the Chehalis Basin Flood Plain Authority
- Partnered with Lewis Conservation District and Grays Harbor Conservation District
- Continue to emphasize the need for local, on-the-ground projects
- Promote the importance of landowner willingness at all times for the Chehalis Basin Strategy
- Changed my own perspective
Next steps...

- Utilize targeted mailings and invitations more often

- Scheduled several other community sessions in other watersheds under a variety of topics
  - Adds to the community-driven aspect of our district
  - Helps us to identify exact areas of need for projects and stay in tune with the watershed

- Continue to build on the relationships built at the first round of community sessions
  - Farm-pad development
  - Reporting back to the community with follow-up targeted mailing
Summary

- Community Listening Sessions
- Gave landowners the opportunity to contribute
- Targeted areas for a variety of habitat projects
- Continue to advocate and share the feedback from the sessions
- Still much work to do