

DECLARATION OF COOPERATION
Spirit Lake-Toutle/Cowlitz River System Collaborative
Final for Signing
December 2021 (all signatures compiled)

Overview

The Spirit Lake, Toutle/Cowlitz River Collaborative (SLTCRC) is an outcome of a recommendation by the [2018 National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine \(NASEM\) report](#) to create "a system-level entity or consortium of agencies to lead a collaborative multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional effort that can plan, program, create incentives, [and identify funding needs, and as appropriate, advance or seek funding¹ to support those needs] to implement management solutions² focused on the entire Spirit Lake and Toutle River system."

The NASEM report was commissioned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) after the U.S. Congressional delegation requested the USFS, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) generate long-term Spirit Lake level management solutions. The NASEM further recommended agencies and entities with management responsibilities "engage in system-wide thinking when making decision about management objectives, approaches, and alternatives for the Spirit Lake and Toutle River system." The purpose of this declaration of cooperation (DoC) is to bring State, Federal, Tribal, and Local Governments together to share information and identify opportunities to address sediment management and risks associated with catastrophic flood risk in the Spirit Lake and Toutle/Cowlitz River system.

The SLTCRC is in Southwestern Washington and geographically will focus on the Spirit Lake and Toutle and Cowlitz River Drainages, including where the Cowlitz meets and impacts the Columbia River. The system is complex, with multiple local, state, Tribal, and federal entities managing various parts of the system toward different goals.

Paraphrasing the NASEM Report, two types of long-term and system-wide risks need to be considered in the Spirit Lake and Toutle River region:

- Risks associated with chronic flooding along the Toutle and Cowlitz Rivers, which cause social and economic disruption in populated and commercial areas and are mostly the result of channel infill from the movement of sediment out of the Toutle River and into the Cowlitz River.
- The potential for life loss and community destruction caused by catastrophic flooding and mudflows into populated areas along the Toutle River and the Lower Cowlitz River.

¹ The brackets indicate paraphrasing of the NASEM wording regarding seeking funding; all mentions of seeking funding herein, acknowledge federal government agencies are not allowed to lobby, fundraise, or advocate for positions or policies.

² Similarly, all mentions of implementing management solutions in this document recognize that individual agencies will act under their legal authorities, constraints, and mandates.

Problem Statement & Objectives

The NASEM report based its recommendation regarding establishment of a system collaborative on the finding that:

“Some coordinating mechanism is needed among responsible agencies to identify management strategies that allow agencies to effectively carry out their respective missions and to engage with the concerns of other interested and affected parties in the region. Without some sort of long-term external influence to encourage and compel the needed coordination, individual agencies may not be able to manage the system in a coordinated manner.”

Once established, the SLTCRC can provide a forum to:

- develop and pursue an aspirational vision for the whole system
- work together on items that contribute to long-term management of the system and safety and economic well-being of downstream communities
- create a communication venue to exchange information, enhance understanding of system complexities and engage interested parties
- raise awareness of those interested or affected by sediment management in the system
- respond to requests from the U.S. Federal delegation, Washington State Legislature, and the Washington Governor on issues related to managing this complex system

Spirit Lake-Toutle/Cowlitz River System Collaborative Team Commitments

The commitments represented below form a public statement of intent to participate in the collaborative to cooperate on addressing sediment management and catastrophic flood risks in the Spirit Lake and Toutle/Cowlitz River system. Members commit to ongoing communication and collaboration, the exchange of information and planning efforts, identifying collective opportunities, and updating and responding to the U.S. Federal delegation, Washington State Legislature, and Governor.

Members acknowledge the best solutions depend upon cooperation by all entities at the table. Accordingly, they recognize each party has a unique perspective and contribution to make, and interests that need to be considered for the group's success. Identified interests to date, unranked, include:

- human health and safety via sediment management
- tribal historical, natural, and cultural resources
- flood risk management
- ecological restoration and fish and wildlife recovery
- economic development and thriving resilient communities
- recreation opportunities
- research integrity and educational opportunities

Actions associated with these interests will follow each agency's authorities and mandates. The SLTCRC will provide information for consideration by county, state, or federal agencies. The SLTCRC will not make or advise on decisions for those agencies.

The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities of the SLTCRC.

The undersigned State, Federal, Tribal, and Local Governments will:

- develop ground rules and operating protocols for working together
- identify communication methods to engage interested and affected parties
- identify opportunities and mechanisms to establish the collaborative long-term
- within each agency or organization’s regulations, identify actions that consider the entire Spirit Lake and Toutle River system
- distinguish individual projects and decision-making processes from the system-level needs and collaborative role/s

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) will serve as the administrative coordination entity, with their Executive Director as contact person. Any signatory to this Declaration can withdraw from the SLTCRC by notifying the CWCOG in a written statement that includes the rationale for withdrawing.

Roles and Responsibilities

<p>State, Federal, Tribal, and Local Governments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signatory to the DoC • Engage, respect, and learn from each other • Participate in good faith in the formation and ongoing function of the collaborative • Abide by shared ground-rules and operating protocols • Individual agencies act under their own authorities and mandates • Participate in subcommittees formed by the collaborative as appropriate • Provide technical information and contribute expertise as appropriate • Bring issues of concern from each entity to the attention of the collaborative • Identify agency and organization planning timelines to facilitate opportunities to meet or advance shared objectives • Share information on projects, plans, policies, and funding opportunities as appropriate • Provide public outreach and education on issues of importance to the collaborative • Assist with meetings, e.g., present information, provide representatives for policy and/or technical issues, potentially host meetings, or lead tours
<p>Agency and Sovereign Government Membership: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, NOAA Fisheries, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration, US Geological Survey</p> <p>State Government Membership: WA Department of Ecology, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, WA Department of Natural Resources</p> <p>Local Government and Special Purpose Districts Membership: City of Kelso, City of Castle Rock, City of Longview, Cowlitz County, Cowlitz PUD, Port of Longview, Cowlitz Conservation District, Consolidated Diking Improvement District #1, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board</p>	

This Declaration of Cooperation, while not a binding legal contract, is evidence to and a statement of the good faith and commitment of the undersigned parties to create common understanding and identify opportunities to reduce risks while addressing multiple functions and benefits in the system.



WA Dept of Ecology, SW Regional Director



Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Natural Resources Director

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U.S. Forest Service, Forest Supervisor
Gifford Pinchot National Forest

NOAA Fisheries, Assistant Regional
Administrator, Oregon Washington Coastal Office

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U.S. Geological Survey
Volcano Science Center Director



Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
Director



City of Kelso, Mayor



City of Longview, Mayor



Cowlitz Conservation District, Director



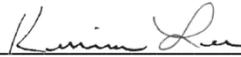
Cowlitz County, Commission Chair



WA Dept of Natural Resources, Pacific Cascade
Regional Manager



Confederated Tribes & Bands of the Yakama Nation
Natural Resources Director



WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
Southwest Washington Regional Director

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OGER.1387647755** Digitally signed by
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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Deputy
District Engineer

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Federal Emergency Management Agency,
Region 10, Mitigation Division Director



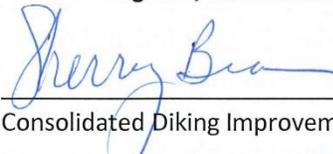
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of
Governments, Director



City of Castle Rock, Mayor



Port of Longview, Commission Chair



Consolidated Diking Improvement District #1, Chair



Cowlitz County PUD, Director of Regulatory
and Regional Affairs