



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

November 24, 2014

Dear Members of the Governor's Chehalis Basin Work Group:

Thank you for the recommendations contained in your Chehalis Basin Strategy report. I support your approach to reduce flooding, protect communities and restore salmon and other aquatic species in the basin. The Work Group has taken the necessary steps to understand the diverse interests in the basin in proposing this strategy to move us towards a solution.

For almost a century, the dual problems of catastrophic flooding and decline in aquatic species have plagued the Chehalis Basin. Flooding has caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to property and infrastructure and extracted incalculable physical and psychological tolls on families and communities. Habitat for salmon and other aquatic species in the basin has been significantly degraded, in some cases by 80 percent. Climate change predictions tell us that if we don't take action, the damage from floods will continue to increase and aquatic species will continue to decline to levels that threaten their very survival and may invoke a listing under the Endangered Species Act.

As you know, solutions have eluded local, state and federal leaders for many years. In August 2012, then Governor Gregoire tasked a diverse work group of Chehalis Basin leaders to develop recommendations for flood-damage reduction projects. I reiterated this challenge when I took office in 2013 and asked the Work Group to develop recommendations that other basin leaders could consider for endorsement and action and that I could support. The Work Group met this challenge.

In developing these recommendations, the Work Group, supported by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, state agencies and others, has led a transparent process using the best science. They provided numerous opportunities for interested parties to be involved as they evaluated ways to reduce flood damage and restore the health of the Chehalis watershed. This conversation should continue.

The next step is to begin work on a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) where the analysis contained in this report can be further tested and a formal opportunity for input is provided to all parties. While the programmatic EIS is being carried out, we can continue implementing smaller, more localized projects on the ground to reduce flood damage and improve habitat in the Basin.

There is a tremendous amount of work ahead. I have asked the Work Group to continue to provide leadership for this plan, and I have directed state agencies to provide technical support for their efforts.

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I look forward to the continued conversation and the work ahead. Together, we can promote a healthy, dynamic watershed and vibrant, prosperous communities in the Chehalis Basin.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jay Inslee
Governor