



Chehalis River Basin Long-Term Strategy Assessment

Chehalis Basin Board Meeting
August 6, 2020

Presentation Objectives

Outline major issues for the Board to consider in responding to Governor's July 22 letter

Generate Board discussion to guide preparation of response to Governor's letter

Governor's request to Board

JAY INSLEE
Governor



July 22, 2020

Dear Members of the Chehalis Basin Board:

I value the important work that you do to advance consensus-based, win-win solutions for flooding and fish in the Chehalis Basin. The complex challenges facing our communities require science, collaboration, and innovative thinking to forge lasting solutions.

Recent work evaluating a proposed large-scale flood retention project in the upper Chehalis River has brought additional and significant questions and concerns about impacts and alternatives. In light of these concerns, I am requesting that the board work together to:

- Define a process and timeline for developing and evaluating a basin-wide non-dam alternative to reducing flood damage.
- Continue evaluating the issues raised regarding the retention project and other flood risk reduction projects and the potential to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the identified impacts.
- Deliver a consensus recommendation on the process back to me no later than the end of September 2020 that will lead to a long-term strategy for consideration by me and the legislature in the first quarter of 2021.

Since the Board's recommendations will have implications for the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process currently under way, I have requested that Ecology pause the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process through at least the end of the year. I am also directing Ecology to use available funding within the Office of Chehalis Basin budget to assist the Board in its development of a non-dam alternative.

Climate change poses a significant risk to aquatic species and increased flood damage in the basin, and I believe that we will need the best scientific evaluation of options to preserve and restore salmon runs and protect the basin's human communities. Time is of the essence as climate change is already impacting the basin.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon. If you have questions, please contact my Senior Policy Advisor, Jennifer Hennessey at Jennifer.hennessey@gov.wa.gov. Thank you again for your dedication and hard work.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee".

Jay Inslee
Governor

CC: Laura Watson, Director, Department of Ecology

- Define process & timeline for developing & evaluating a basin-wide non-dam alternative to reducing flood damage
- Continue evaluating issues raised re: retention project & other flood risk reduction projects & potential to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the identified impacts
- Deliver consensus recommendation on process by end of September that will lead to long-term strategy for consideration in first quarter of 2021

Governor's request to agencies

- Pause the SEPA EIS process through the end of year
- Use available OCB funding to assist Board in development of non-dam alternative

Key Milestones / Decision Points

Board Action Needed:

- **Sep. 30, 2020** Board-approved path forward to analyze non-dam alternative *and* mitigation opportunities for proposed flood retention facility
- **Dec 2020** Board-approved recommendations for 2021-23 capital budget request
- **Jan 1, 2021** OCB report due to Legislature

Suggested Steps for Development of a Local Actions Program

1. Define goals for flood damage reduction
2. Confirm elements of a local actions program
3. Identify, collect & consider existing information
4. Prioritize information gaps
5. Prepare options/recommendations for the scope, budget, and schedule for filling priority information gaps
6. Approve scope, budget, and schedule for filling priority information gaps

Roles & Responsibilities

- Board guidance needed on the roles and responsibilities expected of Board Members, OCB Staff, and other participants in next steps of the process.

Whose alternative is this?

Process Oversight Needs

1. Who do you want to resolve technical differences or differing assumptions? Should a technical and/or policy group be created to guide processes?
2. How do you want to engage with basin local governments and other interested/affected groups to help define goals, collect info, prioritize actions, etc?
3. How can we build on readily available information to meet the key milestones/decision points above?
4. What is a reasonable timeframe for extending the previously identified schedule for completing the Long-Term Strategy Assessment?

Potential Local Action Goals

Examples from June Board discussion:

- Comparable or less cost than FRE
- Uses primarily non-structural actions or smaller-scale structures for flood damage reduction
- Spreads benefits basin-wide and addresses future climate conditions
- Measurable targets by sub-area, including number of people moved out of harm's way & ecological benefit
- Consistency and compatibility with ASRP
- Ensures public safety & protection of residential, ag, commercial properties & infrastructure

Potential Local Action Elements

Excerpted from NSD/NHC tech memo submitted as part of QIN comments on draft SEPA EIS:

1. Develop accurate flood models with a focus on sub-basins
2. Develop comprehensive strategic plan for prioritizing local actions
3. Delineate erosion hazards through CMZ delineation
4. Improve floodplain function
5. Land use management actions
6. Local flood protection actions
7. Floodplain agriculture 'stay-in-place' assistance
8. Acquisition of flood-prone land
9. Relocating people out of harm's way
10. Improve flood emergency response actions
11. Increase floodplain water storage in upper watershed sub-basins

Potential Local Action Program Elements, continued

Referenced in other comments received on draft SEPA EIS and from Board members at June meeting:

1. Evaluate contemporary forest practices
2. Protection of I-5 transportation corridor
3. Others?

Response to Governor's letter must also address...

Flood Retention Facility

Board will need to consider how it will evaluate Flood District's on-going work on mitigation, including Draft Mitigation Opportunities Assessment being prepared by District's consultants and any additional analyses

ASRP

- The ASRP Steering Committee and Science Review Team are currently identifying potential refinements to the ASRP scenarios and results. They are also developing an implementation structure and sequencing approach.
- Board will need to consider this additional information as part of the process you recommend to the Governor in response to his letter.

Breakout Session 1

- Are there additions or refinements you would recommend to the potential list of goals and program elements of a Local Actions Program outlined in the Board memo?
- What are your thoughts on OCB's role and the Board's role in leading development of the Local Actions Program?

Breakout Session 2

- What are your initial thoughts in response to the Governor's letter?
- In developing the process requested by the Governor, what guidance do you want to provide to staff to develop options for your consideration?