

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 11, 2021
To: Chehalis Basin Board Members
From: Andrea McNamara Doyle, Director, Office of Chehalis Basin
Re: Revised Approach for Developing Local Actions/Non-Dam Alternative and Comprehensive Basin-Wide Flood Damage Reduction Roadmap

Background

At the July 1 Board meeting, you discussed, in principle, a structure and process for your support of a \$2.5M budget allocation for the Local Actions Alternative and Comprehensive Basin-Wide Flood Damage Reduction Roadmap. You discussed an approach that would delegate work to new groups to complete a set of three tasks to support your decision-making in responding to the governor's request to evaluate a basin-wide non-dam alternative, and approve a comprehensive, basin-wide strategy for flood damage reduction. The tasks you discussed delegating to new groups include the following:

1. Develop a recommended Flood Damage Reduction Roadmap (Roadmap) for the Board to consider. The Roadmap will include a suite of prioritized flood damage reduction projects and programs that may or may not include a dam.
2. Develop a recommended Local Actions Alternative (or "non-dam" alternative) to be considered for potential inclusion in the Roadmap. The Local Actions Alternative (LAA) will assume there is no dam and include a suite of actions to reduce flood damage throughout the entire Basin.
3. Conduct an independent evaluation of the LAA to determine its potential to reduce flood damage and its environmental and socioeconomic implications.

Your discussion was informed by a staff [memorandum summarizing flood damage reduction alternatives previously considered](#), which concluded that options to reduce flood inundation levels in the populated areas of the I-5 corridor near Chehalis and Centralia are limited. As a result, for a Local Actions Alternative to achieve measurable reductions in flood damage risk to existing development in the upper basin without the proposed dam/airport levee project, a non-dam alternative may need to move or retrofit several hundred or thousands of public and private structures.

Your discussion was also informed by a staff [memorandum summarizing the wide range of suggestions and options for additional governance structures](#) that have been offered by board members and others. Different charges, memberships, roles, and schedules for the groups were highlighted, and a series of questions were posed to elicit more board input.

At the conclusion of the July 1 discussion, board members acknowledged the need to provide additional guidance and direction on:

1. Chartering a policy-level group to make recommendations to the Board on a Roadmap
2. Chartering an additional policy-level group to develop a recommended proposal for an LAA
3. An independent environmental, feasibility, and/or cost-benefit review of a LAA that is desired, and who would be most appropriate to lead and perform the work
4. Expectations for when work products and recommendations should be available from these groups to support the Board's decision-making

Board member Steve Malloch offered to work with OCB staff to refine the proposed Comprehensive Basin-wide Flood Damage Reduction Road Map and Local Action Alternative processes.

Revised Approach to Local Actions Alternative

Based on further conversations between OCB staff, Board member Malloch, and others since the July 1 Board meeting, OCB staff is now recommending a modified proposal for development of a Local Actions Non-Dam (LAND) Alternative & Comprehensive Basin-Wide Flood Damage Reduction Roadmap. Staff still recommends creating a LAND Advisory Group and policy-level group (e.g., a Flood Damage Reduction Steering Committee), but offers revised roles and sequencing for the groups.

Staff recommends that the LAND Advisory Group should be convened first, and that it should select an independent third-party consultant and oversee the consultant's development of the Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative. Staff recommends that the alternative focus first on the need to address flood damage to existing at-risk development in the communities of Chehalis, Centralia, and surrounding Lewis County in the I-5 corridor within the approximate geographic area targeted for protection by the proposed flood retention facility/airport levee project.

Below is a summary of the main differences between the July 1 proposal and the new proposal:

- **Increased funding.** Based on Chair Raines' August 4th proposal, \$3.26M would be prioritized in the 2021-23 budget for developing and evaluating a recommended proposal for a Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative and developing a Comprehensive Basin-wide Flood Damage Reduction Roadmap. Further Board decisions will be needed to finalize a governance structure, refine cost estimates, set a schedule, and define deliverables.
 - *This differs from the July 1 discussion in that the proposed budget in July was \$2.5M, instead of \$3.26M. The Chair's budget proposes to re-direct an additional \$760,000 from the Flood Retention Facility/Airport Levee Project allocation to the Local Actions/Flood Damage Reduction Roadmap in response to feedback that a serious effort to develop and evaluate a non-dam alternative may require more than \$2.5M.*
- **Role of Advisory Group.** A newly chartered Local Actions Non-Dam (LAND) Alternative Advisory Group would serve in an advisory capacity on technical, policy, and/or implementation feasibility issues while a third-party consultant team develops options for a non-dam alternative. The LAND

Advisory Group members would support OCB in developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire the third-party consultant team, participate in the consultant interview and selection process, and regularly engage with and advise the third-party consultant team and Board during the development and subsequent evaluation of the non-dam alternative.

- *This differs from the July 1 discussion in that the LAND Group would now serve in an advisory capacity, rather than being directly responsible for developing the proposed local action non-dam alternative.*

Role of Independent Third-Party Consultant. A new third-party consultant team would be selected via a competitive RFP process. Under the direction of OCB and a new LAND Advisory Group, the consultants would develop one or more options for an alternative that does not include the proposed flood retention facility/airport levee project (a “local actions” or “non-dam alternative”). The non-dam alternative would focus on addressing existing at-risk development in the communities of Chehalis, Centralia, and surrounding Lewis County in the I-5 corridor within the approximate geographic area the proposed flood retention facility/airport levee improvement project seeks to reduce damages from major and catastrophic flooding along the Chehalis River main stem. For the consultant, the scope of work would include: addressing the role of voluntary action and inducements to take voluntary action; impacts on economic and socially vulnerable communities; long term ownership and management of acquired property; and effects on the local economy including local governments.

The work would entail using detailed flood mapping, risk analysis, and economic research coupled with local land use plans and proposed infrastructure to develop a comprehensive perspective of flood reduction options and how they could fit together to provide the most benefit to residents. The third-party consultant would have the expertise to develop a planning level program to move, relocate, and/or floodproof individual structures and use public infrastructure (levees, etc.) to protect hundreds or thousands of homes, other land uses, and public facilities from catastrophic floods based on current and future conditions.

After the non-dam options are considered and refined by the LAND Advisory Group, the third-party consultant team would complete a formal, systematic evaluation of the alternative(s), with a focus on the anticipated flood damage reduction outcomes. The evaluation, at a high level, should assess effectiveness, feasibility for implementation and the costs and benefits, of an alternative to addressing flood damage from major and catastrophic flooding in the absence of the flood retention project, including socioeconomic impacts.

- *This differs from the July 1 discussion in that a third-party consultant team would both develop and evaluate a proposed local actions non-dam alternative, under the direction of OCB and the LAND Advisory Group.*

- **Role of Policy-Level Group.** The chartering of a policy-level group (e.g., a Flood Damage Reduction Steering Committee) to make recommendations to the Board on a comprehensive, basin-wide flood damage reduction Roadmap should not occur until *after* a non-dam alternative is developed and evaluated. Staff is still proposing that this policy-level group would be responsible for vetting and prioritizing the various local flood damage reduction projects and proposals recommended by the Flood Authority, the cities of Aberdeen & Hoquiam, the Community Flood Assistance & Resilience (CFAR) Program, and the Flood Control Zone District. And staff is still proposing that the policy-level group could make a dual set of recommendations to the Board: one that recommends local actions projects and programs *without* the proposed retention facility/airport levee project, and one that identifies local actions projects and programs that could be advanced *with* the proposed retention facility/airport levee project.
 - *This differs from the July 1 discussion in that the policy-level group would convene after the local actions non-dam alternative is developed and evaluated, not before.*

Next Steps

Considerations around timing and the inherent tradeoff between pacing and depth of work for the Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative and basin-wide road map discussed at the July 1 Board meeting still warrant further Board discussion. In addition, to assist the Board in providing direction to staff for developing a more detailed proposal for a new governance structure, schedule, anticipated deliverables, and refined cost estimates, the Board will still need to consider the questions introduced at the July 1 Board meeting around:

1. Expectations for the groups – work products, timing, and relationship to the Board
2. Relationship of the groups to each other and other existing planning efforts, including Washington State Department of Transportation’s (WSDOT) parallel planning efforts to implement practical solutions to mitigate flooding risks as part of on-going transportation improvement and congestion relief along this part of I-5.
3. Guidance on what is an “actionable” level of detail for board decision-making

At your next meeting, time permitting, Board members will have an opportunity to provide further direction on these issues and the revised approach in order for OCB to initiate the additional governance structure and associated work required.