

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 21, 2021
To: Chehalis Basin Board
From: Rich Doenges and Diane Butorac, Department of Ecology
Cc: Andrea McNamara Doyle, Office of Chehalis Basin Director; Erik Martin, Chehalis River Basin Flood Control Zone District; Evan Carnes and Brandon Clinton, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Re: Update on the SEPA EIS for the Proposed Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project

At the June 3, 2021 meeting, the Chehalis Basin Board requested an update on what information is being requested from the applicant, the Chehalis River Basin Flood Control District (FCZD), for the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) has started development of the final EIS for the proposed Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project. This work includes considering comments provided on the SEPA draft EIS, preparing responses to comments, updating analyses, and finalizing the SEPA EIS. As part of this process, Ecology will consider information, projects, and studies which have been developed since the release of the draft EIS, such as: the Local Actions Program; additional design, reports, and mitigation proposed by the FCZD for their project; Quinault Indian Nation studies and information; and Chehalis Basin Board projects and studies.

The FCZD held multiple meetings in 2021 with Ecology and the Corps to discuss information they plan to provide to the agencies for the final EISs. In May 2021, Ecology provided the FCZD a table with detailed information that could be provided for the SEPA final EIS, how it would be used, and dates for it to be submitted in order to be included in the SEPA final EIS analysis. The FCZD, Corps, and Ecology continue to meet and the attached document provides details on information that the FCZD could provide for the SEPA final EIS.

This information would provide additional clarity about the project design and help to develop responses to comments. If no new information is provided for evaluation, then the information already submitted by the FCZD will be used for the SEPA final EIS.

The SEPA EIS is not a decision document; it provides information to help inform potential next steps for decision-makers such as the Chehalis Basin Board and permitting agencies and provides information for the FCZD to consider for future design or mitigation development. More detail is usually needed to support the permitting processes than is needed in the EIS process since an EIS is intended to be done early and does not include detailed design or mitigation measures. For permit issuance by state, local, and federal agencies, a permit decision factors in various sources of information, such as: the Programmatic EIS, the SEPA EIS, the NEPA EIS, proposed mitigation measures, changes to project design or operations, and other relevant studies and modeling.