

Overview

SEPA Draft Environmental Impact Statement

For the Proposed Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project

Environmental Review Process

The Chehalis River Basin Flood Control Zone District has proposed to construct the Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project. The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) determined the Proposed Project could have significant adverse environmental impacts. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) identifies and analyzes how the Proposed Project is likely to affect the environment. Ecology has prepared a Draft EIS under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements in the Washington Administrative Code 197-11. A SEPA EIS does not approve or deny a proposed project. It provides information about the probable, significant, environmental adverse impacts of a proposal. Local and state agencies will use the information in this SEPA EIS, along with other information, for making decisions on permits. The Chehalis Basin Board is expected to use this SEPA EIS to inform their recommendations for the long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy.

Ecology is holding a 61-day public comment period for the SEPA Draft EIS on the Proposed Project from **February 27 through April 27, 2020**. Comments received on the SEPA Draft EIS during the comment period will be compiled and reviewed by Ecology. Substantive comments will be considered in preparation of the SEPA Final EIS. Ecology anticipates the SEPA Final EIS will be published in 2021.

Participating in the SEPA Draft EIS Public Hearing

Public Comment Period: **February 27 through April 27, 2020**

During the comment period you can learn about the Applicant's proposal, the probable environmental impacts from the proposal, and provide public comments on the SEPA Draft EIS. There are multiple ways to submit comments. All public comments are considered equally, regardless of how they are submitted.

- In person: **Attend a public hearing on March 31 and April 2**
- Online: chehalisbasinstrategy.com/eis/comment-form
- By mail: *SEPA Draft EIS for the Chehalis Flood Damage Reduction Project*
c/o Anchor QEA, LLC
1201 3rd Avenue, Suite 2600
Seattle, WA 98101

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SIGN UP FOR THE EMAIL LIST

Chehalis Basin project EIS website:
chehalisbasinstrategy.com/eis

Ecology's project webpage:
ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-to-know-us/Our-Programs/Office-of-Chehalis-Basin/EIS

CONTACT US:

SEPA EIS Contact

Diane Butorac
Ecology SEPA EIS Project Manager
Ph: 360-407-6573
email: diane.butorac@ecy.wa.gov

Media Contact

Curt Hart
Ecology Communications
Ph: 360-407-6944 | Cell: 360-701-1220
email: curt.hart@ecy.wa.gov
Twitter: @ecologyWA

Equal Access

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call 360-407-6831 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341. All meeting-related requests must be received 72 hours in advance; please call 206-903-3331.

Significant Impacts from the Proposed Project

The Proposed Project would have probable significant adverse environmental impacts from both construction and operations. These significant impacts would occur in the upstream areas of the Chehalis Basin. The environmental impacts downstream of Chehalis and Centralia would be moderate to minor. A summary of key impacts is presented in this map.

Impacts in Flood Retention Facility and Temporary Reservoir Area:

FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Construction and operation of the flood retention facility would significantly degrade habitat. Water temperatures would increase by up to 9°F and habitat would be removed to build the retention structure. 90% of the trees in the 600-acre temporary reservoir area would be removed during construction. 847 acres would be temporarily flooded when the reservoir holds water, killing trees and vegetation.

FISH SPECIES

Construction and operation of the flood retention facility would degrade habitat, increase water temperatures, eliminate spawning areas, and reduce fish passage survivability. This would have significant impacts on spring-run and fall-run Chinook salmon, coho salmon, steelhead, other native fish like lamprey, and freshwater mussels.

WILDLIFE SPECIES

Habitat for wildlife would be degraded as described above. This, along with noise and reduced nesting and breeding areas, would significantly affect wildlife like amphibians and marbled murrelets.

WATER

Temperature increases of up to 9°F and decreased dissolved oxygen would affect Chehalis River water quality from construction and operation of the flood retention facility.

WETLANDS

11 acres of wetlands, 333 acres of wetland buffers, 17 miles of streams, 441 acres of stream buffers, and 0.3 acre of the Chehalis River would be permanently eliminated from the construction of the flood retention facility, road development, and removal of large trees and inundation in the reservoir area.

RECREATION

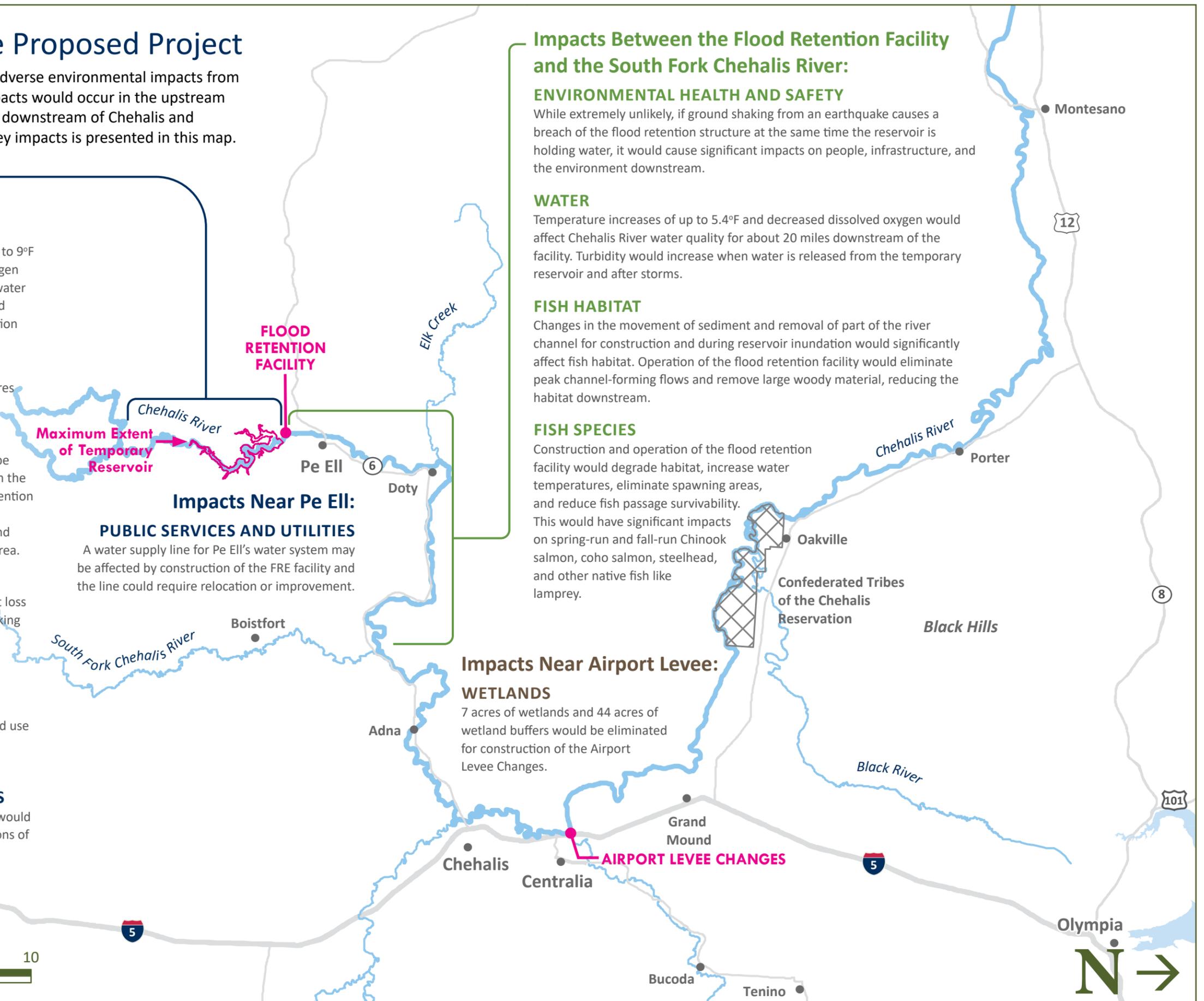
There would be a permanent loss of access to 14 miles of kayaking and 13 miles of recreational riverbank fishing.

LAND USE

Land use changes would be inconsistent with current land use and zoning designations.

AIR QUALITY AND GREENHOUSE GASES

Construction and operation would cause over 123,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.



Impacts Between the Flood Retention Facility and the South Fork Chehalis River:

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

While extremely unlikely, if ground shaking from an earthquake causes a breach of the flood retention structure at the same time the reservoir is holding water, it would cause significant impacts on people, infrastructure, and the environment downstream.

WATER

Temperature increases of up to 5.4°F and decreased dissolved oxygen would affect Chehalis River water quality for about 20 miles downstream of the facility. Turbidity would increase when water is released from the temporary reservoir and after storms.

FISH HABITAT

Changes in the movement of sediment and removal of part of the river channel for construction and during reservoir inundation would significantly affect fish habitat. Operation of the flood retention facility would eliminate peak channel-forming flows and remove large woody material, reducing the habitat downstream.

FISH SPECIES

Construction and operation of the flood retention facility would degrade habitat, increase water temperatures, eliminate spawning areas, and reduce fish passage survivability. This would have significant impacts on spring-run and fall-run Chinook salmon, coho salmon, steelhead, and other native fish like lamprey.

Impacts Near Airport Levee:

WETLANDS

7 acres of wetlands and 44 acres of wetland buffers would be eliminated for construction of the Airport Levee Changes.



Applicant's Proposed Project

The Chehalis River Basin Flood Control Zone District (the Applicant) is proposing to construct a new flood retention facility and associated temporary reservoir near the Town of Pe Ell, Washington, on the Chehalis River and make changes to the Chehalis-Centralia Airport levee in Chehalis, Washington, to reduce flood damage in the Chehalis-Centralia area.

The flood retention facility and associated temporary reservoir (below) is intended to reduce peak flood levels during a major flood or larger from storms in the Willapa Hills. The flood retention facility outlet gates would close when a major flood or larger is predicted (water flow of 38,800 cubic feet per second at the Grand Mound stream gage) and the temporary reservoir would hold water. The water in the reservoir would be released back to the Chehalis River over time. At all other times the river would flow through the outlets at its normal rate.



Changes to the Chehalis-Centralia Airport levee (right) would include raising the levee 4 to 7 feet, widening the levee, and raising a portion of NW Louisiana Avenue to reduce flood damage from a catastrophic flood.

