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CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN FLOOD DAMAGE

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

January 06, 2026



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DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

STATE OF WASHINGTON

CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN FLOOD DAMAGE
REDUCTION PROJECT: SEPA REVISED DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

JANUARY 6, 2026

PUBLIC HEARING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Pages 1 through 34

**CERTIFIED
TRANSCRIPT**

Taken Before:

Michelle Brandt, CRC, CCR

Certified Stenographic Court Reporter

for

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Fran Sant, Hearing Examiner, Washington State Department
of Ecology

Meg Bommarito, Presenter, Washington State Department of
Ecology

Bobbak Talebi, Presenter, Washington State Department of
Ecology

Angie Thomson, Meeting Facilitator, Thomson Strategic



1 BE IT REMEMBERED that on Tuesday, January 6,
2 2026, at 5:30 p.m., a Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage
3 Reduction Project: SEPA Revised Draft EIS public meeting
4 was held before Michelle Brandt, Washington State
5 Certified Stenographic Reporter, residing at Clark County.

6 WHEREUPON the following proceedings were had, to
7 wit:

8 ---ooo0ooo---

9
10 FRAN SANT: All right. We are going to
11 begin the formal hearing section of the meeting,
12 which we are recording for the public record, and we
13 are also using the court reporter to record comments.
14 At this time, I will read information that is
15 required for the public record.

16 I'm Fran Sant, Hearing Officer for this
17 hearing. This evening we are to conduct a hearing on
18 the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for
19 the Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction
20 Project.

21 Please let the record show that it is 6:29
22 on January 6, 2025, and this hearing is being held at
23 Centralia College at 615 West Pear Street, Centralia,
24 Washington.

25 Notices of this hearing were mailed to



1 about 13,000 interested people in the EIS study area.
2 Emails and list serve notices were sent to
3 approximately 4,086 interested people. Ecology
4 issued a news release on November 20, 2025. Notices
5 were also posted on Ecology's public events calendar.
6 And notices of this hearing were also published in
7 the following papers: The Centralia Chronicle,
8 Aberdeen Daily World, and The Olympian, all on
9 November 20th.

10 I'll be calling people up to provide
11 comments in the order your name appears on the
12 sign-in sheet. Once everyone who has indicated they
13 would like to provide comment has had the
14 opportunity, we will go ahead and open it up for
15 others. Please remember your comments should be
16 about three minutes. When you reach that limit, I
17 will ask you to summarize your comments so the next
18 person can come up to testify.

19 We are going to queue people up in groups
20 of three. We have an area for you to sit up here in
21 the front of the room. So when you are queued up,
22 can you please move up to that empty row.

23 And I would like to queue up Ed Humble,
24 Kathy Burnaman, and Chris Brewer to get us started
25 with comments. And Ed, you will be first since you



1 signed up first. When you come up to the mic, if you
2 could please state your name for the record, and
3 please speak clearly so we can get a good recording
4 of your comments.

5 ED HUMBLE: So thank you. Thank you for
6 having this opportunity. My name is Dr. Ed Humble.
7 I am retired. So I now do a lot of things that fit
8 my passion, and I'm currently the chair of the South
9 Sound Sierra Club. And so I'm here -- I am
10 representing the Sierra Club in that point.

11 And I want to start off -- three minutes is
12 pretty good. I want to start off by saying, I
13 actually have time to enjoy reading the Draft EIS,
14 going through it, and it does get a little
15 complicated at times. But I applaud you. I applaud
16 the Department on the work you've done on that, and
17 the information that has given us to be able to build
18 from there and make some good decisions.

19 So with that, some key aspects of that, and
20 again I represent the Sierra Club. We're an
21 environmental organization, and we see some real
22 environmental issues that you pointed out in there.
23 There are lots of words in there about significant
24 change to the habitat, significant change to the
25 salmon runs, significant -- the spring run salmon



1 could be eliminated. We think it is actually
2 stronger than that, and we welcome the opportunity to
3 share some of that information. We think that it has
4 catastrophic effects on salmon.

5 We think that the water flow, and this is a
6 free-flow dam, and that's better, there's no
7 question. But during construction there's going to
8 be significant time when that water flow is going to
9 be really reduced.

10 We also think environmental justice is a
11 piece of our environmental concern and the
12 misrepresentation of low-income communities and the
13 more hurt to low-income communities through this is
14 going to be important.

15 We think it will be important to take care
16 of this. Three minutes goes fast. We think it is
17 important to take care of this. We want to be a part
18 of this. We want to be part of the alternatives. We
19 support, in many ways, the alternative that you have
20 laid out on what is called the land alternative with
21 the levees. We support that.

22 We think there are some other ones that
23 maybe could be looked at. Some of them were in
24 the -- we didn't look at the -- or the no-impact part
25 of it. I should have memorized the whole thing. But



1 some of them were in there. But there are things
2 like, you know, just the public land use policies
3 that we have and how that can be changed. And the
4 reforestation, the areas that have been logged for
5 years, and years, and years and really have an affect
6 on this. We think an additional look at that would
7 be very important.

8 I want to take my last 25 seconds. The
9 restoration part of this, we think, is critical.
10 Something came out from the Board, the Chehalis
11 Board, today that I read that listed all the rivers
12 that were just recently affected. There was all
13 these rivers that come in to flow into this much
14 lower than that dam. All the rivers up by -- and the
15 same thing could be said for rivers up in Snohomish
16 County and Whatcom County that we just went through.

17 The one river you never see identified in
18 any of that is the Nisqually. The Nisqually
19 Restoration efforts started back under Governor Dan
20 Evans, for those of us who have been around here long
21 enough to remember that name. They have restored the
22 water banks. They have restored that, and they
23 purchased the land in there. There is over
24 30-something years of effort. It was the one river
25 in western Washington that recently didn't have any



1 problems. I think there is a lesson there to be
2 learned.

3 I'm sorry. I'm over my three minutes. I
4 will see you at future ones of these. Thank you for
5 the opportunity.

6 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Ed. Appreciate
7 that.

8 We're going to hear from Kathy next and
9 then Chris Brewer. Then following Chris will be
10 Melanie Rabaglia. I apologize if I said that
11 inappropriately.

12 All right, Kathy. Go ahead.

13 KATHY BURNAMAN: Okay. Hello, I'm Kathy
14 Burnaman. I'm the project manager for the Flood
15 Control Zone District. We know how the city floods
16 relates to the Chehalis Basin. Therefore, the
17 project proposed by the Flood Control Zone District
18 is designed to reduce the worse flooding impacts by
19 targeting major and catastrophic floods.

20 The good news, the revised Draft EIS
21 concludes that the project served its purpose. In a
22 late-century catastrophic flood, it would prevent
23 more than 2,400 structures and 4,000 acres of land
24 from being inundated from Pe Ell to Cosmopolis along
25 a hundred miles of river. It would reduce flooding



1 on I-5 and allow it to open up faster.

2 The project is meant to be consistent with
3 an overall Chehalis Basin fish and flood strategy to
4 reduce major and catastrophic flooding damages while
5 still creating successful outcomes for fish. For
6 that reason, the project is not a traditional dam.
7 It is a flow-through facility. Most of the time, and
8 for years on end, the project will allow the river to
9 flow through it. It only closes when a major or
10 catastrophic flood is forecasted. And even then, it
11 allows average winter time flow to pass.

12 For the last five years, our scientists,
13 biologists, and engineers have worked to provide
14 flood benefits while minimize the impact sufficient
15 in the environment. We wouldn't be proposing a
16 project if we didn't think we could provide
17 substantial mitigation, and all of our mitigation
18 measures will be robust. They are designed to --
19 they are detailed in our mitigation plan and will be
20 further described in our comments to the Revised
21 Draft EIS and future project design.

22 All large projects have impacts. But the
23 point is to design them safely, effectively, and with
24 as few impacts as possible. That is what we believe
25 we have done here and what we are committed to doing



1 if the project is selected to proceed.

2 Thank you.

3 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Kathy.

4 We will hear from Chris, followed by
5 Melanie, and then Robert Rao. You will be following
6 Melanie.

7 CHRIS BREWER: Thank you very much for your
8 time. My name is Chris Brewer. I live here at
9 Centralia, and I actually serve as the Deputy Mayor
10 here at Centralia. I apologize that I did not stand
11 up to be heard earlier. I was hiding out in the
12 back. I apologize for that.

13 Thank you for the time. My comments will
14 be very brief this evening. I wanted to state for
15 the record that the Centralia City Council is on
16 record as passing Resolution 2815 back in
17 January 2025. This supports the Flood Control Zone
18 Districts proposed flow-through dam, and also commits
19 to participating further in the process along with
20 all the project partners.

21 I was one of the seven that did vote for
22 that, and we look forward to seeing this as it
23 continues and look forward to further participation
24 in the process.

25 Thank you very much.



1 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Chris.

2 Next we will hear from Melanie, followed by
3 Robert, then Vanessa LaValle.

4 MELANIE RABAGLIA: Hi, my name is Melanie.
5 I live in Elma in Grays Harbor County.

6 I'm here in regards to this conversation
7 about the dam as it's been posed and I go through the
8 paperwork that you guys just went through. We are
9 here to talk about the Flood Damage Reduction
10 Project, and that's been applied by the Chehalis
11 River Flood Control District. Flooding is not my
12 issue here. My issue here is the fish. I speak for
13 the fish and I speak for the fisher folks.

14 When the Governor paused the project and
15 requested a non-dam alternative, obviously that
16 didn't work because here we go again, six years
17 later, and we are back with a dam alternative.

18 I understand from the paperwork that it's a
19 flow-through dam, and when the fish will be
20 restricted, and when they won't be restricted. But
21 the fish will be restricted. And it'll be 43% larger
22 than it was before, and nowhere on any of this
23 paperwork does it say that. And those are facts.
24 That is going to be.

25 When you talk about the flooding, now we



1 will talk about if. If it happens. If it happens
2 there. If it happens some place else. It may not
3 happen. But you will kill the fish regardless.
4 Thanks a lot. This isn't enough for mitigation.
5 What mitigation? Haven't seen anything about a
6 mitigation. What I've seen is the paperwork that
7 says you are going to truck fish. You are going to
8 move fish from a place in a truck and move them some
9 place. That doesn't work. There will be significant
10 impact.

11 Back to 43% larger. Nowhere does this talk
12 about it. Thanks for being transparent. What did we
13 study? Recognizing the overview of the significant
14 impacts. Habitat degradation. Water temperature.
15 There's been this conversation in my office. I work
16 for the county. We have been talking about the water
17 temperature. Yeah, the water temperature is going to
18 go up. And the oxygen is going to be less. There is
19 going to be disturbance of splining areas and reduces
20 fish passage and habitat degradation, and reduce
21 nesting. And you guys have all but admitted it.

22 If the "if" seems to be more important than
23 the "for sure" that you will kill more kings, the
24 kings are already restricted. We already can't fish
25 for king in the Chehalis. I already had to buy a



1 boat to go into the ocean to catch fish.

2 Back to the significant impact. It'll
3 impact the buffer areas. It's going to impact
4 several miles of river available for kayaking,
5 riverbank fishing, and it will reduce fish and
6 wildlife. And you're going to truck fish. This
7 makes no sense to me.

8 Thank you for holding these meetings. I
9 know it is required, so we are just going through the
10 process. And I will see you on January 13th in
11 Aberdeen.

12 Bob, you're up.

13 FRAN SANT: After Robert, we'll have
14 Vanessa. Then John Harwood will be after Vanessa.

15 ROBERT RAO: My name is Robert Rao. I live
16 in Elma.

17 I look at the reports on impacts to
18 wildlife and the noninformation provided about any
19 mitigation. And I look back at the Wynoochee River
20 mitigation where a lot of money was put aside to
21 mitigate for fish loss in the Wynoochee River that
22 never materialized. That money is still sitting
23 there, and nothing has been done to mitigate the fish
24 loss on the Wynoochee River.

25 So the whole mitigation process for me is



1 very, very negative that we are not given any
2 information about the people proposing these
3 mitigation measures. And how that is not done prior
4 to this EIS study is just terrible. Borders on
5 criminal in that the public is not informed as to
6 what is really proposed.

7 I know that the king salmon run in the
8 Chehalis River is already severely threatened. 75%
9 of our fish are taken in Canada and Alaska before
10 they even get here, so we're not allowed to fish for
11 them. And as a result, they are talking about the
12 spring king salmon run may be eliminated. I mean, I
13 don't understand how any proposal can say that and
14 then hope to proceed further. That in itself should
15 be a killer for this.

16 And I have no faith in our public agencies
17 to do the right thing. This whole project is
18 basically funded to benefit the commercial interests
19 along I-5. Which, by the way, are all built on
20 raised pads so that floods will not affect them. But
21 it is still used as an excuse to build this dam. And
22 the reality is, if they really want to reduce the
23 impact of a major flood, which would close I-5, the
24 key would be to raise the highway in that floodplain
25 and eliminate it.



1 Nothing should be done that is going to
2 degrade habitat for wildlife. Nothing should be done
3 that is going to further impact our salmon runs.
4 That should be the paramount feature in all of this.
5 Not for people that choose to build in floodplains.
6 Because that is their own self interest coming
7 forward in this rather than the greater public good.

8 And I don't have a lot of faith in a
9 process that already so many people have spoken up
10 against and caused it to be shelved by our Governor
11 in 2020.

12 So all I can say is that hopefully enough
13 people will raise a real stink about this and
14 permanently shelf this rather than having it shoved
15 down our throats one more time.

16 Thank you.

17 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Robert.

18 We will hear from Vanessa, and then John
19 Harwood, and then Lee First after John. Go ahead.

20 VANESSA LAVALLE: Good evening, everybody.

21 So it is clear from the DEIS that there are
22 significant adverse impacts for fish and wildlife and
23 their habitats, and that this would only be a partial
24 solution for flooding in the Basin. Additionally,
25 increase threats of landslide and declining water for



1 residents give me so much concern.

2 I can appreciate that the new FRE design
3 has fish in consideration. But there is doubt they
4 would survive the lengthy construction period to even
5 be able to flow through. With the high cost of this,
6 the FRE, I'm hoping we can instead spend that money
7 to raise people's homes, to raise I-5, and to
8 implement all of the various levees, dikes, and other
9 flood deterrent tools that we have at our disposal.

10 So I thank you for your time and hard work
11 to improve all of our lives in the Basin.

12 FRAN SANT: Thank you.

13 So John will be next. Lee First. Then
14 following Lee will be Julie -- thank you for helping
15 me out.

16 JOHN HARWOOD: Thanks. I'm just more
17 comfortable if I'm sitting. Thank you for the time
18 this evening.

19 My name is John Harwood. I live in an
20 unincorporated area of Grays Harbor out towards
21 Westport, but I still consider myself a member of the
22 Chehalis Watershed Community.

23 I'm strongly in favor of taking measures to
24 reduce flooding. Flooding is a serious threat to
25 lives, livelihood, and property. I think measures



1 need to be taken to reduce it and to make the entire
2 watershed more resilient.

3 But I'm strongly opposed to this flood
4 retention facility that is being proposed. I think
5 is a boondoggle. It is a huge mistake. It is just
6 absolutely the wrong approach.

7 When I started thinking about it, I started
8 thinking, what am I certain about and what am I not
9 certain about. I'm certain about a few things, like
10 the dangers of flood and how flooding is going to
11 become more severe and extreme over time. I'm sure
12 that is a fact. I'm sure that it is going to
13 threaten lives and property over time. And that's a
14 fact.

15 Another thing I'm certain about is that the
16 flip side of that, that climate change will cause
17 increased draught and heat events during the summer.
18 I feel like that's where the EIS really falls short.
19 It doesn't address the consequences of this facility
20 over the summer months when the Chehalis is in dire
21 straits because of the low water, warm temperatures,
22 low oxygen levels.

23 And I think that this facility that is
24 being proposed is going to make it so much worse. I
25 don't think EIS addresses that. And maybe that's



1 going to be taken care of in mitigation plans. But
2 that's one of the things that I'm very uncertain
3 about is the mitigation plans aren't included and
4 aren't part of the proposal, so how are we to know
5 whether that would be sufficient.

6 And I think I just stated multiple times, I
7 am not certain whether it is feasible and effective.
8 I don't see how the EIS can be acceptable without
9 knowing whether the mitigation plan, what are they
10 going to be and whether they are acceptable and
11 effective.

12 Another thing I'm very certain about, I've
13 decided, is that \$2 billion could be spent a whole
14 lot better and a whole lot more effective than on
15 this flood retention facility, because just seems
16 like helping people get out of the way, helping
17 people avoid the damages of flooding, is a whole lot
18 more reasonable and more compassionate to the people
19 in this watershed rather than to say, we got it all
20 fixed and we are building something up the river that
21 may work. Which is one of the things we are not
22 certain of, is whether or not it will even work.

23 Thank you very much for your time.

24 FRAN SANT: Thank you, John.

25 Lee, and then Julie will be next. Then



1 after Julie, Anthony Ahrens. I apologize if I said
2 that incorrectly.

3 LEE FIRST: Hello. My name is Lee first.
4 I'm the Twin Harbors Waterkeeper.

5 Washington State is a leader in the effort
6 to recover what was lost during the era of dam
7 building. Dams on the Elwha, the Conduit, and Mill
8 Pond and many smaller dams have been removed. Yet we
9 are contemplating a major dam on the only undammed
10 river of its size in Washington.

11 Near where I live in Rochester, right next
12 to the river, is the huge, almost complete, new Fords
13 Prairie Industrial Park. A couple miles south next
14 to the river, the eye-popping UNFI Distribution
15 Center. The new Winco. The expanded Fred Meyer
16 Distribution Center. And other fills and many signs
17 in the floodplain that the Port of Chehalis is
18 advertising vacant land. And even higher levy around
19 the airport?

20 Who is this mega dam really for? The big
21 developers? If permitted, and that's a big if, the
22 applicant expects construction of the mega dam would
23 occur between 2030 and 2035. How many more huge
24 warehouses and distribution centers will be built
25 between now and then? All of this is making the



1 floods much worse for the rest of us.

2 Must we build a mega dam so that Lewis
3 County can continue business as usual? No. Let's
4 get serious about moving people, homes, and
5 businesses out of harm's way. Let's treat our
6 forests as the flood resilience assets they could
7 become. Let's fix land use laws and prohibit
8 floodplain fills. Let's change course now. Future
9 generations will thank us.

10 Thank you.

11 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Lee. Julie?

12 JULIE PUHICH: Hi. My name is Julie
13 Puhich. I live in farm alongside the Chehalis River.
14 And we have the good fortune that all of our
15 infrastructure and some of our fields are well above
16 the floodplain. Not so for some of my family members
17 and friends and neighbors who farm just a little ways
18 further down river from us in Independence Valley.

19 These are, you know, more than a handful of
20 neighbors, friends, and family members who have all
21 suffered losses in the 2007 flood and whose shops,
22 and barns, and in some cases, houses were inundated
23 in that flood. These are people whose lives and
24 livelihoods depend on their farms. And I might add
25 that larger community also relies on our products and



1 supports our tenacity and wants us to continue.

2 Not one of the farmers that I know of,
3 including those who have had to raise their homes and
4 improved or added other infrastructure to prepare for
5 future floods, not one of them want this thing. Any
6 one of them will tell you, if asked, that the fill
7 and development in and around Centralia is
8 wrong-headed and creates risks for those downstream
9 and worsens the flooding.

10 Reading the Draft EIS, it's so clear that
11 this dam, if gets built, will severely degrade the
12 life-giving functions of the Chehalis River. Most of
13 my adult life, we the people of Washington State have
14 been working to bring salmon back from the brink of
15 extinction. And now we are seriously considering
16 building another dam that will almost certainly
17 extinguish one distinct population and will further
18 weaken the possibility of recovery for all of the
19 rivers' populations of salmon. This is crazy.

20 Building a dam on the Chehalis, and let's
21 call it that, because flood retention expandables
22 sounds like new speak to me. Building a dam on the
23 upper Chehalis is an example of exactly the kind of
24 disruptive development and forest practices that have
25 contributed so heavily to getting us into this mess.



1 Building this dam would give the green light to
2 continue more problematic development in the
3 floodplain. Dams are a solution from the past.
4 Their days are done, or they should be.

5 Meantime, I notice that the local
6 alternatives are only in early stage of development,
7 according to you all. And you note that local
8 actions can potentially achieve the applicant's
9 objective. Well, why aren't we putting resources
10 into developing the local action alternatives? As
11 others have mentioned, a whole lot of money going
12 into this dam that does feel is being pushed down our
13 throats.

14 Thank you.

15 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Julie.

16 We are going to hear from Anthony. And
17 then following Anthony will be Ron Averill. Thank
18 you.

19 ANTHONY AHRENS: Thank you. I'm Anthony
20 Ahrens. I live in Chehalis.

21 I wanted to personally express my support
22 for this project. I'm a fourth-generation Lewis
23 County resident. We have all seen the devastating
24 effects these floods have had. We have seen homes
25 lost, farms washed away. Houses, livelihoods, lost.



1 I strongly support this.

2 This project, this flow-through design is
3 fascinating. I'm personally not aware of anything
4 like this. This is fascinating to me. I have been
5 working in the construction trades. I've had the
6 good opportunity to work for Tacoma Power. And I
7 work firsthand at the Alder Dam, the Mossy Rock and
8 Mayfield Dam here in Lewis County, and the Wynoochee
9 Dam out in Grays Harbor County, which is a beautiful
10 facility.

11 The recreation opportunities created by
12 these dams are remarkable. And I think the job that
13 these men and women did, operate these facilities and
14 taking care of these salmon, is second to none. They
15 put these fish lives in front of themselves everyday.
16 They do a fantastic job on it.

17 I think that if you see pictures of the
18 Wynoochee when it's flooding, it floods Montesano.
19 It floods down that valley. When you see pictures of
20 I-5 flooding here 10, 11 years ago, you would support
21 these dam building operations.

22 One thing that we, the taxpayers and
23 citizens, need to take into consideration is when you
24 are talking about the cost of a project like this.
25 \$2 billion. Where does that money go? It doesn't go



1 to tonight. This goes to businesses here in Lewis
2 County. This goes to businesses. This goes to
3 homemakers, and home builders, and construction
4 workers, truck drivers. This isn't money that's lost
5 in thin air. This isn't money that is going to be
6 taken from us. This is a valuable investment, in my
7 opinion.

8 When you think about the effects on the
9 Sound, I know the state put a premium on restoring
10 salmon habitats. I support this wholeheartedly. I
11 worked as a commercial fisherman out of Westport, up
12 in Alaska, and I know there are people who depend on
13 this fish for their livelihoods. We enjoy the fish
14 and enjoy the recreational fishing.

15 I think this new flow-through device is new
16 to me, and I think if they can perfect this and get
17 it to work, I think it will improve salmon runs. I
18 have hope in that.

19 Another thing I want to touch on really
20 quickly is the practices of the modern building
21 trades, environmental remediation, and mitigating the
22 damage. It is second to none. We use straw wattles
23 on everything. If there is one ounce of silt
24 floating in that water, DOE is there to shut it down.
25 I understand the state's regulations, as far as



1 ecology, are more stringent than the federal
2 regulations. I would like to applaud the state on
3 that in their commitment to improving our
4 environmental state well-being.

5 I support building this water retention
6 facility. Let's build this dam.

7 Thank you.

8 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Anthony.

9 RON AVERILL: Good evening. My name is
10 Colonel Ron Averill. I'm former County Commissioner
11 here in Lewis County.

12 I was the County Commissioner in 2007 when
13 we had terrible flooding that hit our community. It
14 was almost a billion dollars of damage, that flood.
15 It wasn't just restricted to our county or to the
16 Basin. It impacted the Seattle transportation
17 routes, movement of products, groceries, and things
18 of that nature.

19 One of the things that bothers me about
20 this EIS is, as a former professor we usually look at
21 both sides of an issue. Pros and cons. All I see in
22 this is the cons. You even admit tonight that you
23 didn't consider the issues with the development of
24 the free-flow dam and the mitigation that they
25 propose. It doesn't tell people that considerable



1 effort has been made in here.

2 We have a process now that is not
3 restricted to just fish. That is an important side,
4 and we recognize that. But it is also what is for
5 flood mitigation. We need to look at both sides as
6 we do this. Homo sapiens are part of the environment
7 just as fish are.

8 It was brought up this evening that the
9 Nisqually River has done well. You know there are
10 two dams on the Nisqually River? I sat on the
11 Nisqually River Council for six years while I was a
12 County Commissioner. And yes, the Nisqually Tribe
13 spent considerable effort. That is part of the ASRP
14 program that we have currently as we do this study to
15 improve the environment.

16 The Chehalis River is the second largest
17 river in the state, and it has 300 tributaries, and
18 at the current time there are only two dams. One of
19 them is really small, and the other one is large.
20 And this dam is specifically being designed so that
21 it does a minimum impact and that we have other
22 mitigations taking place to protect the fish at the
23 same time. There will be changes.

24 If we don't do anything -- I got to tell
25 you, during the 2007 flood, we lost a lot of fish.



1 They can't swim on land. When the rivers go over
2 their banks, they get on land and they get caught
3 there. We need to look at that side as well.

4 This is an important thing to us in this
5 community. We do want to save fish and make both
6 sides benefit. We need to open this study so that
7 both sides are considered.

8 Thank you very much.

9 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Mr. Averill.

10 We've gotten through folks that have
11 indicated before the meeting that they would like to
12 provide comment. This would be another opportunity.
13 If you haven't signed up to provide comment, if you
14 would like to provide comment, I'm going to ask you
15 to go up to that first row and sign in. Then we will
16 go ahead and get your comment noted.

17 Ma'am, you are welcome to come on up.
18 State your name for the record. Then we'll hear your
19 comment.

20 EDNA FUND: Okay. My name is Edna Fund.

21 I've been involved in the flooding effort
22 since 2008, shortly after the 2007 flood. Currently,
23 I'm the Chair of the Flood Control Zone District
24 Advisory Committee and Vice Chair of the Flood
25 Authority. I'm deeply involved in this for our



1 community, Lewis County, which we've seen just
2 terrible things happen when we have flooding. And it
3 continues.

4 When we have folks that want to look at
5 Lewis County as a home or as a business, and they
6 Google us, flooding comes up. That is not a good
7 selling point for our county.

8 When I look at the SEPA, and I should back
9 up a bit, that the Office of Chehalis Basin Research
10 shows that the climate impacts are hammering the
11 fishery across the Basin. The impact of this
12 flow-through dam, according to the Draft SEPA,
13 extends only above Rainbow Falls, and that's before
14 mitigation is done. The Draft SEPA needs to make
15 clearer the huge impact of climate versus the tiny or
16 zero impact of this project on the fishery.

17 Thank you.

18 FRAN SANT: Thank you, Edna.

19 Sir?

20 MAX VOGT: Thank you. My name is Max Vogt.
21 I'm formally a City Council Member of Centralia.
22 Just recently off, full disclosure. I'm speaking
23 just as a citizen now.

24 I'm speaking because I live and work on the
25 edge of China Creek. And China Creek has been known



1 to flood our city for many, many, many, many years.
2 I've been through that with my business and my home.
3 The county and the city came together with the state
4 and rebuilt what is called a weir on China Creek,
5 which is very similar to a flow-through dam. I think
6 the flow-through dam is basically a very complicated
7 technologically advanced weir.

8 I'm here to testify that the weir on China
9 Creek has definitely abated some of the major
10 flooding that goes on, on China Creek. I have lived
11 through many of the floods that have happened, and
12 I'm up all night. For some reason, floods always
13 happen in the middle of the night. I don't know why
14 that is. So I spent many hours worrying about
15 flooding from China Creek at every hour, and
16 measuring it, and knowing what it is going to do is
17 just a part of my life.

18 I want to testify that I totally support
19 the flow-through dam concept. I know it will work.
20 I know it will slow down significantly the type of
21 flooding that we have. That's from personal
22 experience of the weir, which is basically, I've
23 looked at those designs, and they are very similar.
24 Which water can flow through. It doesn't completely
25 hold it back. But I would like to say it would



1 significantly reduce flooding, from my experience, on
2 the smaller experiment. So I just wanted to say that
3 I support the flow-through dam.

4 Thank you.

5 FRAN SANT: Thank you, sir.

6 All right. Is there anybody else here
7 tonight that would like to provide comments that
8 hasn't had the opportunity to do so? Okay. Just
9 double-checking.

10 Is there anybody that provided a comment
11 and would like to provide an additional comment?
12 This would be your opportunity to do so.

13 Okay. I'm going to go ahead and read some
14 more information that is required for the record.
15 Okay. One more chance. This is your last chance
16 tonight to provide oral comments. Otherwise, I will
17 start to wrap the hearing up. Okay. Perfect. You
18 are already ahead of me, Team.

19 All right. There are many ways to provide
20 comments. If you would like to submit written
21 comments, they are due to Ecology on February 4, 2026
22 by 11:59 p.m. You can send them via U.S. mail to PO
23 Box 47775, Olympia, Washington 98504-7775. You would
24 address those to Bobbak Talebi, SEPA Southwest Region
25 Office. And it is regarding the SEPA Revised Draft



1 EIS for the Chehalis Flood Damage Reduction Project.

2 You can also submit comments on-line using
3 the e-comments form. You can see that address
4 displayed on the screen. You can also find that
5 information on our program website. I believe it was
6 on handouts given out tonight as well.

7 So all comments received at this hearing,
8 as well as the on-line hearing held on December 11th,
9 and additional on-line hearing to be held
10 January 8th, and the two public meetings to be held
11 on January 13th in Aberdeen and on January 21st in
12 Boistfort, along with all written comments received
13 postmarked no later than February 4, 2026 at
14 11:59 p.m., will be part of the official hearing
15 record for the final Environmental Impact Statement
16 for the Chehalis Basin Flood Reduction Project.

17 In addition to these comments on the
18 Revised Draft EIS, Ecology will also consider all
19 comments received on the Original Draft EIS issued in
20 2020. Ecology will respond to all comments received
21 when the final EIS is issued.

22 We will also send notice about the
23 availability of the final EIS to everyone that
24 provided written comments or oral testimony on the
25 Draft Revised EIS, and submitted contact information



1 to everyone that signed in for today's hearing and
2 provided an email address, everyone that provided
3 comment on the Draft EIS in 2020, and other
4 interested parties on the agency's mailing list for
5 the proposal.

6 The final Environmental Impact Statement
7 for the Chehalis Basin Flood Reduction Project in
8 response to comments will, among other things,
9 contain agency's response to questions and issues of
10 concerns that were submitted during the public
11 comment period.

12 If you would like to receive notice but did
13 not give us your contact information, please see one
14 of the staff as you leave the hearing. Now I'm going
15 to hand it back to Angie to go ahead and talk about
16 next steps.

17 ANGIE THOMSON: Thanks, Fran.

18 We are about to say goodnight to folks. I
19 just wanted to remind you, we talked about this
20 earlier, but Ecology expects to release the Final
21 Environmental Impact Statement in August of 2026,
22 just to remind you of that date.

23 Fran just told you, but comment period runs
24 through February 4th of this year. We would really
25 enjoy seeing any of you who want to come to the



1 meetings that we have coming up. On Thursday we have
2 and on-line meeting. Next week we have another
3 in-person meeting, next Tuesday in Aberdeen. Then we
4 have one the following week on Wednesday, the 21st,
5 in-person.

6 You also can view a lot of this information
7 and a lot of the display boards at the on-line open
8 house. And you can get to that at the URL that's on
9 the screen as well.

10 I think with that, I am going to say thanks
11 to everyone for attending. We really appreciate all
12 of you and appreciate all of your comments. And we
13 will wish you all a safe drive home. Thank you,
14 again, for your time tonight.

15 (Hearing adjourned at 7:12 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Michelle Brandt, a Certified
Stenographic Court Reporter in and for the State of
Washington, residing at Clark County, do hereby
certify;

That the foregoing proceedings were taken
before me and thereafter reduced to a typed format
under my direction; that the transcript is a full,
true and complete transcript of said proceedings
consisting of Pages 1 through 34;

That as a CCR in this state, I am bound by
the Rules of Conduct as Codified in WAC 308-14-130;
that court reporting arrangements and fees in this
case are offered to all parties on equal terms;

That I am not a relative, employee,
attorney or counsel of any party to this action, or
relative or employee of any such attorney or counsel,
and I am not financially interested in the said
action or the outcome thereof;

That upon completion of signature, if
required, the original transcript will be securely
sealed and the same served upon the appropriate
party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
hand this 9th day of January, 2026.



Michelle Brandt, CCR No. 3421
Certified Stenographic Reporter



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