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## CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN FLOOD DAMAGE

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### TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

January 06, 2026

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1 CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN FLOOD DAMAGE  
2 Transcript of Proceedings - January 6, 2026

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5 DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY  
6 STATE OF WASHINGTON

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

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25 JANUARY 6, 2026

PUBLIC HEARING

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25 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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25 CERTIFIED  
TRANSCRIPT

Taken Before:

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25 Michelle Brandt, CRC, CCR

Certified Stenographic Court Reporter

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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---

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.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

FRAN SANT: Thank you, Robert.

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

VANESSA LAVALLE: Good evening, everybody.

So it is clear from the DEIS that there are significant adverse impacts for fish and wildlife and their habitats, and that this would only be a partial solution for flooding in the Basin. Additionally, 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.

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.

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



CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN FLOOD DAMAGE  
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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. )

16  
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18  
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1 C E R T I F I C A T E  
2

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

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

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

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

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

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



26 Michelle Brandt, CCR No. 3421  
27 Certified Stenographic Reporter



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