Chehalis Meeting 20260108 Recording.m4a

Angie Thomson: Welcome everyone. People are still joining the room, so we will just wait a moment while we're all gathering.

Angie Thomson: Okay.

Angie Thomson: We will go ahead and get started. Welcome, everyone, to the online public hearing for the Chehalis Basin Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement. My name is Angie Thompson and I will be the facilitator for our meeting tonight. We are so happy to have you here today to join us. Before we get started, I want to share some logistics with everyone. We are using the zoom platform and you are all here as attendees to this webinar. You are all on mute and your cameras are off automatically. We are broadcasting this meeting in both English and in Spanish at the bottom of your zoom toolbar. The screen at the bottom there should be a toolbar. Please click on the globe icon and select the language you'd like to listen to the meeting in today. You can also use the chat box during the meeting today, so you should see this on your screen. It's usually down at the bottom if you hover your mouse or your finger there. And this is where you can let us know if you're having technical issues, maybe trouble hearing us or seeing what's on the screen. Um, we may also put information in the chat box that could be helpful to you, like links to some of the documents. We are not taking written comments through the chat box at the meeting tonight.

Angie Thomson: A little bit later, we will share information on where you can submit comments in writing. You can also turn on closed captioning so that you can read what we're saying by clicking on the live transcript and during the public hearing, you can let us know that you want to give oral comments by using the raise hand feature that the arrow is pointing at on the screen. So let's go ahead and practice raising your hand now so that you're ready when the time comes. So on your screen find the words raise hand. It's usually at the bottom. And if you've called in you raise your hand and lower your hand by pressing star nine on your phone. So once you've found it, go ahead and raise your hand. People are raising practicing. Great. Okay. And now I will just lower everyone's hand so that we start fresh again. All right. Our purpose today is to present information and accept oral comments on the revised draft environmental impact statement. We have a brief presentation to provide some information on the purpose of

the eyes. Give an overview of the proposed project, share findings of significant adverse impacts, and then move into an official public hearing. Our guidelines for the meeting today. Um, during the public comment session, we ask people to use respectful language when providing comments or asking questions and provide comments that are specific, constructive, and on topic.

Angie Thomson: Please respect the rights of others to have an opinion even if you don't agree. Please be ready to speak when your name is called and the hearing officer will call your name. And then we will unmute your line and then you'll be able to speak. So we ask you to be to be ready and then respect the time limit for the comments. So if you have lengthy comments, you'll need to summarize those. And tonight we are um, we have a three minute time limit for comments. Are there any questions about the agenda or how to participate? You can put a message in the chat to let me know. Um, or for those of you only on the phone, you can hit star nine and let me know so we can answer any questions about how to participate. Okay. Seeing none. Um, I want to remind folks that we will record this event today and make a video of the presentation available online as soon as possible for those who can't attend. Um, or if you'd like to watch the meeting again. Okay, we are ready to move into the presentation. I would like to introduce Bobbak Talebi, the director of Ecology Southwest Region. Bobbak, turning it over to you.

Bobbak Talebi: Great. Thank you everybody. Uh, for those that attended the in-person meeting on Tuesday, it was great to see you. Thank you for joining us. And for those that, uh, did not have a chance to join us in person on Tuesday. Thank you for joining us tonight. It looks like we have a good group here. And, uh, really appreciate everybody being being here, especially in the evening, um, with everybody's busy schedules and lives. Um, so we have a short presentation here that we would like to provide. Um, that gives us a high level introduction to or overview of the project. Um, I just want to note here, before we get started, that this is a large, complex project. And so the documents, um, the eyes documents will do a more thorough job, much more thorough job than we will tonight. But I think this presentation here will hit on a lot of the main, main points here. Um, so as we get started, uh, I just wanted to start off by providing an overview of the timeline associated with this proposal. Um, so the original proposal, um, and the current proposal is, uh, was submitted by Chehalis Basin Flood Control Zone District. The original design was proposed in 2017 after a programmatic

EIS was completed and 2020, the governor paused that analysis and asked ecology to work or ask the Office of Basin to work on an alternative. Um, within that time, then the applicant took the feedback that was already provided during the draft EIS and incorporated that feedback into a new design that was submitted in 2024 to ecology.

Bobbak Talebi: We'll get into more of the details on what that new design looks like in this proposal. Um, but we are moving forward now with the revised draft EIS. So the information and the new project design that was submitted to ecology warranted. Um, more environmental review and analysis. So we we decided to do the revised draft EIS path. And one just note here before we move on is I wanted to just really emphasize here that, um, when the new proposal came to ecology, we, uh, the director set an aggressive timeline for us to complete our final EIS in support of the larger efforts by the office Chehalis basin to develop the broader strategy, um, associated with their efforts. Next slide. All right. So the proposed or the purpose of an EIS. Next slide please. So I'd like to start by just saying that the the EIS is not a decision document. It provides a science based, neutral evaluation of the impacts, the probable, adverse and environmental. It evaluates the reasonable alternatives. Um proposes mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize impacts. And again, this is not this document does not approve or deny the proposed project. So once the EIS is developed, Ecology's um office Basin team will consider the information. And we'll be taking that into consideration as they provide the recommendations on that broader strategy for the legislature. So tonight and for the comment period, that is 75 days, which closes on February 4th. Um, we're looking for comments that provide facts and information for us to consider. Um, comments simply in support or or opposition to the proposed flood damage retention facility, um are not going to be as useful as comments that are analyzing the EIS and providing feedback on things that need to improve, um, things that we missed, um, or areas that we can make more robust for the final EIS.

Bobbak Talebi: Next slide. So as I mentioned, um, this is just one small piece of the larger efforts that are going on in the Chehalis Basin to address flood risk. So you can see on the right hand side of your screen, you can see the EIS for the flow through dam facility proposal, and you can see all the other efforts that are going on, um, that contribute to um, again, this larger strategy that's being developed by the office of Chehalis Next slide. All right. Now we can dive into a little bit about what the proposed project includes. Next slide. So again this project is being proposed by the flood control

zone district. Um, and it is proposing to construct and operate a new flood retention facility and a temporary temporary reservoir near the town of peel and make levee changes at the airport. Um, in Chehalis, Centralia. The purpose is to reduce flood damage from major floods, larger um major floods, or larger in the Chehalis and Centralia area. Next slide. So this map here shows on the screen the study area that we used for this environmental impacts assessment. And you can see the orange outline is the entirety of what we consider to be the project area, including the flow through dam facility, um, labeled here as the facility up near Pell, um, on the bottom part of that screen and the airport levee changes more in the middle part.

Bobbak Talebi: Next slide. So this is a, um, a rendering of what the flow through dam facility will look like on the landscape and some of the important, um, attributes to this facility, um, including the byway, which is the flow through capability, um, and the spillway, um, basin there and, uh, how it is shaped there on the landscape. Next slide. The proposed project again includes a raised portion of the Northwest Louisiana Avenue um, of the airport levees. Um or it includes airport levees, increases and raises a portion of the Northwest Louisiana Avenue along the southern extent of the airport and replace and replaces utility infrastructure. Next slide. So this slide was included because it demonstrates the differences between a conventional dam and a flow through dam facility. So on the left you see more of a conventional dam that does not have an operating feature to open or close. It is closed all the time to trap the water and sediment behind the structure. On the right hand side of the screen, you can see the flow through capability that the proposed project includes, which would remain open during a majority of the time, um, unless triggered by a catastrophic event, in which case it would close, um, the facility to retain that water and then de-water over a period of time after the event has subsided. So you can see in this photo here that fish could pass through as well as sediment on the proposed project.

Bobbak Talebi: Next slide. So we included this, uh, graph in the presentation because of the recent flooding events. And it probably, um, a question by all of you is whether or not this flow through dam facility would be operational during the recent events. Um, and the operation of the facility, um, as proposed, is to operate only when flow rates exceed 38,800 cubic feet per second at the ground at the Grand Mound Range. So likely in the recent events, we can see here on the chart that did not reach that level. Therefore, it would likely not have been triggered during these recent events. I would

note here, though, that the applicant is planning to update the operations plan for the proposal, um, and is currently, uh. Oh. Okay. I think that was the so the the operation of the facility, um, is only expected to occur once every seven years. Under the existing conditions, um, and future conditions slide. So there are a number of updates. As I mentioned before, um, the applicant included the, the the comments that were submitted during the original draft and incorporated that feedback into the new proposed design. And this slide shows a few of those updates that were made to the proposal, including the location of the dam, which you can see here on the slide. The red polygon is the originally proposed location of the facility, and the yellow is the new proposed facility. Next slide. And now we're going to get into some of the impacts. And I'll turn it over to Meg.

Angie Thomson: Thanks, Bobak. Um, I want to introduce Meg Bommarito. Meg is a Ecology's Sipa EIS project manager for this project, and she'll be talking about some of the significant impacts. Meg. Over to you.

Meg Bommarito: Thanks, Angie. So I am going to start by I'm going to give you a high level overview of the significant impacts, but we're going to start by talking a little bit about what we analyzed first. Uh next slide please. So what did we study. We looked at natural and built elements of the environment and likely adverse impacts. We considered mitigation measures that might reduce those impacts. We reviewed and incorporated a lot of the comments that we had received from the 2020 draft EIS. We also looked at impacts from construction and operation of the dam and airport levies. We examined three different alternatives a no action alternative, a local actions alternative, and then the project itself with the flow through facility and the airport levies. We considered climate change as part of our baseline conditions in the analysis, which means it was part of it was woven throughout the entire analysis for all the different resources. We modeled major and catastrophic floods, and we looked at both mid and late century time frames. And we did make some different some changes in our approach compared to our 2020 draft EIS. So some of the things that were new and the way we looked at this analysis and completed the analysis were using updated climate change models. We also used a range of scenarios for each time frame. The mid and late century. We had a lot of new and updated scientific information and studies that were integrated and considered, and we also received tribal input on the technical

analysis of tribal and cultural resource impacts. And just a reminder that this is not a decision document or an approval or denial of the project.

Meg Bommarito: This is a disclosure of the impacts to be used by decision makers. So the board for the strategy and for the permitting agencies. Okay. And now we'll dive into a little look at the findings. Next slide please. So I do want to note that a lot of the impacts that we saw when we did this analysis of the new design were very similar or the same as impacts that we saw with the previous design. I also want to note that a lot of the impacts we saw are cumulative or would be cumulative, and that is a lot in part because of climate change. So we already know climate change is affecting resources and will continue to, and even more so in the future. So that is part of our baseline look. And then the dam is going to amplify a lot of those impacts that resources are already experiencing, especially for fish. So what we found was we would see impacts to fish and fish habitat because of habitat degradation, higher water temperatures, disturbance of spawning areas and reduced fish passage. Similar impacts for wildlife and wildlife habitat with the loss of habitat degradation and then the loss of nesting and breeding areas and tree and vegetation loss. We also identified impacts to earth, changes to the river channel, increased risk of landslides, changes in sediment movement and reduced channel forming flows. Next slide please. We also identified impacts to water and wetlands, which include water temperature changes, increase in water temperature, more turbidity, less dissolved oxygen.

Meg Bommarito: And we did identify impacts to tribal resources and cultural resources. And we want to acknowledge that there is still a federal review of impacts to tribal and cultural resources underway as part of the federal environmental review process. We have been using information that has resulted from their initial work in our eyes, and we expect to get even more information from that process, which we will feed into the final EIS. Next slide please. And we also identified impacts to To recreation with permanent loss of several miles of river for kayaking and riverbank fishing. We also identified the potential impacts to the water supply line for people's water system, which will likely be impacted by construction. And then we also, because the EIS looks at worst case scenarios and needs to be conservative in its analysis, we looked at the very low likelihood event of an earthquake that could occur when the reservoir is holding water. Next slide please. Mitigation measures are measures taken to reduce, eliminate or compensate for project impacts. They are often proposed by the applicant. In this case

we we got a lot of information about proposed mitigation from the applicant. Our own staff at ecology propose some mitigation and then other state agencies did as well. A note that an EIS does not analyze for the feasibility or effectiveness of that mitigation. And a lot of that is because this is early stage in the project, and we don't have enough information to know exactly what will be effective. The mitigation will be more fully developed and analyzed as permitting efforts get underway.

Meg Bommarito: If this project is brought forward and will be implemented so that mitigation piece will continue on and be further developed in the project design and then also permitting. And this is important note too, that mitigation is not implementable just because it's in the eyes that mitigation needs to be tied to an enforceable legal action or agreement in order to make sure that it's enforced and implemented so that more information that will be coming. We did consider the mitigation that was brought forward by the applicant, ourselves, our own staff and state agencies, and there'll be more work to come on that. Uh, next slide please. So looking at next steps, as you all are well aware, we are in the middle of our 75 day comment period. We are also holding quite a few meetings and have already held, um, one other online and one other in person. We have two more in-person meetings coming up later this month. We have one next week that'll be in Aberdeen, and we have another one on the 21st of January that will be in Boistfort. So we hope, um, that we get more comments, um, both in those meetings. And then also there are other ways of commenting that I'll talk about in the next slide. Uh, our comment period will close on February 4th. And after the closure of the comment period, we will be taking a look at all the comments that we got during this comment period. And we're also going to look back at all the comments that we got from the 2020 draft EIS. So if you made comments on that original draft and you're wondering what happened to them, we have already reviewed them and considered a lot of them when we worked on this EIS.

Meg Bommarito: And then we'll look at them again when we're finalizing our eyes this time around too. So we have two, two sets of comments that we'll be reviewing. We may make changes to the EIS based on those comments, and then we will be releasing. The final EIS is anticipated in August of this year. And just another reminder to that, again, we'll be working with our federal counterparts to make sure that we get the information from their process fed into our final EIS. Okay. Next slide. So a little bit more about how to comment. We have our online smart comment system that you can

submit comments to at any time. You can also review comments on that site too. So if you're interested to see what other folks are saying, all those comments will be available to you to review at any time. And then again, the next two meetings, uh, 13th and the 21st of this month will be in person. Um, and you can also send us handwritten or typed comments via mail also. And a note that all of these comments will be weighted equally. So if you don't get a chance to be in person, we will still consider your comments, whether written or submitted on our electronic system, equally the same as the comments we get at the public meeting. And with that, I'm going to turn things back over to Angie.

Angie Thomson: Great. Thank you. Meg. As we move into the public hearing portion of the evening, I'm going to be turning the microphone over to ecologies hearing officer Fran Sant. Um, what I have on the screen, though, is just a reminder of our meeting guidelines. Excuse me. Um, that I reviewed at the beginning of the meeting. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Fran.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Angie. Um, good evening everyone. My name is Fran Sant. We're going to be getting a formal section of the meeting, which is the public hearing. We are recording this, and at this time, I'll read some information that is required. For the record, I'm Fran Sant, hearing officer. For this hearing this evening, we are to conduct a hearing on the revised draft environmental impact statement for the Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project. Please let the record show that it is 6:27 p.m. on January 8th, 2026, and this hearing is being held online via the zoom platform. Notices of this hearing were mailed to about 13,000 interested people in the EIS study area. Emails and listserv notices were sent to approximately 4086 people. A news release was issued by Ecology on November 20th, 2025. Notices of this public hearing were also posted to Ecology's public Events calendar, and notices of this hearing were also published in the following papers the Centralia Chronicle the The Aberdeen Daily World in the Olympian all on November 20th, 2025. I will be calling people up or on to provide comments when I see your hand raised. When I call your name to provide your comment, we'll do a quick sound check and then I'll ask you to state your name for the record and provide your comment. Please speak clearly so that we can get a good recording of your comment. Please remember, comments should be kept to about three minutes. You will see a timer on that screen. If you reach that limit, I will ask you to summarize your comments so the next person can come up and provide comment. So I

am going to start taking a look at participants and look for raised hands. So this would be your opportunity to let me know. You'd like to provide comments and I'm already seeing some raised hands. And what I'll do so folks know to get ready. Um, I'll call one person and I'll let you know who's going to be next. So we're going to get started with, um, Maggie Sanders, followed by Kathy Brenneman. Maggie, you should be able to unmute yourself. Maggie. Can you hear me?

Maggie Sanders: Yes. Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: We sure can. Please go ahead and provide your comment.

Maggie Sanders: Yes. Um, I, along with the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and Quinault Indian Nation, feel that there are very profound concerns regarding the adequacy of the proposed revised EIS. The key concerns are inadequacy of realignment to address tribal concerns related to traditional cultural property of the dam and structure where it was moved. The Quinault Indian Nation raises major concerns regarding this realignment, and its threatened to extinguish the spring and fall run Chinook spawning aggregations upstream of the PL. It would cause irreversible loss of cultural resources. Even with the relocation of this revised draft EIS, it would cause significant and unavoidable adverse impacts of at least one known archaeological site. Mitigation measures for these cultural losses are still under discussion. It would also impact the fish passage, despite the the quote unquote improved fish passage designs modeling show the project will still place additional burdens on salmon and steelhead, magnifying the declines already exaggerated, exacerbated by climate change. Tribes have voiced skepticism and the trap and transport or ladders. It's also going to affect long term habitat degradation. Tribes and I are concerned about the permanent loss of hundreds of acres of quality forest and riparian habitat. This project would eliminate peak flows necessary to maintain natural river channels and habitat, and the replanting efforts cannot immediately replace the shade and ecosystem functions of the mature forest being cleared. It will affect genetic diversity.

Maggie Sanders: The modeling of the 2026 report predicts a reduction in genetic diversity of Chinook, coho, chum and salmon. This would be a critical concern for tribes and irreplaceable natural cultural resources. It's a disproportionate burden explicitly states that it impacts on natural resources if this construction operation will take effect

and affecting tribal resources. When a federal undertaking causes significant and unavoidable impacts to tribal resources, it triggers a complex legal obligation rooted in the US Constitution, federal statutes and established case law. One example of that is the United States, or is the Washington State Culverts case. This would be a violation of federal trust responsibility, legal mandate, and implementation implications that are affecting the best interests of the tribe. It infringes on treaty reserved rights. It also has the right to protect habitat and has also. I appreciate that you talked about the federal process. There's several federal laws and mandates under the Clean Water Act. The mandatory consultation about tribal cultural resources that are legally required and the permit like this dam, causes temperature spikes and that the United States Army Corps of Engineers are obligated to legally bar from issuing section 401 404 permits. And so I feel that the this project and the legal frameworks that are presented are would unavoidably cause impact. And with the Chehalis tribe as well as the the Quinault Indian Nation. And that specifically.

Fran Sant: I'm going to ask you to please wrap up your comments so we can make sure that everybody has an opportunity to provide comment.

Maggie Sanders: Okay. So my final comments are scientific uncertainty, failure of realignment, ineffectiveness of of mitigation, irreplaceable cultural loss and a magnification of climate change. And the preference for alternatives is mute.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Maggie. Um, next we're going to hear from Kathy. And Kathy will be followed by Ed Humble. Um, let's see. Kathy, your hand went away. I don't see your hand up any longer. Um, and how about you? Are you ready to provide comment? You can go ahead and unmute yourself and check in with me.

Edward Humble: Can you hear me? Okay.

Fran Sant: We sure can. Thank you.

Edward Humble: Okay. Do you want me to start?

Fran Sant: Go ahead when you're ready.

Edward Humble: Yeah. My name is Ed Humble. I am currently the chair of the South Sound Sierra Sierra Club group. And, um. And I just want to to register and let people know that that we are opposed to the construction of the flow through dam because of our environmental priorities. Uh, it's clear from the data that's been presented that this project, while not providing a great deal of of relief from the flooding that has gone that has gone on, will severely restrict salmon habitat, possibly eliminate, uh, the spring run of Chinook salmon, and it will also during the construction, the water flow will need to be reduced at some points to a near zero, which will destroy a lot of the habitat. We also are concerned our environmental concerns include environmental justice, and this project will have a disproportionate effect on on low income communities. Our other piece of this is that there are better solutions available at a much lower cost than the cost of this dam, which is into the billions of dollars. Um, those those other alternatives will include there's the land solutions that have been identified, uh, in the, in the, the uh, EA uh, and some of those make some real good sense. There's also just the idea of, of raising their you know, they were talking about raising some of the, the, the Louisiana Avenue.

Edward Humble: There's other areas that can be raised. There's buildings that could be raised, some things that haven't been talked about in the that are other alternatives are just looking at the local codes for approvals of, of of building, building in what we know as a floodplain, local codes and what kinds of construction needs to be, how much things need to be raised. And then a large one for us is the restoration, the years and years and years of logging and other activity in the upper Chehalis have really destroyed a lot of what is has been the the natural habitat along the Chehalis River. If if restoration can be effective in those areas and it can be, uh, in a, in a number of areas, that will also have a major impact on the flooding downstream that was seen during these recent floods on in rivers in western Washington in these recent floods. So with those things, we we I'd like to get into more detail of what we see as those options and other options. We will put those in written form, but we really appreciate the opportunity here to just let people know and to express those. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Fran Sant: Thank you for your comments. Um, next up I see Paul Pickett and Paul will be followed by Vanessa Lavalle. Um, Paul, when you're ready. Um, okay. I just saw

Paul's hand disappear as well. Vanessa, I'm going to call you up if you'd like to provide comments.

Vanessa LaValle: Hi. Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: We sure can, Vanessa. Thank you.

Vanessa LaValle: Thank you. I'm grateful for the opportunity to comment. Um, you know, I know flooding is scary as a basement resident, and I share the concerns of other people. And however, I do oppose this free and I appreciate the work that has gone into the eyes so that we can have the full picture, which is significant adverse impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitat. Um, in 2026, it's my opinion we should not be damming rivers as we did from the 1930s to 60s. We learned so much from that era. And and in fact, we're taking them down now. And taking them down can be as expensive as installing them. For example, the Elwha and the dams that came down cost over $351 million. So when I hear that the estimated cost of the Fra is 1.2 billion, it seems like we'll likely still be paying for that as is, it's already time for it to come down. And then my grandchildren, I guess, will be paying for the deconstruction. Um, you know, I support SRP projects raising I-5 and the local action on dam alternatives. And I thank you all so much for the work that you're doing to improve our lives in the basin, and I thank you all for your time.

Fran Sant: Thank you for your comments, Vanessa. Um, the next hand I see raised is that of Andrew Simrin. Andrew, would you like to go ahead and provide comment? You can go ahead and unmute yourself.

Andrew Simrin: Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: We sure can. Thank you.

Andrew Simrin: Hello. My name is Andrew Simrin. Uh, I live in Eugene, Oregon. Uh, I'm calling because, uh, I'm calling in to comment because this is a very important issue. Um, we know that our area is experiencing our region is experiencing, uh, different atmospheric conditions related to, our planet's climate. And we know that the atmosphere, while it's getting warmer, is able to hold more moisture. But, um, a dam is

not the way that we should be controlling this, uh, inundation. Um, that only happens. It was pointed out every seven years or so. Um, I read through some of the draft EIS and see that there would be significant impact to, uh, imperiled wildlife species, um, aquatic and terrestrial as well. Um, and one of the more important ones is salmon. Um, salmon are important to many people, and they are keystone species. Um, the relocation of this dam site does not, uh, properly mitigate the harms that would be done to salmon and to people, uh, and to other wildlife as well. Um, so we can't be relying on these, um, very expensive and ineffective mitigation measures. Um, that. Are very complex. And as was pointed out, there are, uh, more cost effective and, um, less resource intense ways to mitigate the impacts of flooding, uh, while still, uh, working with natural processes of a river system. Um. In addition, the building or extending of levees that we, we know that that just moves the flooding elsewhere. Um, so it's again, another ineffective mitigation. Um, as was pointed out, we need to be considering a different approach, not subsidizing development near, um, floodplains. But, uh, I see the whole project area is within the floodplain of that, but, uh, so really, we should be looking into, um, having green space that can be used for wildlife habitat and to, uh, you know, mitigate some and buffer some of those, uh, impacts from flooding. Um, so please do not put the dam in the the new location does not mitigate the the problems enough. Thank you for your the opportunity to provide comment.

Fran Sant: Thank you Andrew. Um, next we're going to hear from Glenda DeLaMater. Glenda, when you're ready, you can go ahead and unmute yourself and provide comment. Glenda.

Glenda DeLaMater: Yes? Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: We sure can. Thank you.

Glenda DeLaMater: Oh, thank you for your time allowing me to comment on this. Um, I was involved in some of the cultural resource, uh, research when this project first came about in 2017. Again in 2020. I am an enrolled member of the Chehalis tribe. I am also one of our main gatherers who goes out and seeks out the different resources throughout this entire basin to feed our people. I really feel like the cultural aspects are really being pushed to the side. They're not being considered. We have so many aspects that we rely on for these floodwaters to come through this valley and nourish

our valley. We need these flood waters to come through here and wipe our slate clean. Every year our fields grow based on these flood waters. Our nettles grow based on these flood waters. And I don't hear in any of these public comments where any of the other environmental factors are even being considered, such as our wild onions, such as our chemists, such as our roots, our berries, these other important aspects not only as Native American people, but I gather alongside many people in our communities throughout this valley that are not just tribal. So these aspects feed our families, and this is what's not being considered. And so I would really express and really hope that ecology, Army Corps of Engineers, who failed to maintain the last levees down in Centralia in the 2017 flood, are taking these aspects into consideration. We're not just voicing opinions, we're voicing our facts. We're the people that are living this land. We reside on this land anywhere outside of this basin. We are here. We are from here, and we'll continue to be here for generations to come. Many of the people that are being affected are not just homesteaders, but they're families rooted their roots here, and they have become here. They have become naturalized into this valley. And so I would like to sincerely ask you to please start considering these voices as a part of your data. Thank you for your time.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Glenda. Um, next, I'd like to ask Thomas O'Keefe if you're ready to provide comment.

Thomas O'Keefe: Yeah. So my name is Thomas O'Keefe.

Glenda DeLaMater: Good enough.

Fran Sant: Glenda, we're going to go ahead and mute you really quick. And, Thomas, give us a second to get organized. Um, I think you can go ahead now, Thomas.

Thomas O'Keefe: Okay. My name is Thomas O'Keefe. I am the director of policy and science for American Whitewater. I'm speaking in opposition to the proposed Chehalis River Flood Retention Dam. Because of its permanent and unavoidable impacts to whitewater recreation and river based public use. I personally voted the Chehalis River through the area proposed for the dam and temporary reservoir. American Whitewater is a national river conservation organization founded in 1954 that represents whitewater boaters across the country, including thousands of members in Washington state.

America's Whitewater mission is to protect and restore America's whitewater rivers, and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. Appendix J of the revised draft EIS acknowledges that the Chehalis River supports kayaking and whitewater rafting, and identifies the West Fork to PL as reach. As one of the longer continuous class three four whitewater runs in Washington. These are not casual or interchangeable recreation sites. Whitewater rivers exist only where gradient flow access and uninterrupted river continuity come together. The EIS concludes that construction and operation of the proposed dam would permanently close boating access on affected reaches, and that these impacts would be significant and unavoidable even after mitigation.

Thomas O'Keefe: The proposed mitigation off site recreational enhancements elsewhere in the basin does not replace a lost river. Trails, campgrounds or access points cannot compensate for the permanent loss of a free flowing whitewater river. Public rivers are part of our shared natural heritage in Washington state. The EIS effectively concedes that this project would permanently eliminate white water recreation opportunities and offers no meaningful path to avoid that outcome. This project reflects a broader problem. For more than a century, flood policy has relied on large engineered structures that promise control but require perpetual maintenance while failing to address root causes despite billions of dollars invested. Floods persist while rivers and floodplains are degraded. Chehalis basin represents an opportunity to move beyond that legacy by restoring floodplain function, reducing floodplain development, assisting landowners, and protecting rivers that support fish, recreation, and quality of life. For these reasons, I urge the Department of Ecology to reject the proposed dam and pursue flood damage reduction alternatives that do not permanently sacrifice irreplaceable river and recreation resources. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Tom. Um, we're going to hear from Kathy Burnaman next.

Kathy Burnaman: Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: We sure can, Kathy. Thank you.

Kathy Burnaman: Great. Thank you. Hello. I'm Kathy Burnaman, the project manager for the flood control zone district. We know how devastating flooding is to the upper

Chehalis Basin. And the project proposed by the flood Control Zone district is designed to reduce the worst flooding impacts by targeting major and catastrophic floods. The good news is, the revised draft EIS concludes that the project serves this purpose in a late century catastrophic flood, it would prevent more than 2400 structures and 4000 acres of land from being inundated from Pale to Cosmopolis along 100 miles of river. It would reduce flooding along I-5 and allowing it to open faster. The project is meant to be consistent with an overall Chehalis basin fish and flood strategy to reduce major or catastrophic flooding damages while still creating successful outcomes for fish. For that reason, the project is not a traditional dam, it's a flow through facility. Most of the time and for years on end, the project would allow the river to flow through it. It only closes when a major or catastrophic flood is forecasted, and even then it allows average wintertime flows to pass. Regarding mitigation, for the last five years, our scientists, biologists and engineers have worked to provide flood benefits while minimizing impacts to fish and the environment. We wouldn't be proposing a project if we didn't think we could provide substantial mitigation. All of the mitigation measures will be robust. They are detailed in our mitigation plan and will be further described in our comments to the revised draft EIS and future project design. All large projects have impacts, but the point is to design them safely, effectively and with as few impacts as possible. That's what we believe we have done here and what we are committed to doing in the in if the project is selected to proceed. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Cathy. Um, next we're going to hear from Larry Lestelle. Larry, when you're ready, you should be able to, um. Hear me now.

Larry Lestelle: And can you hear me?

Fran Sant: We sure can. Thank you. Larry.

Larry Lestelle: Okay. Yes. My name is Larry Lestelle. I'm a fish and aquatic habitat scientist with more than 50 years of experience in salmon science, much of it focused on the Chehalis Basin and the Olympic Peninsula. Um, excuse me. I conducted among the first comprehensive assessments of salmon habitat across the Chehalis Basin in 1978 and again in 2003, using EDT modeling. Since 2015, I have helped develop and implement the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan, serving first on the Science Review team and now on the Technical Advisory Group. I'm also part of the Quinault Indian

Nations team reviewing the draft EIS. Today, I am addressing one critical aspect related to the proposed dam. Chinook salmon, especially spring Chinook, are in steep decline in the upper Chehalis basin. This decline is the result of cumulative impacts, most notably the loss and degradation of essential salmon habitats caused by past and ongoing land and water use practices. The AICp identifies restoration of the upper basin as a top priority because it contains key Chinook spawning areas. Protecting and restoring these habitats is essential for sustaining and recovering wild Chinook in the Chehalis Basin, particularly the Chinook population. If the proposed dam is built, it will eliminate the possibility of restoring the upper basin for Chinook salmon. It will accelerate the decline of wild Chinook, and in my professional judgment, spring Chinook and likely all Chinook would be lost from the upper basin. There is no mitigation that can offset such an outcome. The upper basin is a critical component of the Chehalis Basin salmon producing system, and losing it would have irreversible consequences. For these reasons, the proposed dam represents an unacceptable and permanent sacrifice of one of the basin's most important salmon habitats. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Fran Sant: Thank you for your comment, Larry. Um, next we're going to hear from Micah McNair coming out. Um, when you're ready, go ahead and let's check in and provide your comments.

Malikah McNair: Hello? Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: I sure can, thank you. Micah.

Malikah McNair: Okay, so I am a Chehalis tribal member. I am 16 years old and I participate in a lot of cultural activities, and I gather a lot in our valley. And this dam will not allow, um, a lot of the soy, a lot of the soil that we need for our valley to get, you know, the nutrients it needs. It's very it'll be very harmful to all of us. A lot of us depend on our canvas, our fern. Nettle. And it's not even just. We need it. We also need it for our ceremonies, our traditions. It is very. What's the word? Um, key for us to have the have this dam not be here. It's just. It's just a really bad idea for all of us. All of our. All the Chehalis. Sorry. Chehalis people. Uh, and, you know, I, I feel like me and a lot of my fellow youth will do not want to have to pay for something that'll just ruin our land and not allow us to get the, um. You know, nutrients that we need. We need our salmon,

which, even though it'll even though it'll let fish do it, will not allow enough fish to go through as a without a dam and with our declining fish population. And I just wanted to thank you for researching our river at least. And that's all I have for today.

Fran Sant: Thank you Micah, we appreciate your comments. Next we're going to hear from Paul Pickett and Paul. When you're ready, we are ready to hear from you.

Paul Pickett: Oh I pushed the right button this time. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Me too.

Paul Pickett: Um. All right. Yes. Uh, my name is Paul Pickett, and, um, I live in Port Angeles, Washington. I'm a licensed environmental civil engineer. I'm retired, but I worked for over 30 years for the Department of Ecology, mostly for the Environmental Assessment program, doing studies of water quality and hydrology. I did technical studies for Tmdls on the Chehalis and black River back in the early 90s, and I served on a committee reviewing US Fish and Wildlife grants in the basin. And near the end of my time at ecology, I served as a technical specialist for the early years of the flood response program up through about 2000. I'd like to make several specific points. First, with regard to water quality, the EIS correctly identifies higher temperatures, lower dissolved oxygen, and increased turbidity as impacts. It notes that the applicant has proposed to develop and implement a surface water quality mitigation plan, and that the proposed action would have significant and unavoidable adverse impacts on surface water quality. Unless this plan meets regulatory requirements and implementation is feasible, but no specific mitigation is proposed other than a plan of unknown usefulness. Just proposing a plan of unknown content is not adequate. In reality, it may be impossible to meet water quality standards. I'd like to. I don't think I've ever seen a dam that met water quality standards. Um, and, uh, or mitigation that could deal with that. Um, but even to, uh, or even reduce impacts that worsen water quality conditions below water quality standards, the river is already on the list of impaired water bodies and EPA improved tmdls are in place. There are court cases that suggest that a project must not be given permits if it adds to the impairment of a listed water body.

Paul Pickett: The EPA is inadequate if it fails to explain specifically and thoroughly how the project will meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act, both water quality

standards and the Tmdl is already established. In fact, it would be foolish to spend large amounts of money on a project that would fail to meet state and federal water quality laws. Second, I'd like to mention that, uh, an important aspect of flood hydrology that I don't see mentioned in the is floods. Um are are defined in the by flows of Grand Mound, but storms can hit the basin from many different direction, resulting in floods that come out of subbasins other than the headwaters. For example, the most recent flooding was concentrated on the Newaukum basin. The value of flood control structure that addresses only a small part of the large basin may be relatively small. The absence of this information raises doubt about the estimated use of the dam every once every seven years. Categorizing floods by the area of the basin impacted by storms is an issue that needs to be addressed in detail in eyes. I would like to add one other point, which is that, um, when I was doing this work, I noticed that the modeling of flooding, um, showed that increasing the airport levee increased flooding upstream of the levee from route six up to the Newaukum River. This area with more flooding includes toxic waste cleanup sites saying the levee increases flooding, reduces flooding is not actually true. It reduces flooding in some areas. It increases impacts in other areas. The specific impacts of this upstream area from increased flooding needs to be specifically analyzed and discussed. And I'm right on time. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you so much. Um, next we're going to hear from John Harwood. John, when you're ready, go ahead and just do check in and provide your comment.

John Harwood: Can you hear me now?

Fran Sant: I can. John. Thank you.

John Harwood: Thank you. Um, my name is John Harwood. I live in Aberdeen, technically out near Westport. Um, I have a couple of specific concerns. One is, um. Looking at the structure itself and the the pass through fish passage that is designed, uh, the description was that it would be 320ft long, that the fish would travel through this called a conduit that the fish would have to travel through. 320ft long. That's like more than a football field in length. And, um. I it puzzles me because here I think that the, um, the current push is to remove culverts from anywhere on any road in western Washington. And a lot of money is being spent to do that. But yet, uh, this 320 foot long conduit, which sounds an awful lot like a culvert to me, is going to be relied upon to

preserve these fish runs. Um, I tried to look up some of the citations that are listed in the document about, uh, the design of fish passage. Um, but most of them were not live links, and I would have to dig much deeper to go find those to see what they actually said. Um, but I don't know that the fish that we have are very well adapted to swimming through long, dark caves in order to survive. A second was that just the size of this inundation area, behind the behind the upstream from the flood retention facility is is nearly 850 acres.

John Harwood: That is going to be deforested periodically due to the the flooding that backs up when the gates are closed and that huge quantity eight more than 800 acres being deforested, uh, includes five miles more than five miles of the Chehalis River, uh, where? And some 18 miles of secondary streams, which will all lose their, um, forest, and therefore the shade that, uh, keeps them cool during the summer. And remembering that our summers are going to become hotter and drier and more intense, I just, uh, try to envision these streams and this river flowing down through these 800 acres of denuded area, just getting cooked by our summer, July and August sun. I can't believe that the river, the and the organisms that rely on that river are going to survive that. Um, so that just that just that doesn't make very much sense. And finally, I also am somewhat frustrated by the lack of specifics on mitigation plans and committing, you know, um, being committed to those plans, the mitigation plans, because it seems very difficult to decide whether this facility is even feasible given the sketchy and ambiguous details that are given. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Fran Sant: Thank you. John. Um, next we're going to hear from Dustin. Dustin, when you're ready, go ahead and um, let's do a sound check and we'll go from there.

Dustin Klatush: Check.

Fran Sant: Sound check. Accomplished.

Dustin Klatush: Hi, my name is Dustin Klatush, enrolled tribal member and chairman of the tribe. On behalf of the tribe, I must express our clear opposition to the proposed flow through free dam in the upper Chehalis Basin. While state agencies are prepared to bring their party to Aberdeen. For our people, this is not a celebration. This is another chapter in a long history of decisions made about our lands, our waters and our future

without meaningful respect for the rights, knowledge and sovereignty of the tribe. The river is not simply a body of water to be engineered or controlled. It is a living system that sustains our salmon, nourishes our wetlands, and defines our identity as a people, as our ancestors, our families shaped our cultural since time immemorial. Any proposal that threatens the river threatens us directly. The draft EIS released by ecology a couple of months ago, fails to demonstrate that this project can avoid irreversible harm to salmon, lamprey, steelhead and the broader ecosystem. It does not resolve the risk to water quality, sediment transport, downstream habitat, or the long term health of species already in decline. A dam of this scale, regardless of its flow through design, represents an unprecedented manipulation of watershed that has already suffered from generations of modifications. Moreover, this project asks the public and especially tribal communities to accept permanent cultural, ecological and spiritual loss in exchange for the only theoretical flood risk reduction.

Dustin Klatush: We do not dismiss the very real concern of families and businesses facing destructive flooding, but reject the notion that the only solution is to sacrifice the river itself. There basin wide alternatives like non structural, climate resilient, community centered approaches that do not require destroying what cannot be replaced. The tribe will continue to stand firmly for the river, for the salmon, and for the generations that will inherit the decisions that are going to be made. We expect and demand that future discussions respect tribal sovereignty, honor our protected resources, and prioritize solutions that heal the basin rather than divide it. We're in the area. We're in the era of taking dams down, not putting them back up. I also want to thank all the people that made the comments, you know, about our basin, about her. This is our history here. You know, it's the river where the tribe and we will we will be present on January 13th not to accept this project, but to ensure our voices are heard clearly the tribe does not support the free dam. A river is not for sale or salmon are not expendable. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Dustin. Next hand I see is Lee First. Lee, when you're ready, let's check in with each other and you can provide your comment.

Lee First: Sound check.

Fran Sant: Completed.

Lee First: Thank you. I'm Lee First Twin Harbors waterkeeper. I live in south Thurston County, right next to the river in Rochester. I object to the simplistic approach that was taken to analyze and attempt to compensate for the effects that the dam will have on the Chehalis River. For example, the dam will most certainly block downstream movement of spawning gravel. Will gravel augmentation downstream mitigate for this loss? What if the augmentation isn't effective? What about cumulative impacts of sediment processes in the upper river? Many of the impacts identified in the dais were described as minimal, but in the long term, what will be the cumulative impacts of all these so-called minimal impacts? How will the Hyperaemic zone upstream and downstream of the Mega Dam be affected? Will the Hyperaemic zone downstream of the Mega dam become clogged with fine sediment when water is slowly released after a period of impoundment? And if so, will increase sediment from erosion, clog the hyperaemic zone, making it a less effective source of cold, clean water during critical low summer flows. The river upstream of Doty almost dried up last summer. How will vertical water movement be affected by this mega dam? Who will implement mitigation and who will pay for it? Who will make sure it's effective? And what if unforeseen problems arise? Who will be responsible? What if mitigation does not compensate for the harm done? Please make the analysis of impacts to the hyperaemic zone more robust for the final eyes. And lastly, I wonder about the study area. Were residents in Boistfort and Curtis mailed postcards notifying them about the meeting, especially this new meeting. Has there been any effort to let them know about this new in-person opportunity on January 21st? It's not too late. I hope you mail them postcards too. They they really were hammered in the in the 2007 flood. I will yield the rest of my time. Thank you very much.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Lee. Um, next we're going to hear from Liz. Um, Gilliam. Liz, when you're ready, let's check in and then you can provide your comment.

Liz Gilliam: Hello? Can you hear me?

Fran Sant: I can, Liz. Thank you.

Liz Gilliam: Hi. Thank you so much for accepting public comment on this important issue. I'm a river scientist of 20 plus years, and I'm representing the organization Pacific Rivers. Um, I want to begin just addressing, um, the way this project is being presented

to the public. Um, the imagery and videos that we've seen, um, depict an open, expansive, almost park like structure, and that's just not the reality. Um, the opening in the dam that the river will flow through is a rectangular gated conduit through concrete. Um, at the proposed dam site, the Chehalis River is currently the valley is about 100ft wide, and under this design, the primary opening where fish will pass for most of the year is roughly 12ft wide by 20ft tall, and there's two secondary openings that are set at higher elevations, and they're similar sized. So that is a dramatic constriction of a living river. And it is fundamentally at odds with what the public is being led to imagine through some of the, um, public media. Second, um, I want to be clear about mitigation. Um, I've worked professionally in restoration and mitigation for many years now. And, um, I think my comment echoes previous comments as well. So while mitigation efforts can help in limited ways, they cannot replicate the ecological function of a free flowing river. Um mitigation can be framed as reducing impacts, but it does not replace what is lost. It just attempts to soften the damage.

Liz Gilliam: And we should really be honest about that as we move forward. Um, third point is that rivers are complex systems, and placing a massive concrete structure like this across a river valley, especially in the upper portion of a watershed, creates wide reaching and interconnected impacts. We can look to examples elsewhere across the region as to what those impacts might be, but we cannot fully predict the consequences of the dam. What we do know is that the effects will extend both upstream and downstream, and they will persist for generations. Um, and finally, I can't help but think about what could have been done, uh, since 2007, to protect homes and infrastructure directly. Um, there have been a lot of claims of wanting to help the community, but very little meaningful action has actually occurred on that front. Um, and to the contrary, there has been ongoing construction in the floodplain. And even with the dam in place, flooding will continue. As mentioned by others, homes will still flood. Impact costs will remain high. This dam will not end flooding in the basin. Um, and the alternatives analysis is paltry in comparison to the detail of the dam, and the alternatives warrant more investigation and consideration. In closing, I'd just like to say that Pacific Rivers produced the film a watershed moment, and anyone can email us for access to the film. Thank you for being able to comment on this important issue.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Liz. Um, next we're going to hear from Cindy Hansen. Cindy, when you're ready, let's check in. Cindy, you should be able to unmute yourself. There you go.

Cindy Hansen: Okay. Can you. Can you hear me now?

Fran Sant: I sure can. Thank you.

Cindy Hansen: Excellent. All right. Uh. Good evening. My name is Cindy Hansen. I am representing the nonprofit Orchid Network. And thank you for the opportunity to comment. Uh, I know you've already heard several reasons not to construct a dam on the Chehalis River, so I'm going to speak specifically on behalf of the southern resident orcas and the salmon they rely on. These orcas are a genetically and culturally distinct population. They are unlike any other orcas on the planet. And if we lose them, there's no replacing them. They are listed as endangered federally in Washington State and in Oregon State, with only 75 individuals remaining. There are several reasons for their decline, but the number one factor is lack of salmon, particularly Chinook, which is their primary prey. If we want to prevent the extinction of these whales, we need to restore salmon runs throughout their range. And in addition to recovering what we've already destroyed, we also have to protect what we still have. The DEIS states that there would be less than significant adverse impacts to southern resident killer whales, and that is simply not true. We know that Chehalis River Chinook are an important food source for southern residents.

Cindy Hansen: The stock that Chehalis River Chinook belonged to is identified by NOAA and DFW as a priority stock for southern residents. Satellite tagging data has shown southern residents off Grays Harbor most likely foraging. They are spending more time in coastal waters and less in the Salish Sea, particularly in recent years. And research from NOAA has shown that coastal Chinook remains an important food source for them, particularly in the winter. Chehalis River Chinook are already in trouble. We know this. We've heard this multiple times, and the creation of a dam would most likely push them over the edge. The loss of these salmon would be devastating for tribes, for recreational fishermen, and for the communities in the region, including the southern resident orca community. So Orca Network will be sending in more detailed written comments about all of this, and will be strongly urging decision makers to deny this

proposal and instead concentrate on the local non dam actions proposed by the Land Steering Committee that will benefit the entire region and will also urge more time, energy and resources directed towards salmon recovery efforts that the entire region can benefit from. So thank you very much.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Cindy. Um, last hand I see raised for right now is Malakai McNair. Malakai, when you're ready, um, let's check in and go ahead and provide your comment.

Malikah McNair: Hello? Can you hear me.

Fran Sant: Yep, I can.

Malikah McNair: Um, so I've heard a lot of the like factual statements and the, um, kind of everything besides the spiritual statements. I myself, I'm a 19 year old Chehalis tribal member, and I've done plenty of research on the dam and what it can do, and I followed up on where they're moving it, how they're moving it, what they're fixing, what they're taking away, and all the things and all I really want to say is that one thing that people don't understand is that when it comes to waters that like this, that Native American people, um, rely on. We're not talking about just relying on it physically. We're talking about relying on it spiritually and mentally. And a lot of us have no, no reason for wanting a dam on our river solely because of our spirituality. It makes us who we are. It's where we come from. It's what gives us our plants. It's what gives us our animals. It's what gives us our nourishment. I do almost every single one of the ceremonial activities down here, um, on the reservation. And it would just be a dramatic negative impact on all of us. I mean, there's the fish.

Malikah McNair: I mean, there's that aspect of it. We've had pretty, um, bad salmon runs these last couple of years. Um, and that's because we don't have the flooding. Our valleys are not getting the nourishment of the water just because it's raining, and just because it's flooding everywhere else does not mean that it's flooding down here. And with the spirituality aspect of it, there's things that happened up there in our lives, stories that I've been taught since I was a young, young, young girl that I still remember to this day. And moving the dam from where it was supposed to be to where it is going to be now. It's like taking a 100 foot long tree and slamming it right in the middle of

somebody's house and then expecting that person to still want to live there, even though they have no more water, they have no more electricity, and they have a big gaping hole right in the middle of their roof. And that is not livable. That is not a livable place for any human being to be at. And, um, I just thank you for your time. And that's all I got to say.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Malikah. Um, next we're going to hear from Jim Weber. Jim, when you're ready, let's check in.

Jim Weber: Hello.

Fran Sant: Hi, Jim.

Jim Weber: Uh, thank you for this opportunity. Um, I just I wanted to make one observation and ask two questions. Uh, the observation is that I don't see how you can have a, um, a legitimate EA without considering the mitigation you're hoping to use to reduce the impacts. It just, uh, I know that Sepa does allow for the consideration of mitigation. For example, you get a mitigated determination of non-significance and you don't have to prepare an EIS. It seems to me that, uh, consideration and mitigation needs to be done in the EIS process, not later. Uh, and then for my questions, uh, I was curious. One, has anybody, uh, in the, uh, ecology or as part of the Chehalis basin strategy, done an assessment of the likelihood that the federal government will actually shell out the funding needed for this project? I think in the day and age we currently live in, that, uh, the likelihood of that is slim. Um, my other observation or excuse me question is, have the, uh, cities of Centralia and Chehalis and Lewis County, have they updated their development regulations to be consistent with sort of regulations that are most protective of floodplains and fish habitat? Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Jim.

Bobbak Talebi: Hey, Fran. Apologies. I have to take a quick break here to run to the restroom real quick.

Fran Sant: Okay. Let's, um, it is 721. Let's break till 725. Does that work for everybody? Great. We'll see you back in four minutes. We'll get started right back at 725. Um, Edna Fund, you'll be up next.

Bobbak Talebi: So thank you for the for the quick break. I apologize everybody, but appreciate it.

Fran Sant: Edna, um, you are able to unmute yourself. Yes. There you go. There you go. Alright, we're back at it.

Edna Fund: Alright. My name is Edna Fund and I'm in Centralia. I've been a county commissioner. I've been a city councilor. I have been and currently am on the Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee and the Flood Authority. And there's what I'm finding, as I hear a lot of folks talking. There's a lack of information that's out there about some of the things that have been done or will be done. And I think the more we can share what's going on, and I appreciate the gentleman talking about, you know, what more about the mitigation. When we had the flood in 2007, it caused more than $900 million in damage, which for today's budget would be $1.4 billion. And also thinking about the fish issues, and the Office of Research recently showed that climate impacts are hammering the fishery across the basin, which is the biggest deal for our aquatic species, and the impact of this flow through the dam. According to the draft, Sepa extends only above Rainbow Falls and that's before mitigation 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. The flow through dam will protect more than 1400 homes and businesses, and I know the entities here have been raising homes, have been, um, changing their, uh, regulations. And FEMA has recognized that, um, they've they've done a really good job of that. And so some of the FEMA numbers that we've had have decreased, which is good news for, for our citizens. And it's this is a difficult issue. It's been going on, you know, before time. There's 1933. Centralia had a big flood and it said, then we will solve this issue. Well, it's time that we solve this issue. And I think the flow through Dam is part of it. And there are other things we can do. As somebody said, it doesn't solve anything, but it's a piece of our solution for our Chehalis basin, its residents and its species. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Edna. Um, the next person I our hand up is Rhonda Larson Kramer. Rhonda, when you're ready, we're ready to hear from you.

Rhonda Larson Kramer: Hi. Thank you. Um, my name is Rhonda Larson Kramer and I live in Olympia. Climate change is absolutely a major driver of salmon decline, but that doesn't make local habitats habitat impacts irrelevant. And in fact, it makes them more important. Climate change reduces salmon's margin for survival, which means additional stressors that might once have been survivable can now be decisive. We can't locally control climate change, but we can control whether we add permanent new impacts to salmon habitat in the Chehalis River basin. Habitat protection is one of the few tools we actually do have to help salmon persist in a changing climate. Uh, so that was a response to the the prior speaker. Um, I also want to focus on an issue that often gets overlooked in discussions of the proposed pass through dam, the impacts to salmon that occur even when the gate is open. And open gate does not mean an impact free dam. The dam is a large permanent structure that re-engineers the river channel. Even with the gate open, it narrows and hardens. The river corridor alters flow velocity and turbulence and changes how water moves through this reach. Salmon, especially juveniles, are highly sensitive to these hydraulic conditions. Simplified, faster and more uniform flows reduce habitat quality and increase stress and predation risk. The structure also alters floodplain connectivity when the gates are open.

Rhonda Larson Kramer: Salmon rely not only on extreme floods upstream, but also moderate seasonal high flows that reconnect side channels and off channel habitats. A low flow management structure changes the timing and duration of those connections. This can reduce access to slow, water rich, food rich areas that are essential for juvenile growth and survival. Sediment and large woody debris are another concern even when the gate is open. The presence of the dam disrupts how gravel and wood move downstream. Over time, this leads to compacted and armored spawning gravels, fewer pools, and less cover. These are chronic impacts that accumulate year after year and directly affect egg survival and juvenile refuge. Large engineered structures also change fish behavior. Turbulence, noise, altered flow patterns, and unnatural lighting can delay mitigation. Migration. These things can concentrate fish in vulnerable, vulnerable areas and increase predation. These effects all happen even when the gate is open. So the issue is not just what happens when the gate is closed. It's a permanent alteration every day. There are other well-established ways to reduce flood damage, like avoiding new

development in floodplains, relocating or protecting existing vulnerable structures, and restoring floodplains. These approaches address flood risk directly without imposing permanent day to day harm on salmon habitat. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Rhonda. I'm taking a look here. I'm not seeing any additional hands raised. So, um, if you have not yet provided comment and would like to do so, this would be a great opportunity for you to raise your hand and provide your comment. If we don't have any additional folks that would like to provide comment, um, if anybody that has already provided comment would like to provide an additional comment, we would welcome you. Oh, we have someone. Yay! Um, after we go through. But if you've already provided comment and would like to provide an additional comment, please also go ahead and raise your hand. Um, Sheilah Bray, I see you've raised your hand. Thank you. Um, we are ready to hear from you.

Sheilah Bray: Hi. Uh, yes. My name is Sheilah Bray. I am a tribal member. Uh, I did hear Dustin Cleetus speak. He's our chairman, as well as some of our other, uh, tribal members about this subject. I am the vice chairwoman for the tribe. I also use this subject of potential dam, uh, proposition for the Chehalis River at peel. I use that for my evergreen, um, uh, evergreen Masters class that I was taking called, um, uh, American Indian Solutions to Environmental Challenges. And I use this as my topic of of what not to do. You know, we're in a time where where a lot of, a lot of, um, rivers are having their dams removed And I think we look ridiculous talking about putting a dam in in this year, in this age, 2025, 2026. It's been going on for how many years? Talking about putting a dam on a river. And I don't care what you call it or how you think it's going to look. It's still a dam on the river. And the last lady who spoke really said it all, that it's going to affect the fish way more than you think. The all the aquatic marine life, they're not going to look at that and go, oh, here's a structure that we can still move through. They don't know anything about that.

Sheilah Bray: And I've been attending these meetings. I've even spoken up, uh, when she mentioned that, you know, there are so many other ways to to try to help fix the solution other than putting a dam on the river. That and that was part of my presentation, is instead of trying to make the river healthy and putting more plants and and helping it. We're just talking about damming it. And the one thing we can stop doing is building in flood zones. That's exactly what the Home Depot, the Walmart and that

whole area did is they built in an area that was was always covered in water when it did flood. So now what? They're helping push more water back back into the river a lot faster. And when we get flooded here in Chehalis on the on the reservation, it's not just water anymore. It's now water and mud. And and I, I live in a house that's in a flood zone. I'm five feet off the ground, and not once have I said, hey, Washington State, build a dam. So my so the the area I live in doesn't flood. You can you can get all of those companies to move all of those businesses to move. If you stop offering flood protection insurance, they will move. Thank you for your time.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Sheila. Is anybody else interested in providing comment this evening? I'm going to give folks a minute or so while I scan to make sure I'm not missing any raised hands. Dan, we'd love to hear from you. Please go ahead and, um, check in with me and go ahead and provide your comment.

Dan Penn: Okay. Can you hear me now?

Fran Sant: I sure can, thank you. Dan.

Dan Penn: Okay. Uh, hello? Uh, I just like to add on to some of the comments that I've heard previously that talking about flooding being an issue for the area since 1933, and actually, that river has been flooding that valley significantly longer than that. And the people who have lived in this valley for that time have found ways to live with that. And if you're going to live in the floodplain, then you should probably plan accordingly. And that's what the the early indigenous people told to us. The Ford family, when they came to the area and they arrived in the spring, in the summer, and it was so beautiful and everything was so lush and so green and plentiful. And we're going to build a cabin right here. And, you know, our older people, they said, you know what, Sydney? You seem like a nice guy. Why don't you put your house up here by where our house is? Because come the winter time, it's going to flood down there. And sure enough, that was what it was. Because there's ways of living in this valley where you can live with the river and not have to try to put a dam on it. So that way you're capping and ruining something that could be so beautiful. Our name for that river.

Dan Penn: It means our soul. Wealth. Our water, our wealth. Water. Trying to take away our wealth. Water damaging it. And we've already seen significant reductions

since management has changed hands over the course of the time of colonizing forces that manage the land now. And I really pray that our children will be able to come to this river, to fish and to have fish to eat, to feed the people. And I don't see that building this dam as being helpful to that up there where they want to build that right on top of the primary spawning ground for the spring Chinook salmon, that's the most nutritious, most essential post winter salmon that our people feasted upon and celebrated marked the start of the year for Chehalis people. And I just shudder to think about all of the ways that this has been presented and the misuse misrepresentation of words, of calling it different names and different things when the same. It's been the same thing the whole time. It's been a gigantic concrete wall in the middle of the river. And I just hope and pray we never see that thing come to fruition, because there are so many better ways and better things that we could do to help people live in this place.

Fran Sant: Thank you Dan. Appreciate your comments. Um, taking a look here at folks that are in the meeting. Is there anybody else that would like to provide comment. Either new or someone that's provided a previous comment and you'd like to provide an additional comment. Maggie, let's go ahead and hear from you now.

Maggie Sanders: Thank you. I just I just wanted to say one more comment that, you know, this is if this dam were to be put put in place, it it would be an irreplaceable cultural loss. Despite redesigns, the project will still expect to cause significant and unavoidable impacts to multiple other traditional cultural places, archaeological sites that tribes maintain that no amount of technical mitigation can compensate for the destruction of these irreplaceable cultural landmarks, and and the and it will only magnify the adverse impacts of climate change and that there is a preference for alternatives and a shift towards local action. Non dam land alternatives. Flood wall improvements. Home elevation. Floodplain restoration. It can meet the reduction goals without this catastrophic environmental cost of a dam being placed in a culture that would affect cultural treaty trust resources. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Maggie. Um, Sheila, see your hand raised. Go ahead and let's check in. And then you can go ahead and provide your comment.

Sheilah Bray: I appreciate it. Another minute or two. I just wanted to say thank you so much. I just want to say, um, that I appreciate all the comments, all the speaking out on

on, you know, the thoughts and stuff. But but one of the things I learned while while I was prepping for this subject to give a report was, um, I went in and googled, what does a dam do to a river? And it is catastrophic. Like Maggie just said, it's it's it's, um, it's very damaging and it's over time and it's, it's stuff that we're not going to go in and be able to fix it later. So if you know, if somebody's on the fence or they're not sure what to think about this, do some research. Google. Google that. What does a dam do to a river? And you you can see all the damage and it just goes down the list of, of uh, everything that it starts to destroy. And it will it doesn't all happen at once, but it will happen. And I appreciate another minute or two. Thank you.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Sheila. Glenda, um, I see you have your hand up. We'd love to hear from you. Go ahead.

Glenda DeLaMater: I just wanted to share a story that I really feel like a lot of people in this forum should hear about. This is a Chehalis tribal cultural resource project that was given to us as children. Um, and it is actually cited by Carolyn Marr and Kay Francis. And this is the story of steelhead and spring salmon. Spring salmon had a younger brother, silver eel. Steelhead had a brother named trout. Steelhead and his brother always came here in the winter. They always stayed in the Chehalis as they belonged here. Naturally, they traveled everywhere together. In the summer they would go down the river to the ocean, and in the winter they would come back and make their living. Once upon a time, early in the spring, the two brothers were going down the river on their way to the ocean. Steelhead had a powerful medicine, even if he should be killed and cut into many pieces, his medicine would bring him back to life. This was his power. While they were on their way, still had said to his brother, let us rest now and have some lunch. Then we shall start off again. After they had finished eating, they heard someone coming up the river. They stopped and listened. At last a man and a boy came into sight. This man, whose head was very large, was spring salmon, and the boy was his brother, silver eel. Although spring salmon's head was very large, his body was quite thin. Silver eel was not especially fat either. Spring salmon stopped, intending to make friends with steelhead and trout. Can you tell me the way to the falls at the head of the river? He asked. Still head did not answer.

Glenda DeLaMater: As Spring salmon was a stranger. Furthermore, he did not like his looks nor those of his companion. Steelhead was a natural born fighter, and there was a

chance for a fight. Spring salmon asked the same question again, but this time in a rough voice. Where is the weight of the falls? As soon as he had finished, steelhead said, I don't know what you're talking about. I never listened to a person like you. Your head is large, your body is small, and you look terrible. Spring salmon answered. I'm asking you for the last time. If you don't answer, I'll break you into pieces. Steelhead cried and jumped at him. They fought it out all day as the two chased one another back and forth on the riffle. Steelheads younger brother trout cried as loud as he could. Since that time, Trout's mouth has been of normal size. At last, steelhead was beaten. After his brother's death, trout gathered up the bones and took them ashore. He knew that his dead brother, by the aid of his medicine, could be revived. Spring salmon and silver eel had taken steelheads, flesh, fat, and oil to use them for themselves. They had then gone up the river to the falls. Ever since that time, the spring salmon has been nice and fat, and so has the silver eel who used only the oil. There's more to this story, but I'd like to summarize. These are our creation stories. You can tell that we have been here since time immemorial. Immemorial. We are here, we're still here, and we'll still be here for years to come. And we would really appreciate that some of these things start being considered.

Fran Sant: Thank you. Glenda. All right. Um, is there anybody else that would like to provide comment? I'm going to give folks another minute or so to think about that, and then I'll talk about, um, other ways to provide comment. And we'll start to close out the oral hearing. Okay. Double checking for folks that are here. I'm not seeing any other hands raised. This would be, um, a good opportunity for you to raise your hand if you'd like to provide comment. All right. Okay, I'm going to start to, um, wrap the hearing up. We are here till 8:00 this evening. So if someone, um, does join us between now and then. If you'd like to provide comment. While certainly accept those comments for the folks that are with us, if you'd like to provide comment, I'd ask you to raise your hand now. All right. I'm not seeing any raised hands. So, um, let's take a moment here and then I'll read some more information that is required for the record. And you can also see this information on your screen. If you would like to send a written comments, please remember they are due by February 4th, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.. You can see the mailing address on the screen. I'll also read it out. It is uh uh PO box 47775 Olympia, Washington 985047775. You would send your comments. Karen Boback Taleb uh, the Southwest Regional office, and it would be regarding the Sepa revised draft EIS for the Chehalis Flood Damage reduction project. You can also provide comments using our

online comment form. And you can see that information on your screen. And then I would ask one of our team members to drop that link into chat as well.

Fran Sant: And I'm going to go ahead and start to close the hearing out. All comments received at this hearing, as well as the online hearing held December 8th, 2025, and the in-person hearing held on January 6th, 2026. And at the public meetings to be held on January 13th in Aberdeen and January 21st in Boistfort, along with all written comments received or postmarked no later than February 4th, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. will be part of the official record for the final Environmental Impact statement for the Chehalis Basin Flood Reduction Project. In addition to the comments received on the draft. In addition to these comments, ecology will also consider all comments received on the original draft EIS issued in 2020. Ecology will respond to all comments received when the final EIS is issued. We will also send notice of about the availability of the final Environmental Impact statement to everyone that provided written comments or oral testimony on the draft Revised Environmental Impact Statement and submitted contact information. Everyone that signed in for today's hearing and provided an email address. Everyone that provided comment on the draft EIS in 2020, and all other interested parties on the agency's mailing list for the proposal. The final environmental impact statement for the Chehalis Basin Flood Reduction Project, in response to comments will, among other things, contain the agency's response to questions and issues of concern that were submitted during the comment period. The next steps are for ecology to review the comments received on the original draft EIS and the revised draft EIS, and to issue a final EIS anticipates the final EIS with response to all comments will be issued by the responsible official in August 2026 on behalf of the Department of Ecology.

Fran Sant: Thank you for coming this evening. We appreciate your cooperation and courtesy and hope that you have a good evening. Thank you very much again. Uh, we are going to be, um, staff will be staying online to 8:00. Should someone new join us, we'll give them the opportunity to provide comments. Um, so for right now, we are going to pause the hearing. So please let the record show that we are pausing it at 7:51 p.m., and then I'll adjourn it at 8 p.m.. Thank you very much and have a good evening. We have about seven more minutes of time together. Again, I'm. We're just hanging out in case anybody just joined us late and didn't have an opportunity to provide comment. Okay, it is 7:59 p.m.. I have not seen that anybody new has joined the meeting. Um, I'm going to, um, transition from the hearing being paused to closing the hearing out. So I'd

like the record to show that, um, we paused the hearing around, uh, 750, and we reopened it at 7:59 p.m.. And then as it turns to 8:00, we will officially, uh, close the hearing out. So please let the record show that this hearing is being adjourned at 8 p.m. on January 8th, 2026. Again, on behalf of the Department of Ecology, we thank you for your time and energy for attending tonight, and hope you have a good evening. And the hearing is now adjourned. Thank you so much.

Bobbak Talebi: Thank you Fran.

Fran Sant: Thanks. Thanks everybody else. Appreciate your help. Thanks.