

Sarah Plane

I strongly oppose the proposed Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project dam. The project is estimated to cost up to \$2 billion, yet no clear funding plan has been identified. This cost would likely fall to Washington taxpayers despite the dam providing only limited, intermittent protection to select structures.

Proven, lower-cost alternatives already exist. The Local Actions Non-Dam proposal would reduce flood risk across the entire Chehalis River Basin while avoiding the permanent environmental and cultural damage associated with a large dam. In contrast, the proposed facility would deliver narrow benefits while imposing widespread harm.

At a time when communities nationwide are removing dams to restore rivers and fisheries, constructing a new dam is contrary to best practices. The project would cause irreparable harm to local Tribes, their treaty rights, culture, and livelihoods. Tribes in the region have clearly stated their opposition, and their concerns must be respected.

The environmental impacts would be severe and irreversible. The dam would inundate critical salmon and steelhead spawning habitat, degrade water quality, increase water temperatures, and damage wildlife habitat. The Chehalis River is the largest watershed entirely within Washington and one of the few remaining free-flowing rivers on the West Coast—a resource that cannot be replaced once lost.

The Chehalis is one of the state's top salmon-producing rivers, with most fish being wild rather than hatchery-origin. While these salmon are not yet ESA-listed, their numbers have declined dramatically. They are part of the Washington Coast Chinook stock, identified as a priority prey source for Southern Resident killer whales. NOAA data shows Southern Residents continue to rely on Chinook year-round, with outer coast fish especially important in winter, and tagging data indicates foraging near Grays Harbor at the mouth of the Chehalis.

For these reasons—excessive cost, lack of funding clarity, availability of effective non-dam alternatives, harm to Tribal communities, and unacceptable ecological impacts—the proposed dam should be rejected in favor of basin-wide, non-dam flood reduction strategies that protect both communities and the Chehalis River ecosystem.