

Gwen DeHaven

To Whom It May Concern:

I strongly oppose the revised Chehalis Dam proposal. This project represents an outdated approach to flood management in an era defined by dam removal—not new construction. Across the country, communities are tearing down dams because of the devastating impacts they have on rivers, fish, and wildlife. Building a new dam on one of Washington's last free-flowing rivers is a step backward.

The Chehalis River is the largest watershed entirely within Washington and one of the few remaining undammed rivers on the West Coast. It is a lifeline for salmon and steelhead, producing some of the highest numbers of wild fish in the state. These salmon are not yet listed as endangered, but their populations have plummeted from historic levels. They are part of the Washington Coast Chinook stock—a priority prey source for Southern Resident killer whales. NOAA research shows Southern Residents rely on Chinook year-round and forage off Grays Harbor at the mouth of the Chehalis. Every salmon lost to this dam is a blow to orcas already on the brink of extinction.

The proposed dam would drown critical salmon and steelhead spawning habitat, degrade water quality, destroy wildlife habitat, and raise water temperatures—conditions lethal to fish. It would cause irreparable harm to local Tribes, their culture, and their treaty rights. Tribal voices have spoken clearly in opposition, and their concerns must be honored.

This project comes with a staggering price tag of up to \$2 billion, with no clear plan to pay for it—costs that would likely fall on Washington taxpayers. Meanwhile, proven alternatives exist. The Local Actions Non-Dam proposal offers basin-wide benefits without sacrificing the river, its fish, or its communities. These solutions reflect modern science and respect for ecosystems, unlike the outdated dam approach.

The Chehalis River is a rare treasure—a free-flowing river that sustains salmon, wildlife, and people. To sacrifice it for a project that only protects some structures some of the time is shortsighted and destructive. We should be restoring rivers, not drowning them.

I urge you to reject the Chehalis Dam proposal and invest in non-dam solutions that protect communities while preserving salmon, wildlife, and the cultural heritage of Tribes. Extinction is forever. Please choose restoration over destruction.

Thank you for considering these urgent concerns.