

# Stephanie Ehinger

Dear Department of Ecology,

I am writing to express strong concerns about the proposed flow-through dam/flood retention facility on the upper Chehalis River. Based on the DEIS, the project would cause significant and unavoidable harm to salmon and steelhead, including major losses of Spring Chinook, Coho, Fall Chinook, and Steelhead populations. This stretch of the river is one of the Basin's key spawning areas, and once damaged, these habitats cannot be replaced.

I am also concerned about the cost of the proposed structure, especially as unresolved safety and geotechnical risks as identified in the DEIS remain, protections in the lower river are very limited, and the risk of back-to-back heavy rain events would not be sufficiently addressed. The latter means that, especially with increasing extreme weather events, flooding like it happened in 2022 would not be prevented by the proposed dam. At an estimated \$1.3–\$2.3 billion, the dam would offer limited benefits while compromising the river's ecological health and fisheries including adversely affecting the communities that rely. The proposed dam does not seem prudent and may not be cost effective given that alternatives exist.

Less damaging flood reduction approaches already exist like the Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative described in the DEIS. While the DEIS informs that alternative actions could potentially achieve the Applicant's objective (!!!), the level of detail presented for the alternatives analysis is sparse. Given the cost, risks, and limited benefits of the proposed dam, I urge you to at least advance the alternatives analysis before finalizing a decision whether to move forward with permitting or building a dam. To make an informed decision, I find it necessary to better evaluate whether the alternatives could achieve the Applicant's objective with less impact on salmon and fisheries. I wonder how much of the objectives could be achieved with investing \$1.3–\$2.3 billion into the Local Actions Non-Dam Alternative but do not find that question addressed in the DEIS. Thus, I urge Ecology to better evaluate and pursue less harmful alternative solutions instead of the proposed dam.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Stephanie Ehinger