

Brianna Cowin

I live in Centralia, and I am writing because the Chehalis River is part of my everyday life. I cross the Mellen Street bridge daily and spend time recreating on and around it. I have also lived through the last two major floods and seen firsthand the damage they caused to homes, businesses, and families in our community. I know we need better flood protection. Doing nothing is not an option. But I do not believe a massive new dam is the right answer.

The size and cost of the proposed dam are concerning. A structure nearly half a mile long with a price tag in the billions, and no clear plan for long term funding, maintenance, or repairs, feels like a huge financial risk. The unresolved geotechnical issues at the site, including fractured bedrock, landslide risk, and possible faulting, only add to my concern about long term safety.

I am especially worried about what this project would mean for salmon and wildlife. The upper Chehalis is one of the most important spawning areas left in the basin for Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead. The DEIS shows these impacts would be severe and permanent, with some salmon runs pushed toward extinction within decades. Biologists have documented active salmon redds near the proposed dam site, which makes it clear how valuable and productive this stretch of river still is.

I also want to acknowledge the strong opposition from the Chehalis Tribe, whose people have lived with and depended on this river since time immemorial. Their concerns about the loss of salmon, cultural resources, and the overall health of the river deserve serious weight in this decision. Ignoring Tribal voices and expertise would be a mistake.

I believe we can protect communities like Centralia without sacrificing the last major free flowing river in southwest Washington. Non dam approaches, including the Local Actions Non Dam Alternative, are already being developed and can be implemented sooner, at lower cost, and with far less harm to fish, wildlife, and Tribal resources.

Please reject the proposed mega dam and prioritize non dam flood management solutions that protect people, respect Tribal voices, and preserve the Chehalis River for future generations.

Thank you for considering my comment,
Brianna Cowin
Centralia, WA