Brendan Walker

I am writing to provide comments on the Department of Ecology's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). I do not support a plan to construct a large dam on the upper Chehalis River. The footprint created by the temporary reservoir will significantly impair spawning habitat spawning, and will reduce survival of salmon and steelhead migrating out of and into the upper Chehalis basin. The site of the proposed dam is located directly in an area with one of the highest spawning densities for wild steelhead, Coho and Chinook salmon. This area has been identified as some of the best rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and steelhead in the upper Chehalis basin. 93% and 87% of Spring Chinook and Fall Chinook redds, respectively, are located within the proposed temporary reservoir; 32% of coho redds are located within the reservoir footprint. 15% of the steelhead produced in the basin come from the upper Chehalis River, at or above the proposed dam site, yet it represents only 4% of the total habitat

Steelhead in this upper river section are genetically distinct from steelhead in lower river areas. This section is critical for steelhead production and protection of life history diversity; and will become even more important in the face of climate change, as adult and juvenile fish seek cold water refuge at higher elevations in the basin. As stated in the DEIS, the proposed dam would cause irreparable impacts on all Viable Salmonid Population (VSP) parameters for steelhead and salmon-abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity.

This revised proposed dam- is 45% wider than the original proposed dam, increasing from a width of 1550 to 2250 feet at the crest-and temporary reservoir would back up and submerge 824 acres and almost six miles of the river corridor above the proposed dam site. It would store water during major flood events and release the water over a period of about a month, with a stated goal to not stop floods, but merely reduce their impact in the many downstream communities, including Chehalis and Centralia along the flood-prone Interstate-5 corridor. Modeling indicates that water temperatures in the Chehalis River within the reservoir footprint and immediately downstream are expected to increase by up to 2° C. These elevated water temperatures increase stress on juvenile and adult salmonids on an already temperature stressed system.

I recognize the need for a solution to flooding issues but support a collaborative process that reduces local flood impacts throughout the basin, restores habitat, and supports long-term resiliency of both fisheries and people.

Sincerely,

Brendan P. Walker