November 9, 2026

RE: State Environmental Policy Act Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement – Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project

Dear Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to engage with the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project (Project). We appreciate the importance of the Department of Ecology's role in the Project.

American Rivers is a national conservation organization working to make every river clean and healthy for people and wildlife. We combine evidence-based solutions with enduring partnerships to safeguard the 4.4 million miles of rivers and streams that are essential to our nation's clean drinking water, extraordinary wildlife, and the strength of our communities. For more than 50 years, our staff, supporters, and partners have been driven by a common belief: Life Depends on Rivers.

We appreciate and support the importance of restoring tidal processes, improving water quality, and restoring aquatic organism passage past the 5th Avenue dam and through its impoundment. We especially appreciate the visibility and recognition of the state's investment in river health at its capitol campus.

We appreciate and support the proposed habitat design approaches. We support the design refinement to have tidal shorelines rather than islands. In our experience, islands can be challenging to access during plant establishment and have a higher likelihood of invasive vegetation persistence. We support the change from sheetpile isolation to using geotubes and request that the imported gravel to fill the tubes should be free of contaminants, especially metals and pesticides, which could impair plant establishment and degrade water quality. We are curious to learn more about how the addition of gravel will interact with vegetation establishment and rooting depths. We support the extended channel grading into West Bay for a smoother transition from the reestablished channel to existing bathymetry. Moving this transition further from the new 5th Avenue bridge should also allow for natural channel adjustment outside of the infrastructure constraints.

We appreciate and support the coordination and collaboration with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Squaxin Island Tribe for fish passage during the in-water work. We support the draw down of the impoundment during the full duration of construction before dam removal. We are curious to learn more about how aquatic organisms will be removed from the work area prior to and during the draw down, especially if lamprey, freshwater mussels, or other immobile species are present.

We would like to know how the change in the bridge length affects tidal exchange and potential scour depths. Has the bridge alignment changed to result in a shorter total length? Has the restored channel geometry been altered to fit the shorter bridge length? We encourage the design team to fully restore channel processes and tidal exchange and then fit the bridge structure around the restored channel. The Washington Department of Transportation's fish passage and stream

restoration design program has resources regarding establishment of the 'minimum hydraulic opening' though its applicability to tidal systems is limited. We encourage you to continue involving geomorphologists in the design team to advise on channel and estuary dynamics. We are curious to know the depth of the buried riprap and how it will interact with the rooting depths of the native vegetation.

On behalf of American Rivers, thank you for considering our input on the DSEIS for the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project. Please contact me for additional information: mklym@americanrivers.org.

Sincerely,



Melanie Klym, Northwest River Restoration Director