Gordon White

I live in the South Capitol Neighborhood adjacent to the lake. My comments here will underscore the strong connection this draft SEIS has to the big picture vision established in the Deschutes Estuary Restoration PEIS and strategy developed a few years ago. It is impressive. I also have a few suggestions on specific questions.

I've witnessed the failed experiment of Capitol Lake over the fifty plus years I've lived in Olympia. I once fished and swam in the lake.For a brief time it was a place for summer fun. Those days of lake fun are long gone.

I am really excited about the return of the estuary so it can become what it is best at being: a tidal water we can once again enjoy and where wildlife thrive. Instead of a view of a dying lake, our view will be a restored estuary bringing tidal waters once again to the historical mouth of the Deschutes River.

I am impressed with this SEIS for how well it identifies the best options for improving environmental, social and economic values that estuary restoration will bring. It directly identifies how best to design the public access, habitat improvements and flood reduction infrastructure for a durable project generations will enjoy.

The current failed lake is both aesthetically unappealing and a water quality nightmare. As many studies have shown, summer lake conditions are toxic. Removing the dam and restoring the estuary will greatly improve water quality. Importantly, LOTT agrees that restoring the estuary will help relieve a major threat to water quality in Budd Inlet and is consistent with its wastewater cleanup efforts to improve water quality. The Draft SEIS does a good job identifying the best restoration options to enable people, fish and wildlife to enjoy the improved water quality of the lake.

One issue that Ecology should consider including is a narrative of how the restored Deschutes Estuary, like other restored "mud flats" will not necessarily have a "rotten egg smell". The July 2022 Air Quality and Discipline Report provided a technical assessment of this question, finding "less than significant impact". I think it will be helpful to include a narrative people can relate to by experience.

For instance, in the times the 5th avenue dam has been open for long periods, our home adjacent to the "mudflats" have never been exposed to a "rotten egg smell". I have purposely walked different sections of the emptied lake and found no "rotten egg smell". The main air quality aesthetic result has been the smell of marine air flowing further up the current river/lake system. Its just like being on Henderson and Nisqually estuaries.

The restored estuary tide flats will be refreshed daily by the Deschutes River. There is some high organic matter mud in the shallow lens of the current lake bottom created by the current anoxic lake conditions in the summer. Algae and other weeds in the lake decompose into the mud. This failed lake condition is what may cause a temporary odor problem. Fortunately the sediments are mostly clean sand. Dredging will remove some of this high organic matter sediment and fresh water from the river and marine water at high tide will do the rest.

Another item I wish to add is that the inter-local agreement between the four local governments shows the confidence our communities have in estuary restoration. All have agreed to cost share future sediment removal costs to maintain the navigation channel in Budd Bay. This type of shared financial commitment has never before been seen in other waterways in the US.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.