

CHEHALIS BASIN BOARD



November 26, 2018

Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

SUBJECT: Chehalis Basin Board's Capital Budget Recommendation for 2019-2021

The Honorable Jay Inslee:

The Chehalis Basin Board is pleased to submit our 2019-2021 Capital Budget recommendation of \$73.2 million for your consideration. In 2016, the Washington State Legislature created the Office of Chehalis Basin and the Chehalis Basin Board to “aggressively pursue” a long-term investment plan and funding for an integrated Strategy to reduce catastrophic flood damage and restore aquatic species in the Chehalis River Basin. The law also directs that we develop biennial and supplemental budget recommendations to you and oversee the implementation of the Chehalis Basin Strategy.

Building on the success of the Governor's Chehalis Basin Work Group, the Board's \$73.2 million recommendation represents a major milestone in the remarkable collaboration between agencies, tribes, local governments, and basin stakeholders to move ahead with unprecedented new habitat protection and restoration projects in this basin and to complete the development of the long-term strategy.

As you well know, the two major challenges facing the Chehalis River Basin – devastating flood damage and extensive loss of aquatic species habitat – present real and imminent threats to the health and safety of the people, ecosystems, and economies of the basin. These threats will only increase with the more frequent, intense flooding and the drastic loss of salmon runs and aquatic species diversity projected for the basin in the face of climate change. Without the aggressive actions supported by this budget recommendation, the state and basin communities will incur larger disaster-recovery response costs and potential ESA listings.

Our \$73.2 million 2019-2021 Capital Budget request reflects our unanimous agreement on the priorities for next biennium to most effectively address both of these challenges. Building on the Department of Ecology's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) on the Chehalis Basin Strategy (completed in June 2017), our 2019-2021 request is included within Ecology's budget, with Director Bellon's input and support. While this budget request is larger than the prior two biennia, it is a recognition of the progress that has been made to date and the readiness of the effort to further advance more elements of the Strategy from the study and analysis phase into on-the-ground actions that protect our communities, natural resources, and critical infrastructure.

Already, more than 80 different projects have been completed since 2012, or are currently underway, in the basin as a part of the Chehalis Basin Strategy. These include:

- Over **50 small- and medium-scale flood damage reduction projects** that have been constructed to protect homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure like roads, sewers, water supplies, and wastewater treatment plants;
- **26 farm pads** that now safeguard livestock and farm equipment, providing a **14:1 return-on-investment**;
- **34 fish barriers** that have been addressed, opening more than 90 miles of habitat for multiple steelhead and salmon species, **including more than 55 miles that support adult and juvenile spring Chinook salmon**.
- Additional **restoration work** that has been done for the benefit of multiple aquatic species, including seven acres of restored riparian function and water quality improvements in important Chinook habitat within the lower basin.

While our successes to-date have been significant, the 2019-2021 biennium is a critical milestone in our overall effort. The Board's recommended \$73.2 million budget request will support a broad suite of actions, including the following highlights:

- **Construction of an unprecedented amount of aquatic species habitat restoration** -- up to five, one- to two-mile-long restoration projects in five different sub-basins and several new fish passage correction projects.
- **Construction of the first phase of the North Shore Levee and seven other local flood damage reduction projects** to protect the cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam, as well as other critical infrastructure throughout the basin.
- **Completion of the state and federal EISs** on the proposed flood retention facility near the headwaters of the Chehalis River, which will allow the Board to make a final recommendation on whether and how to proceed with the flood retention facility in 2020 before next capital budget cycle.
- **Beginning implementation of a basin-wide community flood assistance and resilience program** that will provide technical assistance and grant funds to local jurisdictions for priority property protection actions.
- **Completion of the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan**, which will detail the targeted actions and locations for the long-term investments needed to restore several hundred miles of priority habitat and dramatically increase Chinook population levels.
- **Completion of the long-term capital investment strategy required by statute** to prioritize the detailed actions needed to reduce catastrophic flood damage and restore aquatic species habitat.

None of this work would be possible if not for the continued leadership from your office and the significant commitment to collaboration between and across local communities, state and federal agencies, and tribal governments. Success of the Chehalis Basin Strategy to date has been driven by consensus for action. This request maintains the momentum and bipartisan support for this carefully integrated, balanced effort, which remains critical for our long-term success.

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On behalf of all of the Chehalis Basin communities, we express our sincere gratitude for your commitment to its people and natural resources, and the well-being of the State of Washington, and ask for your continued support as we strive to achieve a safer, more resilient, and prosperous future for the Chehalis Basin.

Sincerely,



Vickie Raines
Chair, Chehalis Basin Board
Chair, Chehalis Flood Authority Chair
Grays Harbor County Commissioner

Voting Members

Edna Fund
Vice Chair, Chehalis Flood Authority
Chair, Chehalis Basin Flood Control Zone
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