



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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June 2, 2017

RE: Chehalis Basin Strategy Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS)

Dear Interested Parties, Jurisdictions, Tribes, and Agencies:

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has prepared and issued this Final EIS for the Chehalis Basin Strategy pursuant to State Environmental Policy Act ("SEPA", Chapter 43.21C RCW) and the SEPA Rules (Chapter 197-11 WAC). The Chehalis Basin Strategy is being evaluated at the request of the Governor's Chehalis Basin Work Group (Work Group), tasked by the Governor to develop recommendations for an integrated strategy that includes both near-term and long-term actions to reduce flood damage and restore aquatic species habitat.

The EIS evaluates a series of actions to address flooding and habitat challenges in the Chehalis Basin. The EIS evaluates four action alternatives, which combine flood damage reduction and aquatic species habitat restoration actions. A No Action Alternative is also included, which represents the most likely future expected in the absence of implementing an action alternative. Ecology released the Draft EIS on September 29, 2016, and issued an addendum to the Draft EIS on October 17, 2016. The Draft EIS was originally available for public review and comment until October 31, 2016; however, an extension was granted to extend the review and comment period through November 14, 2016. Comments were received at two public hearings held during the Draft EIS public comment period, through an online form, and via email and mail.

The Draft EIS was intended to provide an opportunity for the public, interested tribes, agencies, stakeholders, and other parties to consider the effects of implementing an integrated strategy at a broad, planning level. More than 500 comments were received during the Draft EIS public comment period. Ecology appreciates the time and attention that commenters committed to reviewing the Draft EIS.

As described in WAC 197-11-560(5), the Final EIS is being published in an addendum format. The addendum consists of the comments received on the Draft EIS, Ecology's responses, an updated fact sheet, and final Executive Summary. The entire Draft EIS will not be republished in final form for several reasons:

- The action elements and combined alternatives have not been modified since the Draft EIS was published, and no new alternatives have been developed.
- The analyses in the EIS have not been supplemented, improved, or modified.



- It would be difficult for readers to independently identify changes throughout the document due its size and complexity.
- The results of ongoing and future assessments will be appropriately contained in subsequent project- and site-specific environmental reviews.

Where issues raised were project-level considerations rather than programmatic ones, Ecology's responses to comments describe how substantive comments could be addressed or further responded to through analyses proposed to be conducted in the next biennium. The addendum has been prepared under the authority provided in WAC 197-11-560(5) and 197-11-600(4)(c) and conforms to the procedures for preparing an addendum in WAC 197-11-625.

This Final EIS, consisting of the Draft EIS and the addendum, is being issued under WAC 197-11-460 and completes the SEPA process. Except for the Executive Summary and the list of contributors, the Draft EIS has not been updated since the first addendum was published on October 17, 2016. The Work Group, which will transition to the new Chehalis Board in July 2017, will use the Final EIS to further inform continued development of the Chehalis Basin Strategy and a comprehensive approach to flood damage reduction and aquatic species habitat restoration in the Chehalis Basin.

Sincerely,



Gordon White

Program Manager

Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program