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Environmental review starts for Chehalis River project *Public comments sought in first step of environmental assessment process*

CHEHALIS – To reduce flood risks in the state’s second-largest river system, the Chehalis River Basin Flood Control Zone District is proposing to construct a new floodwater retention structure on the Chehalis River near the town of Pe Ell in Lewis County.

The district also is seeking to raise the current levee at the Chehalis-Centralia Airport, including elevating part of Airport Road and making other improvements.

Since the proposal is likely to adversely affect the environment, the Washington Department of Ecology and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are seeking public comment to help the agencies define what should be studied in the environmental review for the proposed flood-damage reduction project.

Under the proposal, the Chehalis River would flow normally through the structure except during major floods, when the facility could be operated to hold up to 65,000 acre feet of floodwaters in a temporary reservoir. The water would be released back to the river system as soon as it was safe to do so.

The two agencies are leading separate environmental reviews of the district’s proposal but are holding a joint scoping period to make it easier for the public to submit comments. The agencies have established a [project website](#) with information about the scoping process, public meetings, how to submit comments, and other information about the environmental review process.

Ecology is using the [State Environmental Policy Act](#) to evaluate the proposal while the USACE is conducting its environmental review under the [National Environmental Policy Act](#). Each agency will develop a separate environmental impact statement (EIS) to assess the project.

The first step in the environmental review process is obtaining public input about the scope of the EIS to help identify project alternatives, probable significant adverse impacts, potential mitigation measures, and licenses or other approvals that may be required.

In mid-October, USACE and Ecology will conduct two open house-style public meetings to gather comments:

- **Montesano:** Oct. 16, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Montesano City Hall, 112 N. Main St.
- **Centralia:** Oct. 17, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Centralia College, Bowman Rotary Banquet Rooms, 600 Centralia College Boulevard.

Both agencies will accept public comments through Oct. 29. Comments can be submitted electronically through the [project website](#) or mailed to:

Chehalis Flood Damage Reduction Project EIS
Anchor QEA
720 Olive Way, Suite 1900
Seattle, WA 98101

Each agency will summarize the comments received during scoping into a summary document, and make the summaries available on the project website.

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