

Moving Forward: Preventing Damaging Floods in the Chehalis River Basin

Communities up and down the Chehalis River are hungry for affordable, proven solutions to regular flood damage.

It's time to move beyond the divisions of the past to consensus pathways to protect our communities, restore fish runs, and create jobs.

Today, we have an opportunity to invest in smart, sensible interventions that will restore the Chehalis and decrease flood damage for residents, businesses, farms, tribes, and wildlife. A misguided and ultra-expensive dam cannot, and should not, make the cut as we move forward.

The good news is that we can get to work today to reduce flooding impacts. Proven, shovel-ready projects that qualify for state and federal funding include:

- **Elevating homes, businesses and utilities so they are above floodwater levels and people are out of harm's way;**
- **Replacing small culverts with bigger ones, to prevent dangerous backups and flooding where roads cross streams;**
- **Allowing uninhabited areas to flood, which slows down flood waves heading for settled areas, stores water in the ground for summer use, and restores soil for farming;**
- **Restoring streamside areas with trees and shrubs so they soak up floodwaters, slow flood waves and erosion, and provide better salmon migration and spawning grounds;**
- **Paying a fair price to property owners who are tired of living or working in the floodplain and want to sell their property and invest in real estate above the floodplain;**
- **Locating new businesses and homes in flood-safe areas, and using smart development in towns—like permeable pavement, rain gardens and intensive tree planting—to prevent runoff from contributing to floods.**



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Moving Forward, Not Backward

Across the country, state and federal governments are investing in shovel-ready flood prevention solutions, and restoration, at scale. The Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) uses its disaster preparedness funding for these kinds of projects, because they offer a tremendous return on investment. Washington State, as well, has multiple funding sources available. These shovel-ready projects generate good long-term jobs, build resilience for fish runs and landowners, and avoid costly court and legislative battles on outdated infrastructure projects.

A Plan for Consensus Solutions

The truth is, misleading claims about a massive proposed dam in the upper Chehalis have diverted energy from the real solutions near at hand. Across the country, dams are coming down because they simply don't work as planned, and generate far more problems than they solve. Building a new one on the Chehalis pulls us backwards into the past, instead of pushing us forward into a resilient future built to anticipate climate changes.

The Chehalis has always been, and always will be, prone to floods. But reducing flood impacts and levels is possible, affordable, and creates multiple benefits while providing more protection for more communities than a dam ever could. If we focus on reducing flood damage and restoring fish runs at the same time, letting go of the false promises of a dam, everyone wins.

The path forward is for community leaders to spend the time and energy consolidating solutions that are workable, actionable, and easy to fund. Let's put the division of the past behind us and move forward to protect our beloved Chehalis communities.

Next Steps

The most important next step we can take is to build a truly integrated, comprehensive, basin-wide flood damage reduction program. A common framework that prioritizes both flood damage reduction and aquatic species restoration will solve the challenge of our often uncoordinated "a la carte" approach where multiple entities are working at cross purposes. A new framework and institutional structure can transparently and comprehensively assess actions for their risks and benefits, and choose the wise investments that will bring the most benefit to the most communities up and down the Chehalis. We are at a pivot point. The process that brought us the dam proposal is discredited, and we have a fresh chance to build on the good work of the past for the real solutions that will serve our communities. Let's get to work!



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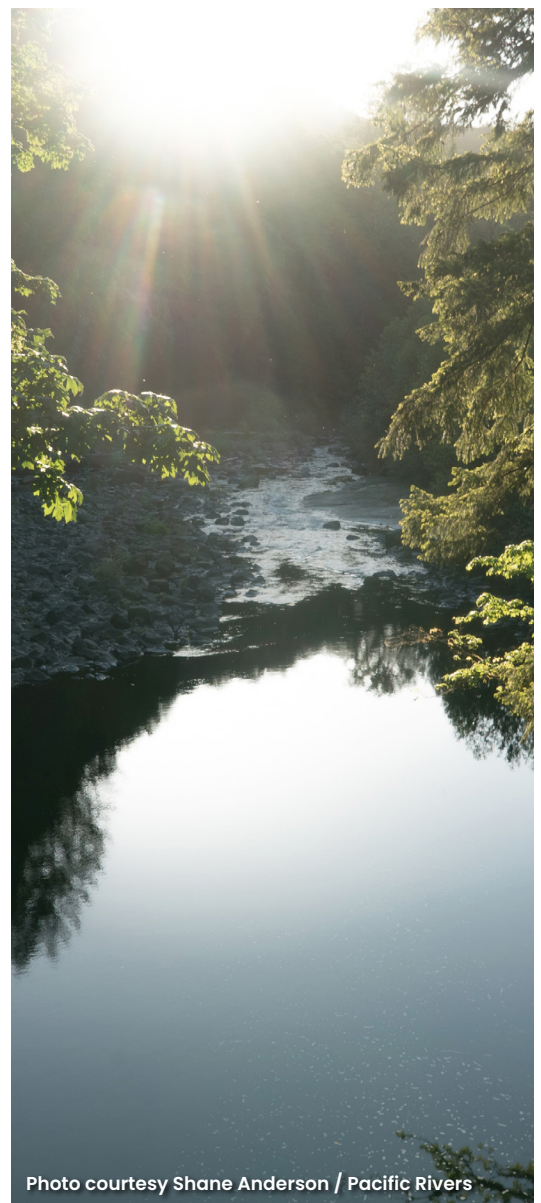


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