Fact Sheet

Proposed Project Title

Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project

Description of Proposed Project and Alternatives

Washington State is proposing to restore 260 acres of estuarine and salt marsh habitat at the mouth of the Deschutes River.

Recent related environmental review to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) was documented in the 2022 Capitol Lake – Deschutes Estuary Long-Term Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).[1] The updated Project design evaluated in this Draft Supplemental EIS (SEIS) originated from the preliminary Estuary Alternative concept evaluated in the previous SEPA document. The Estuary Alternative was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the 2022 Final EIS (DES 2022) and was subsequently selected for implementation (as the Project). Project design and planning have progressed since publication of the 2022 Final EIS and resulted in a number of Project changes and refinements.

The habitat design approach has been modified since the 2022 Final EIS was published. The Project now focuses on creation of habitat areas along the shorelines of the North and Middle Basins (instead of creation of habitat islands). The habitat design objective remains the same, which is to restore a mix of coastal wetland habitat zones across the aquatic-to-terrestrial gradient.

The method of habitat construction has also been updated since the 2022 Final EIS. Instead of sheetpile, the Project would utilize geotextile tubes (geotubes) to create containment areas along the shorelines where dredged material would be pumped to allow solids to settle out, water to drain off, and the material to dry. Imported, natural mix of unprocessed gravel would be trucked to shoreline staging and pumping locations, where it would be emptied into hoppers and pumped into the geotubes. Use of imported gravel would increase the number of truck trips required for construction. To accommodate construction vehicles and additional trucks, Deschutes Parkway north of Lakeridge Drive would be closed for up to 3 years.

The alignment and configuration of the new 5th Avenue Bridge have been refined and the Marathon Park Utility and Pedestrian Bridge would be replaced. At Heritage Park, the shoreline habitat would be constructed to raise the existing shoreline elevation by approximately 3 to 4 feet. This “habitat berm” satisfies a key element of the City of Olympia’s Sea Level Rise Resiliency Plan by addressing a primary flooding pathway into downtown. An earthen berm would be constructed at the Tumwater Historic Brewery, also to provide flood resiliency.

[1] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/separ/Main/SEPA/Record.aspx?SEPANumber=202205474

Project design updates include a number of other infrastructure and utility design refinements and refinements to the design and extent of recreational elements. In addition, since the publication of the Final EIS, the State has hired a General Contractor/Construction Manager (Contractor). As a result, construction means and methods have been further developed and refined, providing a higher level of certainty regarding the construction approach.

The Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project SEIS is limited to new analysis of the updated Project design, supplementing the 2022 Final EIS. The SEIS also evaluates the No Action Alternative, wherein the proposed Project would not be advanced.

Location

The proposed Project is located at the mouth of the Deschutes River, at the southern end of Puget Sound, along the shorelines of the cities of Olympia and Tumwater, within the Usual and Accustomed Fishing Grounds and Stations of the Squaxin Island Tribe and at the base of the Washington State Capitol Campus. The Project area encompasses the 260-acre Capitol Lake and adjoining shoreline areas. Capitol Lake stretches from the base of Tumwater Falls in Tumwater to the 5th Avenue Dam in Olympia. The lake is divided into three basins: the South Basin, Middle Basin, and North Basin. Additionally, the Project area includes a small portion of West Bay of Budd Inlet, located north of the 5th Avenue Dam, where dam removal and channel deepening activities would occur.

Capitol Lake is part of the historic estuary of the Deschutes River. This area was the homeland of the Steh-Chass. Steh-Chass reference both the pre-colonization inlet and the Squaxin band that lived there. These waters are a portion of the usual and accustomed treaty territory and traditionally the domain of the Indigenous bands that form the modern-day, federally recognized Squaxin Island Tribe.

Project Proponent

Washington Department of Ecology

Proposed Date of Implementation

The State plans to begin construction in 2028, with project completion in 2034, if permitted.

Lead Agency

Washington Department of Ecology – Nominal SEPA Lead Agency

Washington Department of Enterprise Services – SEPA Co-lead Agency

Responsible Officials

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Lead Agency Contact Person

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Required Permits, Licenses, and Approvals

Federal

- Clean Water Act Section 404/10 Permit (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- Rivers & Harbors Act Section 408 Authorization (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- Endangered Species Act Consultation (National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- Letter of Map Revision, Conditional Letter of Map Revision, or Physical Map Revision (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
- Advance Approval Authorization or Bridge Permit (U.S. Coast Guard)

Tribal

Federal consultations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

Washington State

- Aquatic Lands Lease (Washington Department of Natural Resources)
- Coastal Zone Management Program Consistency (Ecology)
- Dam Removal Permit (Ecology)
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction Stormwater Permit (Ecology)
- Section 401 Clean Water Act Water Quality Certification (Ecology)
- Shoreline Conditional Use and Variance Permit (Ecology)
- Hydraulic Project Approval (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- Fish Transport Permit (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- General Permit (Washington State Department of Transportation)

Local

- Shoreline Substantial Development Permit (City of Tumwater)
- Shoreline Conditional Use or Variance Permit (City of Olympia)
- Floodplain Development Permit (City of Olympia and City of Tumwater)
- Critical areas review (City of Olympia and City of Tumwater)
- Local Land Use and Development Permits (City of Olympia and City of Tumwater)
- Local Construction Permits (City of Olympia and City of Tumwater)
- Right-of-Way Use Permit (City of Olympia and City of Tumwater)

Authors and Principal Contributors

This document has been prepared under the direction of Ecology and DES. All chapters and appendices have been prepared for and approved by Ecology and DES. Key authors and principal contributors to the analyses are listed below.

Table 1. SEIS Authors and Principal Contributors

Key Authors and Principal Contributors	Topic(s)
Floyd|Snider	Fish and Wildlife; Land Use, Shorelines, and Recreation; Visual Resources; Transportation; Air Quality; Cultural Resources; Tribal Resources; Environmental Justice; Cumulative Impacts
Environmental Science Associates	Cultural Resources (Archaeological Resources); Air Emissions; Greenhouse Gases
Northwest Vernacular	Cultural Resources (Historic Built Environment Resources)
Heffron Transportation	Transportation
KPFF Consulting Engineers	Design/technical input
KOJV	Technical input
Moffatt & Nichol	Hydrologic and hydraulic modeling
Washington Department of Ecology	Review and oversight of all SEIS sections
Washington Department of Enterprise Services	Review and oversight of all SEIS sections
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	Review of Fish and Wildlife; Land Use, Shorelines, and Recreation; Cumulative Impacts
Washington Department of Natural Resources	Review of Land Use, Shorelines and Recreation; Fish and Wildlife; Cultural Resources; Environmental Justice; Cumulative Impacts
Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation	Review of Cultural Resources; Tribal Resources
Squaxin Island Tribe	Review of Cultural Resources; Tribal Resources

Date of Draft SEIS Issuance

October 9, 2026

Date Comments are Due

November 9, 2026 (until 11:59 p.m.)

Public Comment and Hearings on Draft SEIS

Comments on this Draft SEIS will be accepted during a 30-day comment period that begins October 9, 2026. Comments will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on November 9, 2026. Comments should focus on the substance of the Draft SEIS and be as specific as possible. This could include comments on the adequacy of the Draft SEIS, methodology used, mitigation measures proposed, or additional information that should be considered. Comments may be submitted in the following ways:

By mail to:

SEPA Draft SEIS for the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project
Washington Department of Ecology
c/o Bobbak Talebi, Southwest Region Office
P.O. Box 47775
Olympia, WA 98504-7775

Electronic submittal:

Complete an online comment form at:
https://ecology.commentinput.com/?id=buGTA658B

In person at a public hearing:

Wednesday October 28, 2026
5:30 – 9:30 p.m.
The Olympia Center
222 Columbia St. NW
Olympia, WA 98501

Virtually during an online public hearing:

Tuesday November 3, 2026
5:30 p.m.
Log-in information for the online meeting is available on the project website at:
https://deschutesestuaryproject.org/meetings/

Date Final Action is Planned by Lead Agencies

A Final SEIS is estimated to be completed in 2027.

Document Availability

The Draft SEIS is posted on the following websites:

SEPA Register at
https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/separ/Main/SEPA/Record.aspx?SEPANumber=202604136

Project website at https://ecology.wa.gov/ecologys-work-near-you/regional-work/southwest-region/deschutes-estuary-restoration

The document is also available at the following locations:

Washington Department of Ecology

Washington Department of Ecology, Southwest Region Office
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Local Libraries

Washington State Library
6880 Capitol Blvd SE, Tumwater, WA 98501
360-704-5200

West Olympia Timberland Library
625 Black Lake Blvd SW, Olympia, WA 98502
360-764-4440

Olympia Timberland Library
313 8th Avenue SE, Olympia, WA, 98501
360-352-0595

Lacey Timberland Library
500 College St SE, Lacey, WA 98503
360-491-3860

Tumwater Timberland Library
7023 New Market Street, Tumwater, WA, 98501
360-943-7790

Location of Background Materials

2022 Capitol Lake – Deschutes Estuary Final EIS is available at:
https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/separ/Main/SEPA/Record.aspx?SEPANumber=202205474

Reports and background data for the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project used for the Draft SEIS are available at: https://deschutesestuaryproject.org/library/

Cost of Copy of Draft SEIS

To obtain a CD or printed copy of the Draft SEIS (for the cost of production), follow the instructions provided at: https://ecology.wa.gov/footer-pages/online-tools-publications/publications-forms