

## **Capitol Lake / Deschutes Estuary Long-term Planning**

March 2016

Capitol Lake is a 260-acre man-made reservoir located in Olympia and Tumwater, Washington. Enterprise Services manages the lake as part of the Capitol Campus. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns the tidelands beneath the lake. Enterprise Services manages the day-to-day operations of the lake under a long-term lease agreement with DNR.

The 2015 Legislature included language in the capital budget for the 2015-17 biennium (page 55, section 1095) directing Enterprise Services to make progress on reaching an agreement about the long-term management of Capitol Lake.

In January 2016, the Department of Enterprise Services convened a work group of representatives from local and tribal governments to work together to find a path forward on long-term planning for Capitol Lake. The group will be completing the first of three phases in an overall plan to manage the lake. Phases are:

### **Phase 1 - Information and coordination:**

This is a critical building block that includes:

- Successful delivery of a report required by a proviso in the capital budget for the 2015-17 biennium
- Additional technical information needed to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Ensuring that key partners and the public are engaged and working together to move forward

### **Phase 2 - Environmental Impact Statement:**

Under Washington state law, an EIS is required before any state or local permits can be obtained.

### **Phase 3 - Implementation:**

The implementation phase will include permitting, design and construction, followed by long-term maintenance.

The proviso directs Enterprise Services to prepare a report to submit to the Legislature by Jan. 1, 2017. The report is expected to summarize efforts of the work group focusing on the following issues identified in the proviso:

- Identification of common goals for the future management of Capitol Lake.
  - Identification of management alternatives, including hybrid approaches of a lake or estuary in which- freshwater from the Deschutes River would mix with the saltwater of Puget Sound.
  - Best available science concerning water quality and habitat.
  - A sustainable funding plan for future management alternatives.
  - A shared governance structure to manage implementation of an immediate plan and oversee the water body over the long-term.
  - Other related activities including sediment management and flood mitigation.
-

## **Public Engagement:**

On March 9, 2016, Enterprise Services hosted an open house as the first opportunity for public interaction in the Capitol Lake planning process. Members of the public were encouraged to provide feedback on the plan for Phase 1 and on how they would like to participate in the coming months. Online comments were taken on these questions, as well. Multiple other opportunities to comment and participate will be available as each proviso topic is examined.

**Participation.** 65 people attended the open house, with 33 providing written feedback. An additional 29 responses were received through DES' online survey tool. Of the 62 responses, 73% identified themselves as private citizens, while the other 27% showed affiliation with organized groups, including the Capitol Lake Improvement and Protection Association (CLIPA), the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team (DERT), the North Capitol Campus Heritage Park Development Association, Black Hills Audubon, South Puget Environmental Education Clearinghouse (SPEECH), Friends of the Lake, the Olympia Yacht Club and the Burbank/Elliot Neighborhood Association.

**Issues of Interest.** Many of the respondents expressed an interest in all of the stated issues: best available science, hybrid alternatives, shared funding, shared governance, sediment management, flood mitigation and other. Of these topics, best available science, hybrid alternatives and other issues garnered the most interest at 61%, 59% and 59% respectively. These were followed by shared funding and sediment management at 46% each. The issues stated under "other" ranged from voicing a preference for either an estuary, a managed lake or some hybrid to frustration and community weariness over what was seen as "duplication of work that's already been done."

**Other things DES was asked to consider** included sea level rise, economic, public and community benefits, public access, legal constraints and the state's interest under the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Shoreline Management Act, and others, as well as under the National Historic Preservation Act (and what is considered "historic").

We were asked to consider **lessons from other areas** (Nisqually, Grays Harbor, Mud Bay), future generations, outdoor recreation and tourism, citizen involvement and support, costs, age of the dam, invasive species, wildlife habitat, and migratory bird paths.

Ideas were put forth regarding **management and governance**, such as consideration of a Capitol Lake Management District. There were questions about DES' management role: Would another agency like Ecology or DNR be more appropriate considering "this is a natural system, not a building." One suggestion was management by U.S. Fish & Wildlife. One participant suggested including non-profit and private entities as possible funding sources.

With regard to **process**, one suggestion stated, "When a professional/science report is used, the authors and the reference should be included, along with reviews of the data by other scientists and professionals. Criteria used to select listed reports should be written."

Finally, DES was asked to consider "the **value, goals and mission** which will inform the choice..." to give people a chance to express their principles and values.

**Preferred options for engagement.** Throughout all of the topic areas, the public expressed a **preference for using facilitated discussions** as a means of providing input. They asked that more in depth information be made available to the public, while giving them a chance to reflect upon all of the alternatives. There was also an interest in review of past work, including the estuary feasibility study and the CLAMP recommendations. A presentation by Department of Ecology on their water quality study (TMDL) work was also recommended.

They asked for distribution of unbiased information. There was a request for stakeholder presentations with time for community members to present ideas; it was suggested that question and answer times also be incorporated into the format.

They suggested that an open house format and stakeholder presentations would be valuable for some topics, while a design charrette might be used for construction alternatives or refinement of options. There was a request for transparency and a video record to assist with public dissemination of information, including taking online input for those not able to attend.

Ideas for gaining more public input included reaching out to neighborhood associations nearby and around Budd Bay, providing information at the Olympia library, and posting web addresses by the Lake itself to inform people who live, work and play by the lake/bay that this process is underway.

DES has used this input to develop the implementation plan and will consider the preferences and interests expressed, as each upcoming public meeting is planned.