



Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed Long-Term Management Project – Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE CAPITOL LAKE/LOWER DESCHUTES WATERSHED?

The Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed includes the 260-acre Capitol Lake Basin, located on the Washington State Capitol Campus, in Olympia, Washington. With an adjacent trail system and nearby parks that provide passive recreational opportunities, this waterbody is an important resource and valued amenity in the south Puget Sound area.



WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LAKE?

The Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (Enterprise Services) is responsible for the stewardship, preservation, operation, and maintenance of the resource. Enterprise Services maintains Capitol Lake as part of the Capitol Campus under a long-term lease agreement with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

WHAT IS THE CAPITOL LAKE/LOWER DESCHUTES WATERSHED LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROJECT?

A long-term plan is needed for managing this important resource. Developing a long-term management plan involves three phases.

- **Phase 1:** In 2016, representatives from local and tribal governments, coordinating state agencies, and the community joined Enterprise Services to identify common goals for long-term management of the resource. Phase 1 was completed in 2016, satisfying the objectives in a 2015 legislative proviso.
- **Phase 2:** Develop a project-specific Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that evaluates potential alternatives and identifies a preferred alternative for long-term management.
- **Phase 3:** Funding, design, permitting and construction of the selected long-term management alternative.

WHY IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT BEING PREPARED FOR THE CAPITOL LAKE/LOWER DESCHUTES WATERSHED LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROJECT?

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required when the lead agency determines that a proposal or project could result in potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. Enterprise Services, as lead agency under SEPA, has determined that potential short- and long-term actions could result in adverse environmental impacts, and is therefore preparing an EIS. The Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed EIS will identify a preferred alternative for long-term management.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT?

An EIS is a decision-making tool guided by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) that provides impartial information to decision makers and the public about probable adverse environmental impacts, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance environmental quality.

More information about the EIS process is available on the Washington State [Department of Ecology's website](#).

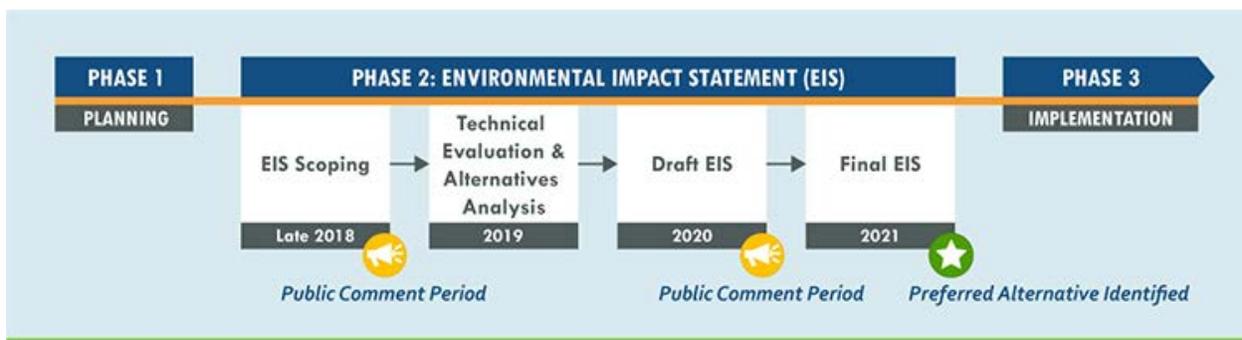
WHAT PHASE IS THE CAPITOL LAKE/LOWER DESCHUTES WATERSHED LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROJECT IN NOW?

The project is now in Phase 2. An EIS will be prepared to evaluate potential alternatives and identify a preferred alternative for long-term management of the Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed.

HOW WILL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGE IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS?

Stakeholders (including members of the public, business groups, tribes, agencies, community organizations, and other governmental entities) will be encouraged to participate in the EIS process at two key milestones defined in SEPA: **scoping** and the **Draft EIS**.

All relevant input received during the scoping and Draft EIS public comment periods will be considered in the EIS process.



WHAT IS SCOPING?

Scoping is the first step in the EIS process. The purpose of scoping is to determine the range, or "scope," of issues to study in the EIS.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN TO PROVIDE SCOPING COMMENTS?

Scoping comments are being accepted through November 13, 2018. The scoping process begins with the issuance of a Scoping Notice. The Scoping Notice is made available to the public through a variety of methods, including by emailing the project mailing list, emailing or calling engaged community groups, posting the notice within the project area, and publishing notice in The Olympian. The various methods to provide comments during scoping are included in the notice. A notice was issued Sept. 26.

WHY IS LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF THE CAPITOL LAKE/LOWER DESCHUTES WATERSHED IMPORTANT?

Water quality standard violations

Capitol Lake is currently violating water quality standards because of high levels of phosphorus, which cause algae blooms that deplete dissolved oxygen in Capitol Lake and the adjacent Budd Inlet, using up oxygen essential for fish and other aquatic life.

Sediment management issues

Every year more than 35,000 cubic yards of sediment from the Deschutes River is deposited within the lake basin, resulting in increasingly shallow conditions. Today, the lake is about 21 percent smaller and it holds roughly 60 percent less water than it did in 1951.

Presence of invasive species

Fish and wildlife habitat are impacted due to the presence of several invasive and nuisance species including the New Zealand mudsnail, purple loosestrife, Eurasian watermilfoil, nutria, and Canada geese. These species out compete and negatively impact native populations.

Restricted active community use

Over the years, high bacterial levels and the presence of invasive species have resulted in impacts to the recreational use of Capitol Lake. The presence of New Zealand mudsnails resulted in official closure to all active uses in 2009. Active use of the waterbody continues to be restricted today.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES FOR LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF THE CAPITOL LAKE/LOWER DESCHUTES WATERSHED?

In 2016, Enterprise Services, in collaboration with stakeholders, identified the following objectives for long-term management of the Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed:

- Improve water quality
- Manage sediment accumulation and future deposition
- Enhance ecological functions
- Restore active community use

Enterprise Services will use the EIS process to evaluate and identify a preferred environmentally and economically sustainable long-term management alternative that satisfies these objectives.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN PRELIMINARILY IDENTIFIED FOR LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT?

At a minimum, four primary long-term management alternatives will be evaluated in the EIS: a Managed Lake, a Restored Estuary, a Hybrid, and a No Action Alternative.

- A **Managed Lake Alternative** would maintain the existing reflecting pool.
- A **Restored Estuary Alternative** would remove the existing Fifth Avenue Dam to restore the historical tidal estuary.
- A **Hybrid Alternative** would include elements of both—a smaller reflecting pool would be developed near Heritage Park and a barrier would be constructed to support a restored tidal estuary west of the barrier.
- A **No Action Alternative** would represent the likely future for the Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed if the project is not implemented. Evaluating a no action alternative is required under SEPA.

Each alternative would include strategies and actions to satisfy the long-term management objectives.

Several sub-options or variations of these primary alternatives have also been proposed. A screening process will be used to identify the range of alternatives that move forward for detailed technical review in the EIS. Options and concepts will be screened for their ability to meet project objectives and their feasibility.

WHO LEADS THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS AND WHO PREPARES THE DOCUMENT?

Enterprise Services will serve as the lead agency for the EIS. Enterprise Services is responsible for stewardship, preservation, operation, and maintenance of the Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed, and has the primary responsibility of complying with SEPA requirements in this process.

Enterprise Services selected a neutral third party to help prepare an EIS in accordance with SEPA. The role of this team is to provide an impartial analysis of the potential environmental impacts and a range of alternatives. They will document the analysis in a readable EIS that explains technical content and allows the public to understand the most significant and vital information concerning the project.

The interdisciplinary team has specialty experience and expertise in EIS development and SEPA regulations, combined with specific technical expertise in the environmental disciplines that will be studied in the EIS.

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT PROPOSED TO BE EVALUATED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT?

The scoping process will help to identify what should be evaluated in the EIS. Under SEPA, an EIS needs to focus on probable significant adverse impacts. This may include, but is not limited to:

Natural environment and built environment

- Water Resources
- Earth Resources
- Air Quality
- Plants and Animals
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Land and Shoreline Use
- Recreation
- Aesthetics
- Transportation
- Historic and Cultural Preservation

Additional environmental topics were discussed in coordination with various stakeholders during Phase 1. These topics, which are expected to be analyzed in the EIS due to the potential for significant adverse impacts, include:

- Sediment Transport and Geomorphology
- Invasive Species
- Economics
- Sea Level Rise and Climate Change

WHAT TYPES OF COMMENTS ARE MOST HELPFUL?

The scoping process is intended to collect input on what should be studied regarding the following topics:

- Alternatives
- Potential environmental impacts
- Potential mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts
- Permits or other approvals that may be required

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO COMPLETE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT?

An EIS of this size and complexity will likely require about three years to complete (see graphic above).

WILL THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IDENTIFY A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT?

Yes, the Final EIS will identify a preferred alternative.

WHAT IS THE FUNDING SOURCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE IN PHASE 3?

During Phase 1, a Funding and Governance Work Group was assembled to gauge the degree of general support for shared funding by state, local, and federal governments and potentially other entities, in accordance with a legislative proviso. The Funding and Governance Work Group identified goals or attributes of a potential shared funding and governance model for long-term management. Enterprise Services will continue to work with the Funding and Governance Work Group during Phase 2 to identify or define the funding source for Phase 3.