I am writing about my concerns regarding the proposed flood control dam on the upper Chehalis. The Chehalis Basin is at increased risk of flooding due to climate change every winter. The Office of the Chehalis Basin (OCB) purports that the proposed flood control dam will prevent flooding in a 100-year catastrophic flooding event; however, the Basin needs solutions that will reduce flood damage risk for residents as well as businesses in the near-term. These answers require science-based results which are also wise investments for the Chehalis Basin and should include assistance for homes.

The OCB is seeking $40 million for permitting, environmental review, and construction of the dam without a basin-wide, coordinated approach for a local action flood damage reduction program (LAP). Furthermore, this $40 million would be allocated to a single contractor.

The Community Flood Assistance and Resilience program which supports acquisitions, retrofitting, and flood proofing for residents throughout the Basin would only be allocated $3 million.

 The proposed allocations in the biennial budget call for $33 million to fund the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP), a science-based plan designed to help restore aquatic species habitat and enhance local economies. It was designed to efficiently and effectively rebuild and protect an ecosystem that is resilient to the impacts of climate change. I find it unfair that the ASRP is only funded at $33million, while the proposed flood control dam is funded at $40million.

Historically, the Chehalis Basin Strategy (CBS) has lacked coordination and accountability across programs, which has increased costs and has directly contributed to the degradation of aquatic species habitat. The CBS needs to work with the Tribes in the Basin to review and revise its governance structure to implement all components in a more fair and just manner. The need for a more integrated approach to align both the flood damage reduction strategy as well as the ASRP is apparent.

I would strongly urge the Chehalis Basin Board to reject the proposed budget in favor of a more equitable and collaborative plan.