

The Long-Term Chehalis Basin Strategy Options



The Chehalis Basin Board and technical experts at the June 6, 2025 workshop.

Photo credit: Office of Chehalis Basin

In 2026, the Chehalis Basin Board will decide on a recommended long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy to protect people and aquatic life for decades to come. As part of its strategy development process, the Board assembled for a workshop in June 2025 to determine what combinations of individual flood damage reduction and aquatic restoration investments they'd like to see studied further. Board members reached consensus on six different long-term strategy options to evaluate – a major milestone for their process. Evaluation of these options will help the Board finalize their recommendation in 2026.

About the range of current long-term options

The initial suite of six long-term options represents a broad range of potential pathways for the future of the basin – from high investments in proposed structural flood damage reduction and aquatic restoration measures, to a focus on non-structural flood protection, and several “middle of the road” options in between. A baseline “no strategy” option will also be evaluated to provide information on how the basin would be affected if OCB’s investments went away completely.

In addition, these initial long-term options:

- **Represent various combinations of individual projects and investments** that consider the needs and interactions of flood damage reduction and aquatic restoration.
- **All include some level support for basin-wide aquatic species restoration and existing flood-related efforts**, including ongoing support for voluntary home elevations, erosion management projects, and continued investment in the Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority's local projects and Flood Warning System.
- **Reflect Board members' consideration for how to gain the most information** on the relative economic, social, and ecological costs and benefits of the various projects and investments being considered.
- **May change based on what's learned from the technical evaluation and community input.** Board members may remove options along the way, or add new flood protection or aquatic restoration measures in, prior to their final deliberations. It's also possible that the Board may recommend a hybrid option that is different from any of the current options.

Comparison of Long-Term Chehalis Basin Strategy Options (June 2025)

See handouts for more information on the sub-options available for each element under consideration.

Long-term Options	Proposed new investments			Existing programs to be scaled up or maintained						
	Proposed Flow-through Dam & Airport Levee	Proposed Levee System (LAND)	Skookumchuck Dam	Basin-wide Aquatic Restoration (ASRP)	Floodproofing, Elevation & Acquisition	Flood Authority local projects	Flood Warning System	Floodplain Mgt, Land Use, & Transportation Planning	Erosion Management	Multi-Benefit Acquisition
Option A	✓	✓ (Group 1*)	Modify	✓++	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Option B	✓	✓ (Group 1**)	Remove	✓++	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Option C				✓	✓++	✓++	✓+	✓	✓	✓
Option D		✓++ (Groups 1-3)	Remove	✓	✓+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Option E		✓++ (Groups 1-3)		✓++	✓+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Option F		✓+ (Group 1 + Airport Levee)		✓	✓++	✓++	✓+	✓	✓	✓

KEY: ✓ Included

✓+ or ✓++ Included with a greater level of investment/implementation

☐ Not built or no action

Modify or Remove Skookumchuck Dam only

Group 1: North Skookumchuck, South Skookumchuck, Improved Chehalis River Conveyance, Mellen Street Bridge Replacement, China to Salzer Creek, and China Creek Improvements

Group 2: West Skookumchuck, Fort Borst

Group 3: Airport, Newaukum, Adna

*North & South Skookumchuck only

**North & South Skookumchuck and China-Salzer only, China Creek improvements

What do the long-term options propose?

Dam-and-partial-levee-system options:

- **Option A:** This option includes the proposed flow-through dam near Pe Ell and a portion of the levee system in and around Chehalis and Centralia (Group 1 – the North and South Skookumchuck levees only) to provide flood protection. It would also modify the structure and operations to increase downstream flood protection and provide some improvements to current fish passage, and provide a high level of investment in basin-wide aquatic restoration.
- **Option B:** This option is closely related to Option A, but instead of modifying the Skookumchuck Dam, it proposes removing it in order to substantially improve fish passage on the Skookumchuck River. It also includes the China to Saltzer Creek levee in addition to the North and South Skookumchuck Levees, as well as improvements to China Creek.

Levee-centered options:

- **Option D:** This option relies on the full system of levees, floodwalls, and drainage improvements, as well as an increased level of investment in voluntary floodproofing, elevations, and buyouts of homes and businesses. It would also remove the Skookumchuck Dam to substantially improve fish passage on the Skookumchuck River, while providing a lower investment level of basin-wide aquatic restoration.
- **Option E:** This option is closely related to Option D, with two key differences: it includes no changes to the Skookumchuck Dam, and high investment in basin-wide aquatic restoration.
- **Option F:** This option relies on a portion of the levee system: Group 1, plus the Airport Levee. It couples that partial system with a high investment in local, small-scale flood projects as well as a medium-high level of investment in voluntary floodproofing, elevations, and buyouts of floodplain structures not protected by Group 1 levees. It also includes no action on the Skookumchuck Dam and a lower investment in basin-wide restoration.

Non-structural flood protection option:

- **Option C:** This option is the least reliant on structural flood protection and includes no flow-through dam or levees, instead focusing on the highest level of investment in local flood projects and voluntary floodproofing, elevations, and buyouts of homes and businesses. Like Option F, it suggests no action be taken on the Skookumchuck Dam and provides a lower investment in basin-wide aquatic restoration.



Next steps

Evaluating the options

An interdisciplinary technical team of economists, hydrologists, and fish biologists is now analyzing the costs, benefits, and tradeoffs of these different options. Their analysis will evaluate factors such as how many homes might be protected, how fish populations could be impacted, and what the long-term economic and environmental effects might be. Final evaluation results are expected in 2026.

Collecting community feedback

Once the evaluation results are available, the Office of Chehalis Basin (OCB) will provide several ways for community members and basin organizations to learn more about what the analysis revealed and provide feedback. OCB plans to:

- Share updates via the **website** and a **webinar**
- Collect community feedback via a **survey** and **Board listening sessions**

Finalizing the recommended long-term strategy

In 2026, during its final deliberations, Board members will consider evaluation results and community input as they identify their recommended long-term action plan to reduce flood damage and support aquatic life in the Chehalis Basin. The recommended strategy may be a hybrid of some of the existing six options and/or may contain new elements identified during the technical analysis, community engagement, and Board deliberations. Regardless of which projects and investments are recommended, the Board will outline considerations related to phasing, conditions, and contingencies to take into account during the next several decades of implementation.

For more information



Learn more at <https://officeofchehalisbasin.com/LTS>
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