

The Proposed Levee System

also known as the Local Actions Non-Dam (LAND) Alternative

FAQs and Responses for Landowners

This document is intended for landowners with property in areas of the LAND Alternative, a project concept being considered by the Chehalis Basin Board (Board). The Washington State Legislature created the Board to develop recommendations for and provide oversight to the Chehalis Basin Strategy to reduce flood damage and restore aquatic habitat.

What is the LAND Alternative?

The [Local Actions Non-Dam \(LAND\) Alternative](#) is a concept for a proposed system of new and expanded levees, floodwalls, and drainage improvements in and around Centralia, Chehalis, and Adna. As part of its deliberations on the [long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy](#), the Chehalis Basin Board is evaluating whether LAND could be a possible alternative to the [proposed Chehalis River flow-through dam near Pe Ell](#), or if some segments could be built in combination with the proposed flow-through dam to provide the greatest level of flood protection to flood-prone communities in the upper Chehalis River Basin.

Where are the proposed levee and floodwall alignments?

The LAND concept currently includes eight levee and floodwall alignments between Adna and Fort Borst Park and along the Skookumchuck River. Two additional drainage improvements are also being considered – reconstruction of the Mellen St Bridge and excavation of upland areas adjacent to the Chehalis River near Fort Borst Park – that would both help to improve floodwaters near I-5. These ten features are grouped into three potential groups which could be built one after the other, or at once. See project concept map on page 3.

The team designing the levee system concept identified these conceptual areas based on what would protect the greatest number of homes and businesses while balancing cost effectiveness, maximizing natural processes, and maintaining emergency routes during times of flood. It is still too early to know where the precise levee alignments would be, or which groups would move forward, if the project concept is recommended by the Board.

What is the current status of the LAND?

The project concept is in its very early stages of design, and the proposed draft alignments represent only preliminary, conceptual thinking about how to best implement an expanded levee system in the Centralia-Chehalis area. There is still a great deal of uncertainty around this project concept, and no decisions have been made about whether it should move forward as a formal proposed project.

How was the LAND developed? Who was involved?

The LAND Alternative is the result of years of technical analysis, policy studies, community workshops, online surveys, and other engagement activities to solicit broad and diverse input across a wide range of issues. In 2020, responding to concerns expressed by some basin communities about the proposed Chehalis River dam near Pe Ell, then-Governor Jay Inslee directed the Board to consider potential local flood protection actions in the absence of the dam. The [initial LAND project concept](#) was developed in 2023-2024 with input from local business and agricultural representatives, tribal governments, community members, technical experts, and the area's city and county departments.

In 2025, an engineering team contracted by the Office of Chehalis Basin (OCB) brought the project concept to its current early draft phase in consultation with the Board, local governments, Tribes, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. [The LAND Conceptual Alternatives Analysis Report \(November 2025\)](#) includes information about the conceptual design process.

What do you mean by project concept?

The LAND project concept identifies potential approximate locations for levees, floodwalls, and drainage improvements. It also describes approximate heights of levees and floodwalls, additional infrastructure (such as pump stations) that would be needed as part of the system, and speaks generally to the possible flood reduction benefits. As a concept-level project, it does *not* set exact locations, which would have to be worked out with geography in mind and input from landowners.

In order to help the Board make the best possible decision on long-term flood protection measures for the upper Chehalis Basin, technical experts are analyzing the potential environmental, economic, and social benefits and drawbacks of different long-term options for the Basin that include the flow-through dam and/or the LAND, and how they compare to one another – a technical study known as the “comparative analysis.” This analysis will help the Board see if an expanded levee system is worth pursuing.

To initiate the comparative analysis, the LAND conceptual design team needed to identify potentially viable locations of the flood control structures, even before a project sponsor has been identified.

If the Board recommends some or all of the LAND, many steps would need to be taken to advance the project (see page 5-6), and even then, it is not guaranteed that the project will be built.

How could the levee system benefit me?

Levees serve as barriers that hold back floodwaters to keep homes, businesses, structures, and infrastructure from being inundated. Based on what we currently know, if fully constructed, the LAND is expected to:

- Protect over 2,000 homes and businesses
- Maintain and enhance emergency routes and road bypasses during floods
- Potentially lower flood insurance premiums for building owners and renters

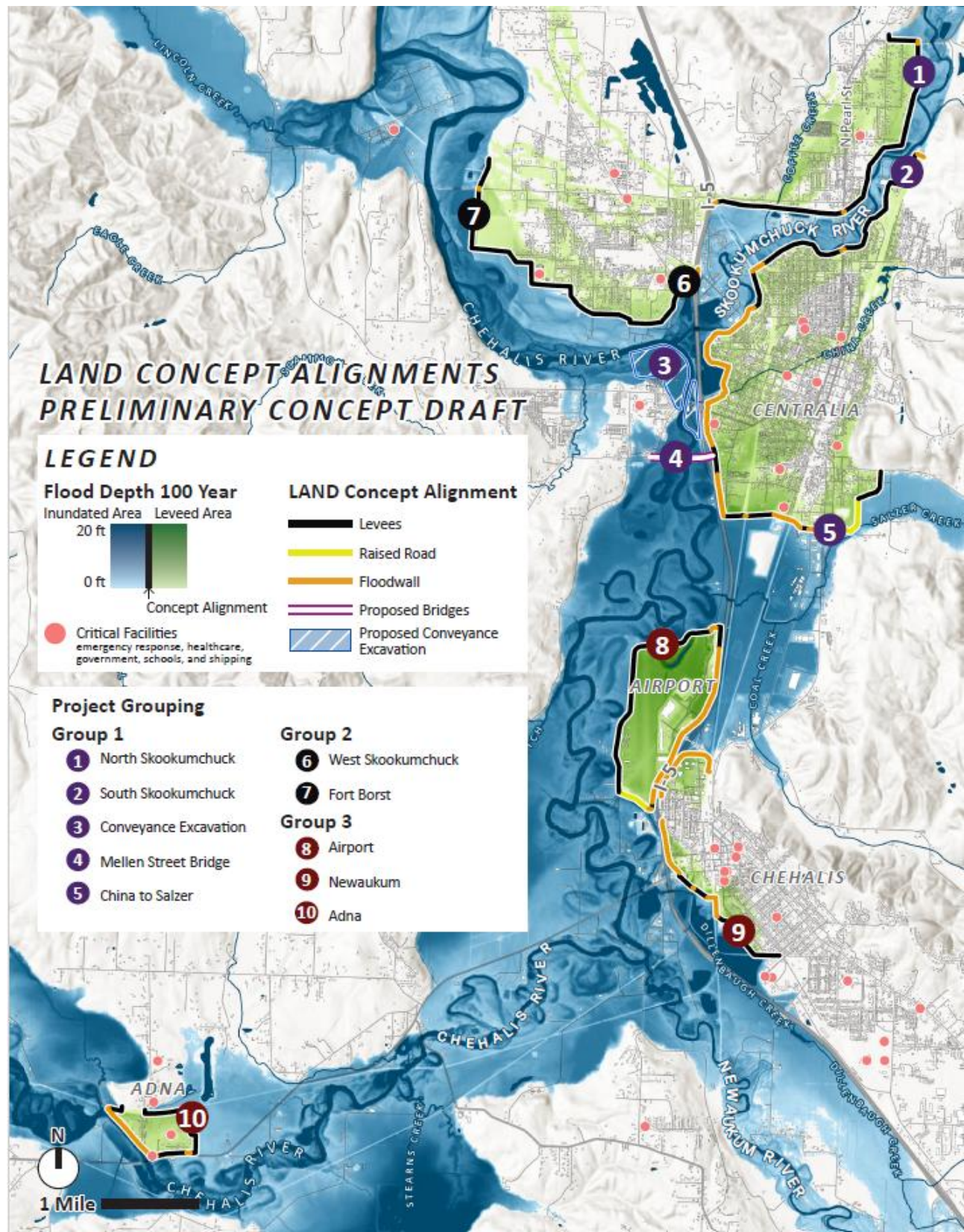
Additionally, the team designing the project concept has worked to enhance aquatic habitat by providing room for the river to follow its natural processes, and potentially connect park systems with new trails.

What might the potential effects be?

While there are many benefits to levees, they are not without impacts. As a result of the added flood protection, there would likely be some effects to aquatic habitat, but those have not been examined as deeply or carefully as the proposed flow-through dam since the designs are still conceptual.

Some private land may also become unusable or inaccessible during and after levee and floodwall construction, though specific impacts won't be identified until further in design if it advances. Any affected landowners would be fairly compensated. In addition, while the conceptual design aims to minimize upstream and downstream impacts, the proposed levees may raise floodwaters in some areas.

The comparative analysis will provide more information about the benefits and drawbacks of the different options considered as part of the long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy, including the options that include some or all of the proposed LAND.



What will happen to properties not protected by a final alignment?

Just like with the proposed flow-through dam, it wouldn't be possible to protect all homes and businesses with a levee system. The recommended long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy will continue to pursue funding for OCB's efforts that provide financial and technical support to landowners to floodproof, elevate, or relocate any structures that would still experience some flooding.

Would the levees be built all at once?

It's unlikely that all recommended levee alignments would be built at once if recommended by the Board. One of the goals of LAND is to develop a flood protection alternative that could be implemented fully or partially, at once or incrementally over time. The conceptual design includes three potential groups of proposed levees that could be built fully or partially and at once or over time.

How will the levees be designed to avoid failure?

If the LAND were to move forward, levees would be designed according to the National Levee Safety Guidelines developed jointly by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), along with other applicable USACE and FEMA standards and guidelines intended to achieve reliability of levees and resilience of communities behind levees. Levee designs will both fit local conditions and meet these national standards.

Why haven't I heard about this before?

OCB and the Board have been sharing information about the LAND since 2023. However, it is still too early to know if the project will be recommended, if it is feasible, and where the exact levee alignments would be. Because the project concept is very uncertain, OCB and the Board have not yet reached out to individual landowners in the concept levee areas. If the Chehalis Basin Board recommends the proposed system (all segments or a subset of them), conversations with landowners will be central at every step of the way.

When does the Board make its decision about the LAND?

The Board will decide in late 2026 whether or not to include some or all of the LAND proposal in its recommended long-term strategy.

What would come next if the Board recommends it?

If the Board does recommend some or all of the proposed system, there are still several steps needed to determine the project's feasibility and design. Each of which will take several years and would include opportunities for landowner and community feedback:

- Additional technical analysis and design to determine actual alignments, during which discussions with potentially affected landowners would occur
- Identification of a local sponsor to take ownership of the project
- Environmental review, which would include a formal public comment period
- Obtaining local, state, and federal permits, several of which would have their own input processes
- Securing funding – construction costs are currently estimated at \$900M-\$1.6B for the full suite of levees, though note this estimate is subject to change if design advances

When is the earliest the levee system could be constructed?

If the Board recommends the LAND and the steps above progressed without delay, the earliest construction could begin is the mid to late 2030s.

How can I share my thoughts about LAND to the Board?

The Board wants to hear from you – especially how this project might benefit or affect you. You can submit a comment form at any time, or provide spoken and/or written feedback to the Board later in 2026 when the current technical analysis is complete. Comments collected through Fall 2026 will be compiled and considered by the Board, along with the results of the comparative analysis in final deliberations on the long-term strategy.

Where can I get more information?

OCB and the Board will continue to provide opportunities to learn more about and share input on the LAND Alternative and other solutions being considered for the long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy. OCB staff also welcome the opportunity to meet with individual landowners to discuss the LAND concept and answer specific questions.



- Learn more and sign-up for our newsletter: <https://officeofchehalisbasin.com/LTS>
- Submit a question or request a meeting at: info@officeofchehalisbasin.com