

## **State Capitol Committee**

October 6, 2016

### **Capitol Lake Management Plan**

**Purpose: Update, Discuss and Feedback**

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the State Capitol Committee (SCC) on the Capital Lake Long-term Management Plan. Bob Covington, Enterprise Services' Deputy Director will present the agenda item.

## **Olympia Capitol Campus: Capitol Lake/Lower Deschutes Watershed**

### **Background**

Capitol Lake is a 260-acre reservoir in Olympia and Tumwater. The lake was created in 1951 after the state built an earthen dam and concrete spillway at Fifth Avenue in Olympia. The state Department of Enterprise Services currently oversees the lake as part of the Capitol Campus under a long-term lease agreement with the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR is the state agency that manages state-owned aquatic lands. The lake was last dredged in 1986.



From 1997 through 2009, a committee of state, local and tribal government officials studied a variety of lake management issues, including the feasibility of turning the lake back into a tidal estuary where fresh and salt waters meet. Scientific studies confirmed that restoring the estuary was feasible. The local community, however, was divided about options for the lake. Due in part to budget constraints, no further action was immediately taken.

Water quality is an ongoing problem in Capitol Lake and the entire Deschutes River watershed. The watershed fails to meet state and federal water quality standards.

### **Capital Budget Proviso**

A proviso in the 2015-17 capital budget directed Enterprise Services to make “*tangible progress on reaching broad agreement*” on the long-term management of Capitol Lake and lower Deschutes watershed, appropriating \$250,000 for the work. Components of the proviso include:

- Identify and summarize the best available science concerning water quality and habitat as they relate to conceptual options of retaining or removing the dam.
- Identify multiple hybrid options for the future management of Capitol Lake to include: substantial improvement in fish and wildlife habitat and ecosystem functions; maintaining a historic reflecting pool at the north end of the lake; and adaptive management strategies.
- Identify general cost estimates for the construction and maintenance of each conceptual option including the range of public support for each approach.

- Identify options and measure the general support for shared funding by state and federal agencies, local governments and other potential entities.
- Identify one or more conceptual options for the long-term shared governance of a future management plan including approaches similar to other state lake management districts ([RCW 36.61](#)) or shellfish protection districts ([RCW 90.72](#)).

## Status

Enterprise Services responded by organizing an executive workgroup and various sub-committees with a goal of making the progress called for in the proviso. Participants include representatives from the Squaxin Island Tribe, cities of Olympia and Tumwater, Thurston County, and the Port of Olympia, with technical assistance from the state departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources. These groups have been meeting monthly since the start of the year.

- Phase 1—Finish and submit a report to the Legislature and Office of Financial Management (OFM) in December 2016 meeting the proviso requirements.
- Phase 2—Complete a project-specific Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Phase 3—Design, permit and construct the preferred alternative determined by the EIS.

Implementation of any long-term management option will require the completion of an EIS under the State Environmental Policy Act. Under state law, the EIS process requires DES to identify a scope of study, conduct research, complete technical analyses, issue a draft EIS with a public engagement and comment process, review comments, and then prepare a final EIS and written responses to comments. While additional scientific and technical information will need to be collected for a final EIS, there is already an abundance of useful data about the lake and watershed done as part of past planning efforts. The existing studies and technical reports will be used extensively during the EIS Phase 2 work.

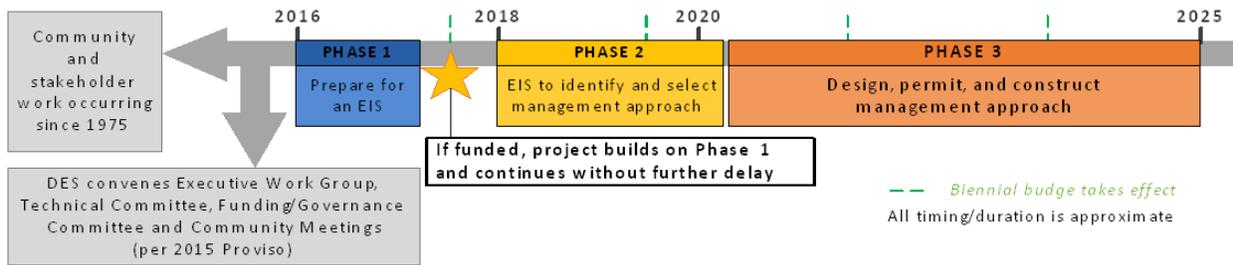
DES has conducted an extensive public outreach effort as part of its proviso work. For example, the department received 421 responses to an April 2016 survey asking for input on goals and objectives for long-term management. These goals were then used to develop a draft Purpose and Need Statement, which will be included in the 2016 report and could then provide a foundation for a future EIS. The long-term management goals identified by community members and stakeholders emphasize that the state should:

- Consider the aesthetics of the waterbody.
- Manage sediments.
- Restore community use, including recreational opportunities.
- Improve water quality.
- Find an economically feasible management approach.
- Enhance ecological functions.

A long-term management decision is needed because conditions in the lake and watershed continue to deteriorate:

- More than 35,000 cubic yards of sediment continue to accumulate in the lake annually.
- The shallow conditions cause warm summertime water temperatures that can harm fish and other aquatic species.
- The lake has infestations of several invasive species, such as Eurasian milfoil and New Zealand mudsnail, which can outcompete native fish and wildlife.
- High levels of phosphorous continue to cause algae blooms that die and then deplete oxygen levels in Budd Inlet.
- The opportunity for community use of the resource, along with the economic benefit that provides, will continue to be wasted.

## Next Steps



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