

PRESS RELEASE

Success! 5th Avenue Dam Slated For Removal; Deschutes Estuary To Be Restored

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Summary: On October 31, 2022, the Washington Department of Enterprise Services (DES) released its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on Capitol Lake/Deschutes Estuary, identifying the removal of the Fifth Avenue Dam and restoration of the Deschutes River and Estuary as the state's "preferred alternative" to address numerous environmental problems with the existing lake and estuarine systems. The Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team (DERT), the Squaxin Tribe, and other local elected officials, organizations, and community members have been advocating for this result for more than 20 years. In releasing the FEIS, DES quoted Kris Peters, the Chair of the Squaxin Tribe, who said: "The Deschutes Estuary has long-standing cultural and spiritual significance to the Squaxin Island Tribe. Restoration of the Deschutes Estuary is a meaningful step toward the larger effort to improve the health of the Deschutes Watershed for native species." His words were echoed by others, including Governor Inslee.

Together, we have cause to celebrate this milestone.

Key components of the Estuary management plan developed by DES include the construction of a new Fifth Avenue bridge with pedestrian and bike facilities; restoration of boating and fishing, including a new boat launch; construction of boardwalks adjacent to ecological improvements in the south and middle basins; undertaking initial dredging in the middle and north basin, and maintenance dredging in the future to remove accumulated sediment in areas like West Bay; establishment of habitat areas within the middle and north basins; and implementation of a habitat enhancement plan to maintain ecological functions.

This decision by DES is a triumph for DERT and local citizens, who have pushed hard to reverse the decision to build the dam over 70 years ago, which ignored the historic significance of the river and estuary for the Squaxin Tribe, and resulted in the displacement of many economically disadvantaged residents of Olympia. Since 2009, DERT has worked directly with key leaders and legislators to encourage an honest and complete analysis of the environmental and economic impacts of both maintaining Capitol Lake and restoring the Deschutes River and Estuary. DERT will continue to advocate, alongside community members, tribes, and other local NGOs, for improved water quality and quantity, riparian and aquatic habitat protection, and pollution prevention.

Please join us for a celebration in honor of the future of the Deschutes Estuary at 6pm on Friday, November 18, 2022 at New Traditions Fair Trade, located at 300 5th Avenue SW, Olympia, Washington.

About: Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team (DERT) is a 501(c)3 based in Olympia, Washington. Since 2009, DERT has been advocating for the removal of the 5th Avenue Dam in downtown Olympia as part of a clear path to the full restoration of the Deschutes Estuary. Learn more at deschutesestuary.org. Free the Deschutes!

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