

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date:	September 28, 2026
Staff Contact/Title:	Alex Smith, Executive Director (alexs@portolympia.com)
Subject:	Deschutes Estuary Joint Resolution of Support
Purpose:	☒ Information Only ☐ Decision Needed

Type of Agenda Item:

Advisory

Background:

In 2022, the State Department of Enterprise Services (DES) decided the best option for long-term management of Capitol Lake and to improve Budd Inlet water quality was to restore the area to a free-flowing estuary. The Port of Olympia Commission adopted Resolution 2023-04 to express support for this “watershed-wide approach to the restoration of Budd Inlet, the Deschutes River, and the Deschutes Estuary.”

As a further sign of support, the Commission approved the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project Interlocal Agreement (ILA), which commits the Port and other jurisdictions to contribute to the cost of maintaining water depths in West Bay following the removal of the Fifth Avenue dam.

The Regional Funding Partners that signed the ILA (City of Olympia, City of Tumwater, Thurston County, Squaxin Island Tribe, LOTT Clean Water Alliance, and the Port of Olympia) have recently been asked by the Washington Department of Ecology to provide additional support for the project by adopting a resolution that supports state and federal funding to implement the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project. This Resolution will confirm the Port’s and Partners’ support for:

- a. The project as a whole
- b. State funding for the project
- c. Federal funding for the project
- d. The local commitment to the success of the project
- e. Continued local support

The Resolution is intended to be a strong demonstration of support for the restoration project and any funding requests for the project. As the Resolution was being drafted and reviewed by the parties, the Port requested that language be added to the Resolution to support funding requests for the Budd Inlet cleanup, which the ILA recognizes is a prerequisite to the estuary restoration. Other Regional Funding Partners objected to that, and the Resolution therefore was put forward without language supporting funding for the cleanup.

The Resolution is being presented to the governing bodies of the Regional Funding Partners for approval, as follows:

- City of Olympia: Approved by the City Council September 15th
- LOTT: Approved by the LOTT Board September 9th
- City of Tumwater: On a Committee Agenda October 8th, full Council consideration October 20th
- Thurston County: On the Board's Agenda October 20th

Summary and Financial Impact:

Adopting this Resolution will not have direct financial impacts on the Port.

Alignment with Vision 2050:

1. Goal: Turn the Port Peninsula into a premier destination by adding attractions, increasing accessibility, and maintaining a clean and safe environment.
2. Goal: Emphasize sustainability in all planning and actions and provide updates to the community.

Environmental Considerations and Review:

Adopting this Resolution will not have direct environmental impacts on the Port, but supporting the estuary will result in improved environmental conditions for Budd Inlet and the residents of Thurston County that we serve.

Alternatives Considered:

The Resolution incorporated some of the feedback the Port provided, although not all.

- One alternative is to reject the adoption of the Resolution as currently drafted. This could signal a lack of support for the Deschutes Estuary restoration and potentially harm relationships with partners whose support we will need for Budd Inlet Cleanup.
- A second alternative is to add language into the Resolution the Port adopts that supports funding for Budd Inlet cleanup.
- The final option is to adopt the Resolution as presented.

Staff Recommendation:

The other Regional Partners have signaled their intent to approve the Resolution. Staff recommend the Port Commission likewise adopt the Joint Resolution, and consider doing so at the October 13, 2026, Commission meeting.

Document(s) Attached:

1. Joint Resolution of Support
2. Port of Olympia Commission Resolution 2023-04
3. Deschutes Estuary ILA of 2024