

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date:	October 13, 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:

Action

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. In 2024 the Port Commission approved the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project Interlocal Agreement (ILA), which commits the Port and other jurisdictions to supporting the estuary restoration, and to contributing funds towards 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, indicating that including references to Budd Inlet takes away from the original intent of this being about the Estuary, along with a fear about mixing messages, and the Resolution therefore was put forward without language supporting funding for the cleanup.

The Resolution will be, or has been, presented to the governing bodies of the Regional Funding Partners for approval, as follows:

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

Alternatives Presented:

Staff prepared two options for Commission consideration:

Option A:

Option A is to adopt the Resolution as agreed by the Regional Partners, and as already adopted by LOTT and the City of Olympia.

The benefits of this option include supporting the joint language and work of the Regional Partners and allowing for one identical Resolution to support funding efforts for the estuary project.

The potential downsides are that Port policy priorities will not be included in the Resolution the Port Commission adopts.

Option B:

Option B is to adopt the Resolution with two amendments:

1. The first proposed amendment reflects the ILA's recognition that the Budd Inlet cleanup must come before the restoration of the estuary. Without this language, there may be a lack of clarity among funders about this requirement.
2. The second proposed amendment reflects the legislative language that gave Ecology management authority over aspects of the estuary restoration project. This language more accurately reflects the legislative direction on Ecology's role with the project.

The primary benefit of this option is that Port policy priorities, already agreed to by the Regional Partners, are reflected in the Resolution the Commission adopts, ensuring this aspect is considered by outside entities.

The potential downside of this option is that it puts the Port slightly out of step with the rest of the Regional Partners in how our support for the project is articulated in this one Resolution.

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.

Staff Recommendation:

The other Regional Partners have either signaled their intent to approve the Resolution or have already adopted it. 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 with edits
2. Joint Resolution of Support – clean copy
3. Port of Olympia Commission Resolution 2023-04
4. Deschutes Estuary ILA of 2024