

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Project

This chapter describes the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project, its purpose and need, and project-specific information, such as where WSDOT proposes to build the pontoons, how long it would take to build them, and the design-build process for the project. This chapter also describes past, ongoing, and future public, government agency, and tribal outreach and involvement in the project planning process.

What is the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project?

The State Route (SR) 520 Pontoon Construction Project involves building 33 pontoons to replace the SR 520 Evergreen Point Bridge in its current configuration if the bridge should ever fail. To accomplish this, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and its co-lead agency, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are considering two sites on Grays Harbor, Washington, on which to build a new facility for constructing the pontoons. WSDOT is also considering the use of a smaller, existing facility in Tacoma, Washington, to supplement pontoon construction while the new facility is being built. The project also includes storing the 33 pontoons until they are needed. Notably, the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is one of four projects in the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Program (SR 520 Program), which is a collection of roadway improvements designed to improve mobility and enhance safety throughout the Puget Sound region (see sidebar).

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is to accomplish the following: (1) expedite construction of the pontoons needed to replace the existing traffic capacity of the Evergreen Point Bridge if a catastrophic failure occurs, and (2) store these pontoons in case they are needed for catastrophic failure response or until they are incorporated into the SR 520 Program's I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project.

To achieve this purpose, WSDOT is proposing to build a new casting basin facility that could accommodate simultaneous construction of

What is the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project's relationship to the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program?

The SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is one of four projects in the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program. Listed below are the other three projects:

- **I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project.** Improvements to SR 520 from I-5 to Medina, including replacing Portage Bay and Evergreen Point bridges.
 - **Eastside Transit and HOV Project.** Improvements to SR 520 from Medina to SR 202 in Redmond.
 - **Lake Washington Congestion Management Project.** A series of projects to improve traffic flow on I-405, SR 520, and I-90.
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In 2006, a windstorm led to the closure of the Evergreen Point Bridge during the peak afternoon traffic period.

multiple pontoons. WSDOT would also keep the proposed facility available to construct the additional pontoons needed for the SR 520 Program's I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. A secondary purpose of the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is to ensure access to the proposed facility if it were needed to build pontoons for unforeseen WSDOT floating bridge repairs or replacements.

Why is the project needed now, and what would happen if pontoons were not built?

The SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is needed now to shorten the time required to replace the Evergreen Point Bridge if it were ever damaged beyond repair in a major windstorm. If pontoons were not built and ready for emergency bridge replacement, WSDOT would need 5 years to reconstruct the floating bridge. With this SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project, WSDOT could replace the bridge in just 1.5 years.

In 2006, when WSDOT began planning for a possible failure of the floating portion of the Evergreen Point Bridge before its planned replacement, they identified what measures might expedite replacing the floating bridge should a catastrophic failure occur. WSDOT determined that building new pontoons would require the longest lead time of any single activity related to bridge replacement.

The Evergreen Point Bridge is a critical component of the Puget Sound region's transportation infrastructure and carries one of two highways that span Lake Washington to link Seattle with the Eastside and beyond. Currently, about 115,000 vehicles cross the Evergreen Point Bridge each day. Long-term bridge closure would impair moving goods (such as merchandise to stock retail stores) and people (such as employees traveling to work) across Lake Washington. Travel times, miles traveled, and travel costs would increase as cars, trucks, and buses switch to alternate routes, thereby causing a domino effect of increased congestion on other roads across and around the lake.

The pontoons supporting the existing Evergreen Point Bridge have approximately 6,000 linear feet of cracks, which decrease the bridge's structural integrity. Any windstorm could further decrease the bridge's structural integrity and life expectancy, and storms exceeding the 20-year windstorm level could cause catastrophic failure of the bridge. Although WSDOT repaired the floating portion of the bridge between 1993 and 1999, it remains at risk of failure. Repairs made to the bridge during that time included installing water-tight doors in pontoon cells, a pontoon bilge pumping system, and post-tensioning cables. The repairs



WSDOT has discovered cracks in the Evergreen Point Bridge pontoons.

strengthened the bridge to handle up to a 20-year windstorm event (characterized by 77-mile-per-hour winds), but the life and strength of the repairs are limited by the capacity of the original pontoons, inadequate pontoon floatation, and cumulative storm damage sustained by the bridge since it opened in 1963. The repairs have added weight to the bridge, causing it to float about 1 foot lower in the water than designed, thereby preventing further repair opportunities, which would add even more weight. Additionally, these safety and maintenance improvements do not provide sufficient protection during major windstorms. WSDOT policy requires closing the existing bridge to traffic and opening the drawspan when gusts of wind reach 50 miles per hour for at least 15 minutes.

Why would WSDOT build a new pontoon construction facility?

Building a new casting basin would allow WSDOT to construct multiple large pontoons simultaneously. Currently, no marine facilities are available in the Pacific Northwest where the number of pontoons needed to replace the Evergreen Point Bridge could be built in less than 5 years. With the exception of a facility in Tacoma, all of the pontoon construction facilities that WSDOT has used in the past have been filled in and converted to other uses. Although there are military facilities in the region large enough to accommodate pontoon construction, they are not available for WSDOT use because the military does not allow nonmilitary work in their facilities that could compete with private facilities. Also, available military facilities do not have sufficient laydown areas around them to support pontoon construction.

As mentioned above, there is a commercial pontoon construction facility in Tacoma that WSDOT could use for this project—the Concrete Technology Corporation, Inc. (CTC) facility. WSDOT previously used the CTC facility on the Blair Waterway for constructing pontoons for the SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge Project. Pontoons required for that project, however, were smaller in size and quantity than those needed for the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project. The CTC facility is too small to accommodate the timely construction of multiple pontoons of the sizes needed for this project. In fact, only one large Evergreen Point Bridge pontoon could be built at the CTC site during each 6-month construction cycle. At that rate, it would take more than 12 years to construct all of the large pontoons needed to replace the floating bridge if they were built only at the CTC facility. Spending 12 or more years building pontoons to replace the Evergreen Point Bridge fails to meet the purpose of this project.

What is a 20-year windstorm?

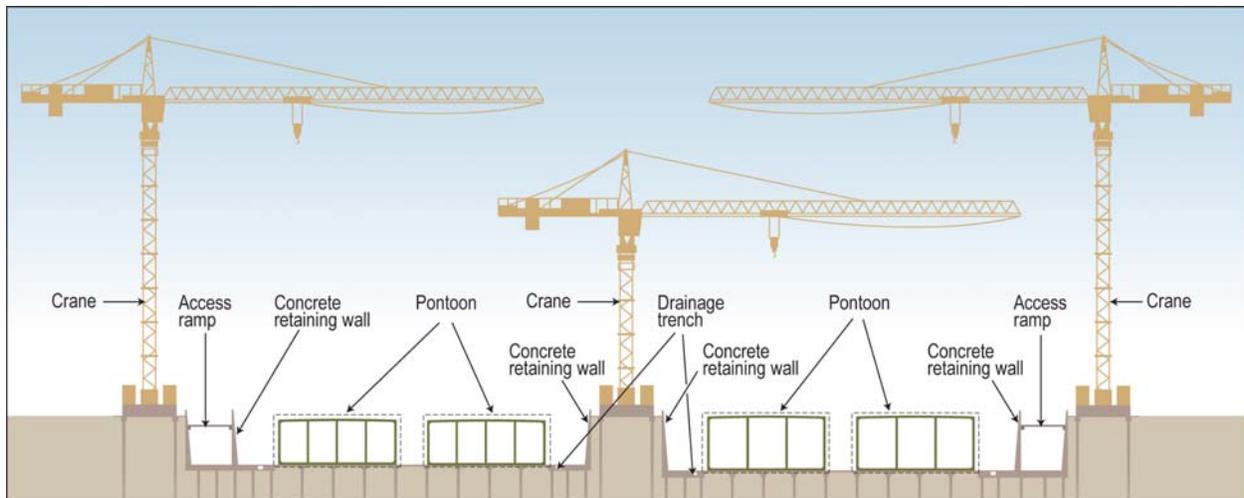
Based on historical data, a 20-year windstorm is an event that has a 5 percent chance, on average, of occurring in any year—not a wind event that occurs once every 20 years. The 20-year windstorm event is characterized by 77-mile-per-hour winds. Past records indicate that wind velocities of 77 miles per hour were exceeded at the bridge seven times in the 20-year period between 1982 and 2002. Winds exceeding 77 miles per hour threaten the bridge with catastrophic failure.

What is a casting basin?

A casting basin is a construction facility consisting of a concrete slab surrounded by high concrete walls built partially or entirely below ground level. The proposed casting basin would be situated next to a navigable waterway and provide a flat, dry space where up to eight pontoons could be constructed side by side at the same time. To give readers a general idea of what the proposed casting basin could look like, Exhibit 1-1 depicts a cross-section of a conceptual casting basin with pontoons, and Exhibit 1-2 shows a three-dimensional overview.

EXHIBIT 1-1

Casting Basin with Pontoons Conceptual Cross-Section Design



When pontoons are cast, cured, and ready, the casting basin would be gradually flooded until the pontoons float. Next, a gate separating the casting basin from the waterway would be opened and the pontoons towed from the basin into navigable waters (such as Puget Sound or Grays Harbor).

Because concrete bridge pontoons are specially designed for water tightness, their construction requires a higher level of quality control than typical concrete construction. WSDOT has extensive experience constructing pontoons in a casting basin; they have used this proven method for building other floating bridge pontoons. WSDOT engineers have a high level of confidence that building pontoons in a casting basin would proceed efficiently, with a low risk of delays and unforeseen costs. For more information on construction methods that were considered but dismissed in favor of the casting basin, see Chapter 2, Project Alternatives.

EXHIBIT 1-2
Casting Basin Three-Dimensional Overview



Where would WSDOT build the new pontoon construction facility?

WSDOT would build the pontoons at one of the two proposed new facilities in Grays Harbor and could also use the existing CTC facility in Tacoma (see Exhibit 1-3). At this time, WSDOT does not anticipate the need to alter the existing CTC facility to accommodate the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project. If WSDOT uses the existing CTC facility, then they would also lease about 17 additional acres of Port of Tacoma property near the casting basin to stage and store materials needed for the project.

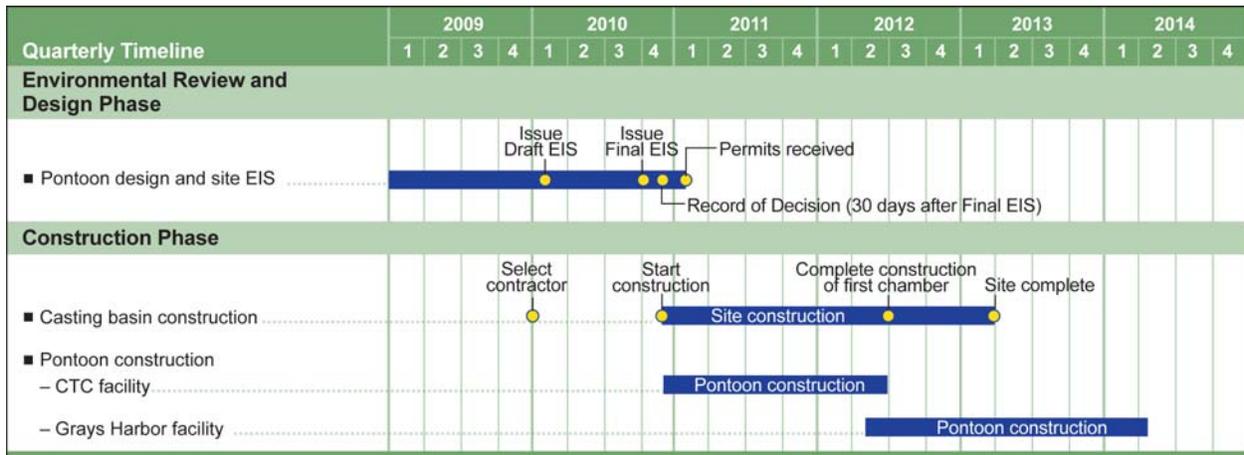
EXHIBIT 1-3
Proposed Pontoon Construction Facility Sites



When would WSDOT begin construction, and how long would the project last?

WSDOT anticipates that pontoon construction at the existing CTC facility in Tacoma (if used) could begin in late 2010. Pontoon construction at the new casting basin facility in Grays Harbor is anticipated to begin in early 2012. The current project schedule shows that WSDOT could finish building all 33 pontoons for this project in 2014. Exhibit 1-4 shows the proposed project construction schedule.

EXHIBIT 1-4
Proposed SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project Schedule



This schedule shows the earliest possible construction start dates.

What is the design-build process for the project?

The traditional process for building highway or highway-related projects is called the design-bid-build process. WSDOT has traditionally designed its projects and then advertised for construction bids to build the project as designed. With the design-build process that WSDOT is implementing for the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project, WSDOT is contracting with a design-builder to complete preliminary and final design and then build the project. WSDOT chose to award the design-build contract earlier than usual to expedite the project and encourage design innovation as early as possible in the project.

Before August 2007, design-build contracts could not be awarded until after the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process was completed and the Record of Decision issued. As mandated by Section 1053 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity

Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), FHWA revised their regulation (23 CFR 636) on design-build contracting. Under the revised regulation, contracting agencies have more flexibility; they can now issue the Request for Proposal and award a design-build contract before the NEPA process is completed.

With this process, the design-builder cannot proceed beyond preliminary design until WSDOT and FHWA have issued the NEPA Record of Decision. Further, the design-builder cannot be involved in nor bias the NEPA process. (See *Why did WSDOT prepare this Draft EIS?* section later in this chapter for a discussion of the NEPA process.)

In late June 2009, WSDOT published a Request for Qualifications for a single contract to both design and construct the project. In August 2009, three teams were selected to submit proposals for the project. WSDOT subsequently awarded a design-build contract in January 2010.

Although the design-builder's proposed casting basin facility modifies WSDOT's preliminary engineering design analyzed in this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS), the types of effects and the areas of potential effect would be the same; that is, WSDOT does not anticipate more or substantially different effects with the modifications. An overview of the design-builder's casting basin facility modification is presented under *What is the design-builder's proposed approach to the project alternatives?* in Chapter 2.

As of the issuance of this Draft EIS, the design-builder's design was conceptual; they will continue to refine the preliminary engineering and design throughout the environmental process. If at any time during the NEPA process the design-builder's approach to casting basin construction is found to result in environmental effects not disclosed in this Draft EIS, WSDOT will provide additional documentation as required by NEPA. WSDOT will remain fully responsible for this project's NEPA process, documentation, and Record of Decision; FHWA's design-build rule precludes the design-builder from preparing any NEPA documents. In addition, WSDOT activities carried out by the design-builder must not affect the objective consideration of alternatives in the NEPA review. In addition, the design-build contract contains termination provisions in the event that the No Build Alternative is selected.

What is SAFETEA-LU Section 6002?

Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users—commonly known as SAFETEA-LU—was codified in 2005 and prescribed changes to existing FHWA NEPA procedures. Section 6002 describes the roles of the project sponsor and the lead, participating, and cooperating agencies; sets new requirements for coordinating and scheduling agency and public reviews; and specifies a process for resolving interagency disagreements (23 USC 136 and 23 CFR 771).

What environmental regulations would apply to the proposed casting basin facility?

The proposed casting basin is subject to the Endangered Species Act, the National and State Environmental Policy Acts, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and many other regulations that are listed on the Fact Sheet at the front of this Draft EIS.

What would happen to the pontoon construction facility when the project is completed?

After building all pontoons planned for this project, the casting basin facility could be used for constructing the additional pontoons needed as part of the SR 520 Program's I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, which would require more pontoons than the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project. When the facility is no longer needed for this project, WSDOT would assess the benefit and cost of maintaining the facility against the cost and risk of decommissioning it. (Decommissioning the site would be a separate action that would require its own environmental process, permits, approvals, and consultation with agencies and interested tribes.) Issues that WSDOT would likely consider include the condition of other floating bridges in its fleet, potential interest in other uses for the facility, and city and/or Port of Grays Harbor plans that might include the project site.

If WSDOT were to sell the site with improvements, then any party proposing actions on the property would need to reinitiate all applicable environmental regulatory and permitting processes as appropriate, including consultation with appropriate agencies and interested tribes. If WSDOT were to retain ownership of the facility, however, then all applicable environmental regulatory and permitting processes, including consultation with appropriate agencies and interested tribes, would be reinitiated for actions not analyzed during the EIS process.

How would WSDOT use the pontoons if the Evergreen Point Bridge did not fail?

If the floating section of the Evergreen Point Bridge did not fail due to a catastrophic event, then all pontoons built during the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project would be used for the SR 520 Program's I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. The design of the pontoons constructed for this project would not predetermine or preclude alternatives for the I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project.

Why did WSDOT prepare this Draft EIS?

WSDOT prepared this Draft EIS to comply with both State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and NEPA requirements for major

What are the SEPA and NEPA requirements?

WSDOT developed this Draft EIS to comply with SEPA, which requires preparing an EIS (the detailed statement required by the RCW 43.21C.030[2][c]) for proposals to perform major actions having probable significant, adverse environmental effects. Also, NEPA requires states and federal agencies to prepare an EIS for "major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." NEPA defines an EIS as a detailed written statement on the project's environmental impact, adverse effects that cannot be avoided, alternatives to the proposed action, short-term use of the environment, maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources (42 USC 4331).

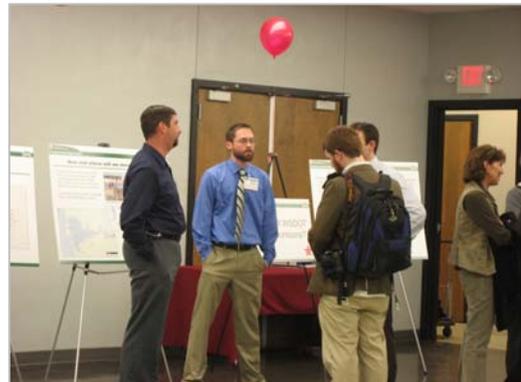
actions with probable environmental effects. The environmental analysis conducted as part of this Draft EIS—and the comments received in response to it—will help decision-makers consider the potential environmental effects of the project alternatives before deciding how to proceed. The Draft EIS process provides the public, agencies, and interested tribes with an opportunity to review potential project effects and solicits constructive comments that could help WSDOT engineers refine the project design. After the Final EIS, which will consider and incorporate public comments on the Draft EIS, is issued, the EIS process will conclude when FHWA issues a Record of Decision based on the EIS.

How has WSDOT involved the public in the environmental process?

Public involvement activities are a critical component of the NEPA/SEPA environmental process. They provide information on project progress and offer interested individuals and groups the opportunity to ask questions and offer input as the project develops. WSDOT developed and implemented a comprehensive, ongoing public involvement program in 2007 at the onset of the decision-making and environmental analysis process for this project. This program has a twofold approach to public involvement: (1) host meetings that the public can attend, and (2) engage the public through existing community groups and events to broaden involvement beyond those who come to public meetings. Specifically, this approach has included holding public meetings, attending local government meetings, briefing different community groups and local business organizations, and hosting informational booths at community events.

Another component of the public outreach program involved soliciting and collecting comments from the public through activities and tools that encourage public participation, such as Website updates, media outreach, and public meetings. WSDOT incorporated the comments and concerns expressed by the public into the overall project comment database for documentation and response.

WSDOT's public involvement program also identified specific goals and activities for outreach to minority and low-income populations. For example, project materials were translated into Spanish—the most prevalent second language in the Grays Harbor area—at key milestones. Most activities of the public outreach program usually were tied to the release of technical project information and were essential to making the project open, accessible, and transparent to the broader public and for



WSDOT staff presented project information and answered questions at a public open house in Hoquiam.

ensuring that lead agencies considered public comments before making final decisions.

To prepare for developing this Draft EIS, WSDOT initiated the NEPA scoping process in January 2008 with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS, which was published in the Federal Register, and with a public scoping meeting held in Hoquiam. Since that initial project scoping in early 2008, WSDOT redefined the project based on new information, published a revised Notice of Intent in the Federal Register, and reinitiated project scoping. In January 2009, WSDOT initiated a 30-day comment period soliciting comments on the project purpose and need statement and the range of alternatives. WSDOT held another 30-day comment period in March and April 2009 because using the Port of Grays Harbor's Industrial Development District (IDD) #1 site in Hoquiam was dropped from consideration from the proposed range of alternatives. (See further discussion of this site and the site selection process in the section *How did WSDOT screen and select potential sites for analysis?* in Chapter 2).

Public involvement is an ongoing effort that will continue through the life of the project. Appendix A, Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report, includes for more detailed information on the public involvement and agency coordination program.

How has WSDOT included agencies and tribes in the environmental process?

Agency Involvement

Although WSDOT and FHWA are the co-lead agencies for this project and EIS process, many federal, state, local and regulatory agencies and interested tribes provide input throughout the environmental process. In accordance with the SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 (see sidebar on page 1-7), agencies and tribes with a potential interest in the project were invited to serve as cooperating and/or participating agencies throughout the environmental review process.

In December 2007, WSDOT and FHWA held a project kickoff meeting for agencies and interested tribes. Since then, the cooperating and participating agencies have been actively involved as members of the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project Agency Coordination Team (PCPACT) and will continue to meet until construction permits are received. (Appendix A, Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Discipline Report, lists the participating agencies and tribes on the PCPACT.) WSDOT and FHWA created the PCPACT as a forum for agency and tribal coordination. In preparing this Draft EIS, this group

What is project scoping?

The project scoping process is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action. The process is used to develop the project's purpose and need statement and identify the range of alternatives, environmental elements, effects, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in the EIS. Scoping allows resource agencies and the public to identify potential environmental concerns or controversy early in the project development.

What is a cooperating agency?

A cooperating agency is any federal agency—other than the lead agency—that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental effect involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe might, by agreement with the lead agencies, also become a cooperating agency. Accepting designation as a cooperating agency does not indicate project support.

What is a participating agency?

A participating agency is any agency with an interest in the project. Accepting the designation as a participating agency does not indicate project support and does not provide an agency with increased oversight or approval authority beyond its statutory limits, if applicable.

met regularly to consider the project's purpose and need, the range of alternatives, and the analysis methodology. The agencies and tribes made recommendations for the project's purpose and need statement and the screening criteria for the range of alternatives. They also helped WSDOT formulate methodologies for the environmental analysis and received regular updates on the environmental process, proposed construction methods, and key findings.

WSDOT assembled technical working groups within the PCPACT to consider and address specific technical issues of agency or tribal concerns. These groups comprised appropriate project, agency, and tribal staff to address issues such as ecosystems, pontoon moorage, water resources, and the built environment. WSDOT scheduled additional briefings with individual agencies and interested tribes as requested to discuss specific topics, such as permit coordination. Cooperating and participating agencies were also provided the opportunity to review this Draft EIS and provide comments to WSDOT and FHWA before it was issued.

Tribal-Specific Outreach

WSDOT is committed to building and maintaining cooperative government-to-government relationships with the tribes in the Grays Harbor area. For the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project, WSDOT is complying with several federal, state, and tribal consultation requirements. While each law and policy has distinct requirements, WSDOT is conducting the tribal consultation process to address natural and cultural resources issues with the tribes who have an interest in the project. The following tribes were invited to be participating agencies for the environmental review process:

- The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
- Hoh Tribe
- Quileute Nation
- Quinault Indian Nation
- Shoalwater Bay Tribe
- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Skokomish Tribal Nation

The Quinault Indian Nation formally accepted participating agency status in January 2008. WSDOT also initiated consultation with the Puyallup Tribe regarding the possible use of the CTC casting basin facility in Tacoma. In December 2007, the Squaxin Island Tribe declined participating agency status and informed FHWA that they would require no further consultation on this project. In August 2009, the Quileute



Members of the Quinault Indian Nation visited the Anderson & Middleton site with WSDOT staff.



WSDOT staff discussed the proposed project with Quinault Indian Nation members at the Aberdeen Log Yard site.

Nation also declined further project consultation. Other tribes did not provide formal correspondence declining or accepting participation.

The proposed casting basin facility for the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is located within the Quinault Indian Nation's federally adjudicated "usual and accustomed" hunting, fishing, and gathering areas. Since the project was formally initiated in November 2007, WSDOT has held several tribal coordination meetings, with additional communications by mail, electronic mail (e-mail), and telephone.

WSDOT encouraged the tribes to participate in the PCPACT and technical working group meetings and provided them with all meeting materials; representatives from the Quinault Indian Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation have attended these meetings. WSDOT also invited tribes to observe cultural resources field work for the project. The tribes have expressed particular interest in potential cultural resources discovery, fisheries and habitat impacts, wetland loss, moorage effects, and mitigation opportunities. In September 2009, the Skokomish Tribal Historic Preservation Office reviewed a preliminary version of this Draft EIS. Based on that review, the Skokomish indicated they had no concerns at that time; however, they also requested a review of the cultural resource investigation report when that report is completed.

WSDOT intends to continue government-to-government consultation with affected tribes in support of this project. This consultation will address tribal interests, potential adverse effects to tribal resources and rights, and measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate such adverse effects. WSDOT will continue to keep tribes informed of project activities through regular updates and distribution of materials.

What are the project-related concerns and issues, and how is WSDOT addressing them?

General Public Concerns

Overall, the general public and the Grays Harbor community have strongly supported the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project; however, some concerns have been raised about the project:

- Negative effects on traffic and access resulting from increased truck trips
- Noise related to pile-driving, increased truck trips, and other proposed construction activities

- Project effects on sport and commercial fishing in Grays Harbor (effects on fishing is also a tribal concern; see below)
- Future use of the casting basin facility site after the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project is completed

WSDOT will continue to work closely with the public through final project design and during casting basin and pontoon construction to ensure that best management practices are in place to minimize traffic and noise-related effects and effects to local fishing. After all pontoons are built for this project and the SR 520 Program's I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, WSDOT would continue to communicate to interested parties and the general public about the fate of the proposed casting basin facility.

Participating Agency and Tribal Concerns

Following are some issues and concerns raised by agencies and tribes:

- Potential effects on protected wetlands at the site of the proposed casting basin facility
- Environmental effects of launch channel dredging at the Aberdeen Log Yard site
- Potential effects of pontoon towing and moorage on tribal fishing
- The presence of precontact Native American fish traps on the Anderson & Middleton site
- Historical resources on both Grays Harbor build alternative sites
- Potential effects of pontoon moorage on fish and aquatic resources in Grays Harbor

WSDOT worked closely with the participating agencies to ensure that all reasonable alternatives were identified and fully evaluated in this Draft EIS. Early in the alternatives analysis process, there was substantial controversy among participating agencies about including the Port of Grays Harbor IDD #1 site in the range of alternatives because developing a casting basin facility on this site would directly affect over 25 acres of federally protected wetlands. Given the availability of other reasonable sites that would be less environmentally damaging, WSDOT and FHWA decided to eliminate the IDD #1 site from further consideration.

WSDOT has conducted additional studies to more accurately determine potential pontoon moorage effects and will continue to work closely with the appropriate resource agencies and interested tribes on this issue. In response to concerns about launch channel dredging, WSDOT has conducted additional studies and analysis. Also, WSDOT is working closely with the Quinault Indian Nation to ensure effective communication about tribal fishing and ensure that best management

What is precontact?

Precontact refers to the period before European explorers and settlers established contact with the indigenous native American people who inhabited the region

practices are implemented to minimize project effects on tribal fishing. Further consultation with FHWA, the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), and the identified interested tribes would be required to determine whether the precontact archaeological site identified on the Anderson & Middleton site would warrant preservation in place; this consultation would be conducted if and when the Anderson & Middleton Alternative was ultimately selected. WSDOT would work closely with the DAHP to mitigate effects on the other archaeological sites by performing controlled archaeological excavations (data recovery).

What additional outreach and public involvement opportunities is WSDOT planning?

WSDOT will hold a public hearing and open house in Grays Harbor County during the 45-day public comment period that begins when this Draft EIS is released and distributed (May 28, 2010). At this event, WSDOT will explain the purpose of this Draft EIS and the EIS process and provide the public with an opportunity to formally comment on the Draft EIS. The public, agencies, and tribes will be invited to comment on the Draft EIS through various methods, including written comment form, court reporter, e-mail, and regular postal mail.

The PCPACT will continue to meet until all project environmental compliance activities have been completed, including issuing the Final EIS, complying with Endangered Species Act requirements, and obtaining appropriate construction permits. In addition, WSDOT will continue to consult with interested tribes throughout the life of the project and maintain ongoing communications and public outreach.