

CLIPA

Capitol Lake Improvement and Protection Association

"Save the Lake – Preserve the Past, Improve the Future."

PRESERVING AND IMPROVING CAPITOL LAKE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the central issues concerning the lake?

Since the 1980s Capitol Lake has been studied extensively. However, the lake has not been properly maintained, resulting in its current poor condition. In 2009, an advisory committee strayed from its legislative mandate to evaluate Capitol Lake maintenance options. Instead it advocated for converting the lake to a tidal mud flat and removing the Fifth Avenue dam. Officials and citizens began reviewing their proposal and the multitude of studies. They identified fatal flaws in the conversion idea. The proposal didn't address the sources of pollution and sediment management within the Deschutes River system. It also didn't address the associated economic, aesthetic, architectural, and social impacts. For example, without the dam, mudflats would be exposed about 80% of the time. Local citizens formed the grass-roots non-profit (CLIPA) to identify watershed-wide solutions for improving water quality and sediment management in a cost-effective way, recognizing the critical role Capitol Lake serves in the ecosystem, the community, and the Capitol Campus.

What's the status of the issue?

By law (RCW 43.34.090) the lake is a part of the State Capitol campus and subject to the policy direction of the State Capitol Committee. The 2011 legislature provided \$200,000 to initiate permitting for maintenance dredging. CLIPA recognizes real solutions require watershed-wide coordinated action with input from all stakeholders. CLIPA will continue to work to increase community awareness and encourage the legislature to continue to support and improve the lake.

How did the lake come to be?

Capitol Lake is an integral part of the nationally significant Wilder and White "City Beautiful" plan for the State Capitol campus. The 1911 plan called for construction of a dam at Fifth Avenue to provide a reflecting lake for the monumental buildings on the bluff. As one of the architectural elements of the campus, the lake was completed in 1951. It ended years of mud flats, provided flood protection and allowed for the development of downtown Olympia into a pre-eminent Capital City.

How did the lake get so filled in?

Without upstream management, 35,000 cubic yards of sediment per year comes down the Deschutes River. The last time the lake was dredged (partially) was 1986. While studying it, nothing has been done to maintain the lake, resulting in sediment build-up. Proper management is needed to restore it and ensure its contributions to the watershed. While it may seem difficult to maintain the lake, in reality it serves as a sediment trap, protecting lower Budd Inlet and the health of Puget Sound.

Which would cost less, preserving the lake or reverting to tidal mud flats?

Preserving the Lake would cost *far* less. The CLIPA 50-year plan is estimated to cost about \$43 – 47 million compared to over \$115 million to remove the dam, build a new bridge and retrofit Deschutes Parkway. Missing in the conversion estimates is the massive costs due to shifting dredging from Capitol Lake to the entire lower Budd Inlet. The fear is that the Inlet will be neglected, left to fill in and threaten the marine environment and the wide range of water related and pedestrian uses.

Would water quality improve by converting the lake to tidal mud flats?

Simply allowing the pollution to continue into Budd Bay be diluted and less noticeable solves nothing. However, a properly managed watershed will solve many problems such as bacterial contamination,

high temperatures, and low dissolved oxygen entering the lake. Effectively addressing upstream contaminants and the over 80 storm water outfalls will improve water quality and allow a return to a wide range of recreational uses of the Lake.

What are the environmental considerations? Does the lake offer benefits?

Capitol Lake has created a unique transition zone between the Deschutes River and Puget Sound. It supports a wide variety of aquatic life. Its high productivity supports birds and the local bat population. There was no significant native salmon run prior to the lake, and the lake supports the hatchery-created salmon run. Returning to tidal mud flats would greatly diminish if not eradicate most of these benefits. The lake also greatly enhances our urban environment, providing a beautiful setting for social gatherings, recreation, business, and tourism.

What about the snails?

The mud snails are a growing problem along the West Coast and are not unique to Capitol Lake. They enjoy a brackish environment so the tide flat alternative will not fix the problem. Experts are working hard to address the issue. Saving the lake would not make the problem worse.

What's the economic impact of returning to tidal mud flats?

There are no economic benefits of turning the lake into tidal mud flats. In fact, it would negatively affect the over \$80 million in investments already made by the State and the community in Heritage Park, Marathon Park, Percival Landing, West Bay Park and Rotary Point, as well as future plans. Water dependent activities would also be adversely affected. Olympia's downtown will be significantly impacted due to loss of waterfront businesses and degraded aesthetics.

Would maintenance dredging costs be higher or lower with mudflats?

On a long term basis, according to evidence from the Port of Olympia's experience, dredging costs would be higher in marine waters where it is more expensive to collect and dispose of materials compared with the managed lake option CLIPA proposes. According to state estimates, 6 feet of sediment will accumulate in lower Budd Inlet every 10 years!

How does the community feel about the lake?

Local candidates who have door belled in the community reported that an estimated 80% of residents favored retaining Capitol Lake, 15% didn't understand the issue but did not like the lake's current condition and wanted it improved, and about 5% supported the tide flat conversion.

Why should people outside of the City of Olympia's downtown core care about this issue?

The lake is an asset enjoyed by residents throughout the county, region and state. It contributes to Washington having one of the most beautiful Capitol Campuses and Capital Cities in the nation. County-wide, dam removal and sediment buildup in Budd Inlet would likely negatively affect wastewater treatment by LOTT, potentially causing higher costs and rate increases. Additionally, Capitol Lake is a resource for all state residents and visitors to its Capital City.

What can I do?

You can check out our website at www.SaveCapitolLake.org where you can access CLIPA's White Paper and third party science and economic reviews. It includes such topics as: The Nature of Capitol Lake (Soule and Ladd); The Impact on Fisheries and the Environment (Daley); Review of Estuary Infrastructure Costs (Gloyd); Dredging and Sediment Cost Review (Holman and Melnick); and A Review of Economic Impacts Associated with Capitol Lake (Curry). You can also visit us on Facebook, by just using the link on our website. Join CLIPA, it's free. Add your voice to those who want to save the lake. Get involved in activities related to the lake. Ask legislators and other elected officials to support legislation (House Bill 1938) to improve the lake and the Deschutes watershed. Ask questions of candidates as to where they stand on the issue. Encourage your friends to get involved.