CHEHALIS RIVER FLOOD OF DECEMBER 2007
Did development, logging set the stage for disaster?

Includes excerpts from an article by Seattle Times staff reporter Lynda V. Mapes
Sunday, December 09, 2007

Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle
A Centralia neighborhood near Mellen Street sits flooded Tuesday as a result of severe storms that caused record flood levels on the Chehalis River.

The Chehalis River floods large areas of Chehalis, and also submerges several sections of Interstate 5. The river was almost 10 feet over flood stage. (Steve Bloom/The Olympian)

Private airplanes find safe haven Tuesday from the rising Chehalis River at the Lewis County Airport. (Steve Bloom/The Olympian)

Airplanes were moved to high ground at Chehalis Airport. Officials said it's the worst flooding in years in and around Chehalis and Centralia including Interstate 5. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

A Centralia neighborhood is submerged. Flood damage to a segment of the interstate in the Chehalis area will keep the highway closed until Friday at the earliest, a transportation department official said. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES
Flood waters from the Chehalis River inundate a neighborhood in Centralia. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The barrier on Interstate 5 between the northbound and southbound lanes is swept away in places as the highway passes through Chehalis. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The freeway overpass in Chehalis was underwater, including Wal-Mart on the right. I-5, which runs below, was completely submerged. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Looking south, semi trucks sit stranded on high ground above the flooded Interstate 5 at Exit 77 in Chehalis. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

A Centralia neighborhood is submerged. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Wal-Mart store in Chehalis. SkyKING photos
Bridge over Chehalis.
SkyKING photos.

You can't actually see Interstate 5 in this photo. It's under the flood water. Notice the exit sign on the bottom of the photo, just a little left of center, and the freeway overpass in the middle of the photo. Dec. 4, 2007. WA DOT

Two men examine the flow of the Chehalis River that ripped down the Chandler Road Bridge, on the way from Highway 6 to the town of Doty. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Mud up to 3 feet thick sits in fields, around homes and on roads in and around Curtis — and it's starting to dry up. Occupants of this Ceres Hill Road home are burning their furniture and belongings destroyed by the flood. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Flooded Chehalis A new automobile dealership, at bottom of photo, is being built just off Interstate 5 on an island of fill in the Chehalis River floodplain. Some nearby stores, including a Home Depot and WalMart, were hard hit by last week's high waters. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES
Clear-cuts and mudslides. Tons of earth and vegetation washed away from clear-cut hillsides last week and slammed into Stillman Creek, a tributary of the south fork of the Chehalis River. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Acres of timber and debris backed up behind this bridge in the Boistfort Valley, which was inundated by the flooding of the south fork of the Chehalis River. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Despite being built on a plateau of fill, this Walgreens pharmacy near the Chehalis River sustained water damage during last week’s flooding. STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Ranch House BBQ co-owner Melanie Tapia gets a hug from Ginny Wallace, a friend and DOT worker who stopped by to check on them Monday, Dec. 3, 2007 after a wall of mud from nearby Kennedy Creek destroyed the popular Highway 8 restaurant near Olympia, Wash.