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Subject: FW: FEMA Skagit County Receives Preliminary Flood Maps
Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2009 7:26:14 AM
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

Question: Why, in the release of these flood maps, which is a FEMA responsibility, did the Seattle District commander feel compelled to comment about how good of a job the Corps did? I have made the point in the past that FEMA was much more reluctant to revise the flawed hydrology of this study, because it was performed by another federal agency, albeit another federal agency supposedly operating in the role of technical consultant.

Put it another way: if FEMA had contracted with, say, Tetra Tech Consultants to perform the flood insurance study, would we see a quote from Tony Melone, Vice President and Principal Engineer, stating, "Yeah, we did a real intensive study and everything, and our data was reviewed and like, real scientific and stuff, and it was high quality and we have confidence in it and it was real good."

Answer is: no. Only quote would be from FEMA. That's because the way this is supposed to work is that FEMA reviews the technical work and convinces itself that the work is solid. It is much different set of ingoing conditions for the FEMA's technical experts to review work performed by a private sector consultant, and critique that work, than it is for FEMA to critique work performed by the Corps – supposedly the nation's experts in hydraulic engineering.

So this looks to me like FEMA Region X and the Seattle District are locked arm in arm with these maps. Not just FEMA. And although I think that Ted Perkins is as honest as the day is long, the fact remains that he was the Corps hydraulic engineer who performed the work for FEMA, while still at the Seattle District, and he now works for FEMA Region X. So he did the work while at the Seattle District. We objected to elements of his technical analysis, which he refused to change. His refusal to change was supported by the District Commander as a matter of policy, which continues today. And now Ted is the hydraulic engineer for FEMA Region X. Under these conditions, it sure seems like we have more than an average challenge ahead of us to attempt to correct the technical basis for these flood maps. Chal

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Skagit County Receives Preliminary Flood Maps

Release Date: December 15, 2009

Release Number: R10-10-004

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SEATTLE, Wash. -- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is releasing preliminary flood risk maps to communities in Skagit County, Wash. The preliminary draft maps will help local officials and residents identify known flood risks, and when finalized, will be used for flood insurance, land use planning and development decisions. According to FEMA Acting Regional Administrator

Dennis Hunsinger, the preliminary maps revise and update information on the existence and severity of flood hazards in Anacortes, Burlington, Concrete, Hamilton, La Conner, Lyman, Mount Vernon and Sedro-Woolley, as well as unincorporated areas of Skagit County.

"The study that produced these maps is one of the most comprehensive ever conducted in the Pacific Northwest," said Hunsinger. "We used the best topographic data, revised hydrologic analyses by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the most sophisticated hydraulic model available."

Colonel Anthony Wright, Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Seattle District concurs. "We've worked very closely with our federal partners and local communities to provide the best flood data available," said Wright. "The Corps' hydraulic engineers spent two years on intensive modeling of the basin, and our data was reviewed by federal experts to ensure the highest level of quality and confidence in the FEMA maps."

Flood zone changes are proposed for the areas along the Skagit River, North Fork Skagit River and South Fork Skagit River. The revised maps are based on detailed ground elevation models, decades of rainfall and storm gauge information, and current topographic data.

After officials have had 30 days to study the preliminary maps, FEMA will assist with a comprehensive public awareness campaign and a series of open houses to explain the ramifications of the new maps. At the conclusion of the public outreach process, a series of legal notices will begin a 90-day appeal period through which residents and property owners who believe the proposed flood maps contain errors can submit additional scientific or technical information through their community officials to FEMA. Once all appeals are resolved, FEMA will make any necessary updates and notify communities, insurance companies and residents of the effective date of the final maps.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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