

July 3, 2014

RE: Comment on Skagit River Flood Risk General Investigation Study

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

My great-grandfather took a paddle-wheeler from Mount Vernon to his new property at the mouth of Nookachamps Creek around the turn of the last century. My family has lived in the Clear Lake area since that time and my grandchildren represent generation number six. I am writing today to make comment of the Flood Risk Management GIS released on June 6th and specifically the impact on my property.

I bought the "family farm" in 1978. Since that time I have been involved in a number of major flood events including 1990 and '95. I have raised my house twice in an effort to be proactive without any compensation. I've had Coast Guard helicopters hover over my house and I have motored out my driveway in a boat with my wife and kids. I have planned carefully and have never filed an insurance claim or a claim with FEMA. I chose not to be part of an earlier class-action suit re: transference of risk which was won by the residents of my area.

The results of the Skagit River GI Study (which took too long and cost too much) came as no surprise. There's an old saying, "Money talks and bullshit walks" and it is obvious to anyone that there are hundreds of millions of dollars in retail, real estate and residential on one side of the river and a economically disadvantaged area with some farmland on the other. I understand that Army Corps is interested in economic impact and helping the most people. I also know that no plan is perfect. However, it is obvious that the big win is for Burlington and Dike District #12, while others of us, (SW, Clear Lake, Sterling, Nookachamps, upriver communities) pay the price.

Let me be specific about my concerns:

- There is a clear "transference of risk". Skagit County has promised to try and minimize these risks but that is hardly reassuring. When I'm told we need to "mitigate" I'm uncertain what that means? Will I be compensated for this risk? Who will pay to raise my house (again)? I have to laugh when I read that we all need to, "Share the risk" when it is obvious everyone is not sharing.
- For me there have been questions about transparency and honesty between stake-holders. There have been instances where I suspected collusion in the process. I remain in awe that Dike Dist. #12 seems to be able to do as they wish. They, along with the City of Burlington, and to some extent Skagit County have not acted in good faith nor been truthful about their intent. I feel, "sold down the river". Ultimately, my home and property are expendable while others prosper from the plan.
- I question the data being used. I'm uncertain that the Corps modeling provides realistic projections. When a former county official says in a meeting that results of the proposed study "Won't put one more inch of water on you" we all know that is a lie.
- My property is already deemed to be in a "critical use area" with regard to wetlands. This plan further reduces the value of my property and makes any improvements more restrictive.

- There are still a multitude of unanswered questions. One example is the sandbagging that might occur along the Sterling/Hwy 20 levee in a flood event. It seems very difficult to get a straight answer (see item #2) and "We'll figure it out as we go" isn't satisfactory. One estimate showed up to 1.5 feet more of water in a hundred year event. In my case this isn't a, "slight overflow increase" but the difference between having water in my home and not.

In summary I would say that I am pleased to see some forward movement on flood management. This is long overdue and every year we delay represents the potential for catastrophe. However, before the GIS is approved I hope that the decision-makers will consider the impact on everyone and provide appropriate protection and/or compensation to those who will lose.

I would be very happy to discuss this further. My contact information is provided below.



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