

Dike and Drainage Technical Committee offers the following comments on the potential local project, "Emergency Overflow Spillway":

The use of a spillway(s) as a flood control measure has numerous challenges. They include:

1. Dike and drainage districts are generally in the business of keeping or moving water out of their respective districts. Designing a measure that directs water onto private property through a "spillway" flies in the face of this general mandate and is contrary to the required nexus between district taxes benefiting the lands being assessed. This raises concern about "liabilities".
2. What to do with the water once it leaves the river. It is unlikely there would be many property owners volunteering to take flood waters for the good of the whole. A flood flowage easement or outright purchase of the flowage pathway would be necessary. This will likely be expensive and contentious.
3. Water leaving the river will have a major impact on drainage districts, especially districts #15, #12, #19 and #22 (depending on the selected flowage pathway(s)). Once the water leaves the river it becomes an interior drainage problem requiring improvements to both drainage infrastructure capacities and ability to outlet to the saltwater bays. This would need to be put in place before the spillway is built.
4. Non-mechanical overtopping of levees is preferred. Flooding is then seen as an "act of God" rather than a man directed event (again from a liability standpoint).

The DDTC believes that a spillway would be an appropriate outlet to get water (once it has left the river) out to the saltwater. This would have application for the Samish River as well as any overflow areas of the Skagit (e.g., "sea gates" on Fir Island).