



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

DON MUNKS, First District
KENNETH A. DAHLSTEDT, Second District
SHARON D. DILLON, Third District

January 22, 2007

Bud Norris, Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
P.O. Box 809
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: County Involvement in Skagit River Impact Partnership

Dear Mayor Norris:

The Board of County Commissioners (the Board) considers it timely to convey its position related to the activities and proposed initiatives currently being undertaken by the Skagit River Impact Partnership (SRIP).

The Board is deeply concerned about the County's ability to remain a partner within the SRIP since the actions recently taken and proposed by SRIP appear inconsistent with the policy directives of the current Board. Skagit County, under the Washington State Flood Control Act and RCW.86.12, has the responsibility and authority to develop a comprehensive flood control management plan for the Skagit Basin in cooperation and consultation with our City partners. The Comprehensive Flood Control Management Plan (CFHMP) was last adopted in 1985 and the County has been working collaboratively with the Department of Ecology to complete the Army Corps General Investigation Study with the goal of using the information derived from this effort to update our CFHMP.

Last month at the SRIP Steering Committee meeting the Board's concerns became reality when Pacific International Engineering, under contract with the City of Mount Vernon, presented an estimated \$100 million (plus) flood control project for the Nookachamps Basin and suggested that the County support and take the lead in moving this project into the Environmental Impact Statement process. It is the Board's opinion that moving in this direction would undermine the commitment and approach currently being undertaken by the Board of County Commissioners.

As stated repeatedly at earlier SRIP meetings, it is the current policy of the Board of County Commissioners to continue working collaboratively with the Army Corps of Engineers, and other interest groups, to first complete the evaluation of the submitted draft flood control measures in an effort to determine which combination of projects would provide the optimum protection levels for the Lower Skagit River. To define an overall flood management strategy acceptable to the varying interests related to the Skagit River is, and will continue to be, a significant and challenging effort. It is the Board's position that in order to achieve success the following action plan needs to be implemented:

- County/Cities/Diking Districts/Agencies/Tribes collectively need to support this overall planning effort.
- The stakeholder group needs to be expanded in respect of other Skagit River interest groups. Simply developing a flood control project without meeting the interests of other key stakeholder groups will result in no projects being built.
- The Corps planning process needs to be allowed to work and our interest groups cannot prescribe a preferred solution prematurely.

- Begin to generate local funding for future construction. Establish a rate structure for the existing Flood Control Zone District and seek to begin collection of revenues in 2008.
- If Federal funding is unavailable and the Corps is unable to complete the needed evaluation and screening of projects in a timely manner, consider performing the work locally using a mutually acceptable consultant while still remaining in the Corps' General Investigation Study process.
- This effort should not preclude current efforts being undertaken locally to improve flood protection while this process continues.


Please note on your calendars that the County plans to meet with Colonel Michael McCormick of the Army Corps of Engineers, along with representatives of our Congressional delegation, on February 27th, 10:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room to discuss the future of continuing the General Investigation Study. The Board views the cities and diking districts as critical partners in this project and invite and encourage you to attend this important meeting.


The Board appreciates and supports the level of energy the SRIP has created surrounding the importance of implementing flood control projects for the Skagit River Basin. It is, however, essential this energy is directed toward a successful outcome. The County strongly feels that to be successful, the SRIP needs to be restructured in a way that allows for other interested parties to become actual partners in the development of a regional Flood Damage Reduction Project for the Skagit River or the County will need to remove itself as a partner to SRIP and form a separate stakeholder group as it continues to move forward with the Army Corps of Engineers. The County looks forward to future opportunities to share its thoughts on this matter and to continue dialogue towards a positive solution to the flood risk our communities face.

To assist in future discussions, attached is County Resolution #20060138 that illustrates the Board of County Commissioners' current policy directives regarding numerous flood control and floodplain management issues. Should you have any questions about these policies please contact our offices at (360) 336-9400.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON


SHARON D. DILLON, Chair


DON MUNKS, Commissioner


KENNETH A. DAHLSTEDT, Commissioner

DB/djm

Encl.

cc: Congressman Rick Larsen
Colonel Michael McCormick
Skagit River Impact Partnership Members