



February 8, 2007

Mr. Carl Cook  
FEMA Region X  
Federal Regional Center  
130 228th Street, SW  
Bothell, WA 98021-8627

RE: Report on Hamilton "Smith" House Preliminary Investigation

Dear Mr. Cook,

Here is the City of Burlington's report on the Hamilton "Smith" house preliminary investigation. The City undertook this investigation to ascertain whether this house, built in 1908, contained evidence of flooding from the Skagit River floods of 1909, 1917, or 1921. We believe these floods, with an estimated discharge of 260,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), 220,000 cfs, and 240,000 cfs respectively in the Hamilton vicinity would have caused significant and most likely, catastrophic damage to this house which would still be readily apparent today. No evidence of significant flood damage was found.

The Smith house was flooded in the 1995 flood event to a level just above the floor boards. The Skagit River discharge in 1995 in the Hamilton vicinity was 160,000 cfs, and we believe this was the first and only time since this house was constructed that it had water in it above the floor. Knowing the discharge and surface water elevation of the 1995 flood event, we estimate that the surface water elevation for the 1909, 1917, and 1921 flood events should have been 3.9 feet, 2.5 feet, and 3.2 feet higher, respectively. But one eyewitness to the 1921 flood event in Hamilton, Mr. Fred Slipper, specifically remembers that the Smith house was not flooded at that time.

While there is additional research which can be conducted on the Smith house, we believe the information we have uncovered in this preliminary investigation casts doubt about the magnitude of the historic flood discharge estimates for the 1909, 1917, and 1921 floods. Therefore, we are submitting this report to you for your consideration as you proceed with your work to produce new flood plain maps for the Skagit River.

Sincerely,

  
Jon T. Aarstad  
City Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Colonel Michael McCormick, Commander, Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Board of Skagit County Commissioners