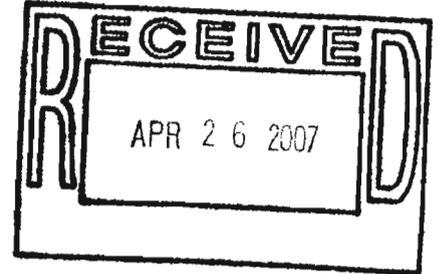




FEMA

April 18, 2007



The Honorable Bud Norris
Mayor of Mount Vernon
Post Office Box 809
Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

Dear Mayor Norris:

Thank you for your letter dated November 17, 2006, to the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), concerning an ongoing Flood Insurance Study (FIS) in the Skagit River Valley. I apologize for the delay in responding.

As you may know, FEMA manages the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the cornerstone of the Nation's strategy for preparing communities for flood disasters. The Flood Hazard Mapping Program is a key component of the NFIP. FEMA and its mapping partners provide flood hazard data and maps that are used to establish premium rates for flood insurance policies and guide floodplain management activities. As such, FEMA has the legal and regulatory responsibility to study current watershed conditions, assess and assign risk, and map the base (1-percent-annual-chance) flood. These studies are factored into local land use decisions and flood reduction project proposals. First responders also use them in the prioritization of critical response operations and for locating key staging areas and critical facility placement.

Since numerous stakeholders rely on FEMA studies and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), it is imperative that FEMA's work be done expeditiously and in accordance with NFIP regulations and the FEMA *Guidelines and Specifications for Flood Hazard Mapping Partners* (Guidelines). As you are aware, FEMA initiated a study of portions of the Skagit River through its Flood Map Modernization Program. The hydrologic and hydraulic analyses of the Skagit River study are still in draft form. When the analyses are completed in accordance with FEMA Guidelines, and any impact to Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) is determined, preliminary FIRMs will be made available to impacted communities for review. Notification of any revised BFEs will be provided in accordance with NFIP regulations, and a 90-day appeal period will be initiated for the revised BFEs. FEMA's Regional Offices will exercise their judgment in coordinating with all communities and sharing study progress in a timely manner. I expect progress to be made towards getting these maps out to the public so they may be used accordingly.

The Skagit River Impact Partnership (SRIP) appears to include many (but not all) of the other Skagit County communities and special purpose districts affected by FEMA's Skagit River study. I

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hope that the SRIP can be helpful in discussing and solving complicated local jurisdictional issues. Like any interested party, the SRIP may generate technical information to share with affected NFIP-participating communities in a timely manner. Communities are recommended to submit such information related to the study directly to FEMA.

I have spoken with Carl Cook, FEMA Region X Mitigation Division Director and Consultation Coordination Officer, regarding the assertion that local data was ignored or not factored into the ongoing analysis. I have recommended that the Region cooperate in seeking an amicable solution to the apparent conflict over the data in question. I want to assure you that FEMA will evaluate any legitimate technical appeals to this study.

I hope this information is helpful to you. If you need additional information or assistance, please contact the FEMA Office of Chief Counsel by telephone at (202) 646-3340. You may also contact the FEMA Region X Office at Federal Regional Center, 130 228th Street Southwest, Bothell, Washington 98021-8627, or by telephone at (425) 487-4682.

Sincerely,



David I. Maurstad
Assistant Administrator
Mitigation

cc: Susan Reinertson, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region X
Carl Cook, Director, Mitigation Division, FEMA Region X
Ryan Ike, Natural Hazards Program Specialist, FEMA Region X