



Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

June 23, 2009

Mr. Albert Liou, P.E.
Pacific International Engineering
P.O. Box 1599
Edmonds, WA 90820

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Case No.: 09-10-0459R
Communities: City of Mount Vernon and
Skagit County, WA
Community Nos.: 530158 and 530151

Dear Mr. Liou:

This letter is in regard to your request dated February 25, 2009, that the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issue a conditional revision to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for the above-referenced communities. Pertinent information about the request is listed below.

Identifier:	Mount Vernon Downtown Flood Protection Project
Flooding Source:	Skagit River
FIRM Panel(s) Affected:	530158 0001 B and 0002 B; and 530151 0425 C

The Seattle District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is conducting a flood damage reduction feasibility study for the Skagit River in cooperation with Skagit County, Washington. The purpose of the study is to formulate and recommend a comprehensive flood hazard management plan for the Skagit River floodplain that will reduce flood damages in Skagit County. The results of this study will also be used in the development of a countywide Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and FIRM for Skagit County, Washington and Incorporated Areas.

In order to properly calculate the effects of the Mount Vernon Downtown Flood Protection project on flood hazards, the ongoing hydrologic and hydraulic analyses for the Skagit River study must be completed. It would not be reasonable to determine the potential impacts of your proposed project by comparing your data to data that have not yet been finalized. Since these ongoing hydrologic and hydraulic analyses are not part of the effective FIS, there is the potential that they could be modified. This could result in increases to the effective Base (1-percent-annual-chance) Flood Elevation (BFE), which could jeopardize the height of the levee freeboard, and not meet all the requirements under Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 65.10 (44 CFR 65.10).

It has come to our attention that the City of Burlington is pursuing a flood protection project just upstream of your project site. If the effects of that project are not considered, we are concerned that your project may not meet all requirements of 44 CFR 65.12, including subparagraph (c)10 of 44 CFR 60.3. This subparagraph states that no new construction or other development shall be permitted within Zones A1-30 and AE on the community's FIRM, unless it is demonstrated that the cumulative effects of the proposed development, when combined with all other existing and anticipated development, will not increase the base flood water-surface elevation (WSEL) more than 1 foot at any point within the community. The effects of the City of Burlington project on the Skagit River WSELs should be evaluated to ensure that the

Mount Vernon project can be constructed in compliance with all aspects of 44 CFR 65.12. The failure to adequately address the effects of all anticipated development on the Skagit River could result in the construction of a levee that does not meet all the requirements under 44 CFR 65.10.

In order to ensure the safety of the lives and property of Skagit County citizens, it is critical to consider the final flood hazard information from the USACE study when designing proposed flood protection projects along the Skagit River. Because the revised FIRM has not yet been issued to the communities involved, the City of Mount Vernon should wait for the finalization of the revised FIRM and coordinate with upstream and downstream communities regarding all potential levee projects along the Skagit River. We encourage the City of Mount Vernon to work with other communities to submit one comprehensive Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) that includes all existing and proposed flood protection projects for the Skagit River. In order to meet all the requirements of 44 CFR, communities along the Skagit River should not finalize their levee plans until they have collaborated on levee project designs and effects and incorporated the results of the USACE flood damage reduction feasibility study. The processing of this CLOMR is hereby suspended until these steps can be taken.

If you have any technical questions regarding this CLOMR request, please contact me by telephone at (202) 212-2252, or call the FEMA Map Assistance Center toll free at 1-877-336-2627 (1-877-FEMA MAP).

Sincerely,

Siamak Esfandiary, Ph.D., P.E., CFM,
Program Specialist
Engineering Management Branch
Mitigation Directorate

For: William R. Blanton Jr., CFM, Chief
Engineering Management Branch
Mitigation Directorate

cc: The Honorable Bud Norris
Mayor, City of Mount Vernon

Mr. Esco Bell
Director
Public Works
City of Mount Vernon

Mr. Gary R. Christensen, AICP
Director
Planning and Development Services
City of Mount Vernon

Mr. Jeffery M. Miller, P.E.
Director/ County Engineer
Public Works
Skagit County

Mr. Harry Hosey, P.E.
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