

# Flood Control Zone District – Public Comment

April 20, 2009

WHEREAS, on the 5th day of August 1970 in regular meeting the Board of Skagit County Commissioners the Board upon their own motion unanimously passed Resolution 5325 initiating the creation of a proposed county-wide Skagit County Flood Control Zone District in accordance with RCW 86.15.010.

## RCW 86.15 Flood Control Zone Districts

### RCW 86.15.080 - General Powers

A zone or participating zone may, among many things:

Exercise all the powers vested in a county for flood water or storm water control purposes under the provisions of chapters 86.12...

RCW Chapters 86.12 specify that county commissioners may annually levy a tax, beginning with the year 1907, in such amount as, in their judgment they may deem necessary or advisable, but not to exceed twenty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value upon all taxable property in such county, for the purpose of creating a fund to be known as "river improvement fund." There is hereby created in each such river improvement fund an account to be known as the "flood control maintenance account."

So, in theory, Skagit County Commissioners have had the authority to collect property taxes for the past 39 years for flood control projects and to serve as local match for, but have chosen not to do so.

Table 1 identifies the missed opportunities for Skagit County to generate local revenue during 2008 and 2009 for flood control projects. Table 2 offers examples of what this tax would cost property owners.

Table 1: Missed Opportunities

	<b>Levy \$0.10 per \$1,000 Assessed Value</b>	<b>Levy \$0.25 per \$1,000 Assessed Value</b>
2009 Total Assessed Value for Taxable Property	\$ 16,868,200,169	\$ 16,868,200,169
Revenue - 2009 Missed Opportunity	\$ 1,686,820	\$ 4,217,050
2008 Total Assessed Value for Taxable Property	\$ 16,166,682,507	\$ 16,166,682,507
Revenue - 2008 Missed Opportunity	\$ 1,616,668	\$ 4,041,671
<b>Total Missed Opportunities for Last 2-years</b>	<b>\$ 3,303,488</b>	<b>\$ 8,258,721</b>

Table 2: FCZD Tax Impact

	Assessed Residential Property Value	Annual Tax Levied at \$0.25 per \$1,000 Assessed Value
Median Residential Assessed Value in Skagit County	\$ 240,000	\$ 60.00
My Property's Assessed Value	\$ 211,100	\$ 52.78
Average Hamilton Residential Floodway Assessed Value	\$ 81,212	\$ 20.30

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The King County Flood Control District was established by Ordinance in April 2007 to provide funding and policy oversight for flood protection projects and programs in King County. The King County Board of Commissioners immediately levied countywide a property tax for \$0.10 per \$1,000 assessed value. Their District has collected \$37 million in 2008 and is collecting \$39 million for 2009 for implementation of projects identified with the King County Flood Hazard Management Plan, adopted in 2006. This plan is akin to the Skagit County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, adopted three years earlier, in 2003.

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According to FEMA Mitigation Director, Mark Carey, well over \$10 million in public funding and NFIP flood insurance claims has been spent in Hamilton alone (pop. 309).

It is my understanding that, of the 37 flood damage reduction measures identified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Hamilton Relocation project is the only project right now the Flood Control Zone District has identified as “green” for early action implementation. The remaining 36 measures are labeled either “yellow” for needs additional analysis, development, design and alternative packaging or “red” for should be abandoned.

In the April 4<sup>th</sup>, front page article of the Skagit Valley Herald, Commissioner Dillon is quoted as saying “We could give them (the Hamilton Public Development Authority) \$159,000 (loan toward the purchase of the property identified for relocation of Hamilton floodway residential and commercial development) or lay off two employees, we’re not going to lay off two employees. It’s not going to happen.”

In response to this situation, here are questions:

- In 39 years, Skagit County has not raised one dime toward flood protection projects. WHEN will the Flood Control Zone District and the County Commissioners choose to finally assume some local responsibility for flood protection by levying the maximum allowable property tax authorized? Will we need to wait another 39 years and dozens of additional floods?
- This revenue is critical for implementing projects NOW, and as local match when we ask our state and federal governments to invest their funds. If we remain unwilling to assume the lead in revenue generation to help solve our flood problems, how can we expect WA state or the federal government to help us to solve our flood problems?