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April 23, 2007

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PW - Engineering

The Honorable Roger "Gus" Tjeerdsma
Mayor City of Burlington
900 East Fairhaven Avenue
Burlington, WA 98233

RE: Request to Add Specific Language to Skagit River
Feasibility Study Project Management Plan

Dear Mayor Tjeerdsma:

Thank you for your March 23, 2007 letter and resolution dated March 22, 2007 from your City Council requesting that we add specific language regarding the use of the Army Corps Hydrology and Hydraulics (H&H) within the Skagit River Feasibility Study (SRFS) Project Management Plan (PMP). We sincerely appreciate your concerns and have considered your request.

We understand that the City's primary concerns are related to the conservative approach to the Corps Hydrology and that this results in inflated base flood elevations. When these increased elevations are used in the FEMA Mapping Modernization process, there is concern it may preclude an affordable Federal flood control project. As you know, Skagit County recently hired Northwest Hydraulics Consultants (NHC) to explore aspects of this technical issue, and they concluded that while the Corps model may overestimate the 100 year flood event, it would take additional H & H studies and consultation with USGS, the Corps, and FEMA to more reliably determine a 100-year flood estimate. NHC recommended utilizing an emerging alternative methodology, Expected Moment Algorithm (EMA), for this purpose.

The County agrees with NHC that EMA holds potential for producing more defensible flood quantile estimates and intends to explore its use for future application as opportunities are available. The County has asked FEMA to consider utilizing EMA for their mapping purposes, and we understand all such requests will be considered in the appeal process.

As discussed at the recent Skagit River Feasibility Study Executive Committee meeting, Skagit County, the Army Corps, and the State of Washington have all spent considerable resources toward a regional flood control planning effort on the Skagit. This planning effort has been hampered over the last several years by conflict and limited federal funding. It was agreed at that meeting that the local community will be best served by continuing this collaborative

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Letter: Mayor Roger "Gus" Tjeerdsma

planning effort with the Army Corps and other project stakeholders. Accordingly, the County intends to build and maintain this collaboration with the Corps and diverse local stakeholders in this process as we proceed and ask for the City of Burlington's support in doing so. The City's request to insert specific language into the PMP does not fulfill this County objective; therefore, we cannot insert the language.

The County considers the effectiveness and organization of our existing Dike Districts as a valuable County asset and desires to partner with them to secure additional funding to improve our level of flood protection. Preliminary results for the Corps' work identified early action steps that should be considered, many within existing Dike Districts, to improve our ability to manage future large flood events.

We continue to value the agreement reached at the City / Dike District / County meeting held on February 27th at the Skagit Valley College following the Executive Committee meeting. It was agreed by all attending that the County should pursue the SRFS with the Corps and that this should not preclude the Cities and Dike Districts from pursuing their needed flood protection projects and actions during this process.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON


SHARON D. DILLON, Chair


DON MUNKS, Commissioner


KENNETH A. DAHLSTEDT, Commissioner

BCC/jjj
Cc: Colonel McCormick, USACE