



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RON WESEN, First District
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February 10, 2010

Colonel Anthony Wright
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Seattle District
PO Box 3755
Seattle, WA 98124-3755

Dear Colonel Wright,

As your partner in the Skagit River General Investigation Study, we urge you to support a technical conference to address the controversy around the Corps' hydrology. We appreciate our partnership and in no way want to jeopardize our good working relationship with your agency as we work toward completion of this lengthy, expensive, and time consuming process, but we believe several issues can be laid to rest if we can work together to resolve them.

We understand the importance of the General Investigation process to complete a feasibility study to determine whether there is economic justification to establish a federal interest to partner on a flood risk reduction project in the Skagit River basin and secondly, to construct the project. We have shared these costs willingly and our staff and consultants accepted the Corps' hydrology for purposes of establishing a federal economic interest. We also understand that our local citizens will pay for all operation and maintenance costs once the project is completed.

Dating back to 2003, Skagit County, as well as our cities and dike districts, have raised issues with the Corps' hydrology, issues we believe the Corps could benefit from an independent analysis. As you are aware, there has been significant additional research and analysis on Skagit River hydrology conducted by Skagit County, the cities of Burlington and Mount Vernon, Dike Districts 12 and 1, resulting in published technical reports by both Northwest Hydraulic Consultants and Pacific International Engineers. Both of these reports use straight-forward and in-depth research technologies. We do not believe the uncertainty in the USGS data used in the Corps' hydrology analysis and the new information now available from the work performed by our consultants, has been incorporated into a review.

Skagit County requests a technical conference with the Corps, USGS, and FEMA to address these findings and the USGS data used in the Corps' analysis. A technical conference would also provide an opportunity to review the available flood data and how best to incorporate into the recent recall of the FEMA flood maps issued in December. Therefore, to ensure the highest level of quality and confidence in the work of our federal partners, it is imperative a technical conference be convened.

The County would also like to request your assistance with scheduling a vertical team meeting with Corps HQ to discuss the Skagit General Investigation Study and other issues important to Skagit County.

Important issues to Skagit County include:

1. Get the hydrology correct and consider all the best science available.
2. Support full funding of the General Investigation study for completion by 2013.
3. Address serious public safety issues regarding levee repair in the Skagit River delta.
4. Corps support of the agreement between Skagit County and Puget Sound Energy to implement License Article 107, including changes to the Water Control Manual for Upper and Lower Baker Dam as part of the FERC relicensing settlement agreement.

As Skagit County Commissioners, we value our relationships with our federal agencies. We also value our partnership with the citizens of Skagit County who demand proper due diligence regarding public safety. Our Community Rating System program with FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program puts us in the top one percent in the nation. We've worked hard to hold up our end of our partnership with the Corps as the local sponsor of the General Investigation and our community expects these important issues to be addressed adequately.

It is in the public's and the Corps' best interest to convene a technical conference as soon as possible to address hydrology on the Skagit River.

Sincerely,



Sharon D. Dillon, Chair



Ron Wesen, Commissioner



Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

BCC/DB:le:mm

cc: Correspondence File