

Open House and Meeting to Discuss the Skagit River Flood Damage Reduction Study

December 11, 1997 at Mount Vernon

Skagit County Administration Building, Meeting Rooms B & C

Open House 4 to 6 p.m.

Meeting 6 to 7 p.m.

Open House 7 to 8 p.m.

WHAT IS THE SKAGIT RIVER FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION STUDY?

In late July 1997 the Corps of Engineers and Skagit County, the local sponsor, signed an agreement to conduct the study. The purpose of the Skagit River Flood Damage Reduction Study is to better identify Skagit River flood damage reduction opportunities that exist to relieve flooding and reduce risk to life and property, and to develop a flood damage reduction plan for implementation that fits Federal law and policy and is within the capability of the local sponsor to supply their share of the construction costs. The approximately 4-year long, \$4 million study is cost shared 50/50 between the Federal government and the County.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS OPEN HOUSE & MEETING?

As part of this study, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared. The purpose of the Open House & Meeting is to provide information to the public on the study plan and probable alternatives to be considered in the study and to facilitate collection of public scoping comments on the alternatives to be considered and the significant impacts that should be analyzed.

WHO IS SPONSORING THE MEETING?

This meeting is being co-sponsored by the Corps of Engineers, Skagit County--Surface Water Management Division, and the Skagit County Flood Control Committee. The Committee was established by the County Commissioners as an advisory board that meets monthly to review and discuss issues related to flood control, including this study. A list of committee members and the groups or area they represent is available on a separate handout.

WHO WILL BE THERE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS?

From the Corps of Engineers the project's Environmental Coordinator, Mike Scuderi, and its Project Manager, Forest Brooks, will attend, as well David Brookings, head of Skagit County Surface Water Management, and Chuck Bennett, Chairman of the Skagit County Flood Control Committee.

WHAT IS THE EIS SCOPING PROCESS?

In accordance with procedures required by the National Environmental Policy Act, the Corps published in the Federal Register on October 19, 1997 a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS. The public scoping process is intended to: 1) Clarify which issues appear to be public concerns, 2) Identify any information sources that might be available to analyze and evaluate impacts, and 3) Obtain public input on the range and acceptability of alternatives.

WHAT IS THE PROJECT STUDY PLAN?

The Project Study Plan (PSP) was developed over the last two years in a cooperative effort between the Corps and the County. The study will be divided into two general stages. Stage 1 will consist of work required to develop a new computer model for the river downstream of Concrete, develop and evaluate with the model potential flood damage reduction measures, and select a plan for detailed evaluation in Stage 2. The second stage will develop a risk-based analysis to determine the appropriate level of protection to be provided by improvements, complete detailed design and analysis of the selected plan, and prepare the required documentation of the study effort, primarily contained in the Feasibility Report and the EIS. Excerpts from the PSP that describe the planned study tasks are contained in a separate handout. Stage 1 is expected to last about 1-1/2 years with Stage 2 taking about 2-1/2 years.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED FOR DETAILED COVERAGE IN THE EIS?

Based on the results of the 1992-1993 reconnaissance-level study, two general alternatives have been identified for detailed evaluation in the feasibility phase of studies. These include: 1) No Action and 2) Levee Improvements. Under the No Action alternative the current levee system would remain in place without a major system-wide improvement. Individual diking districts would continue to operate, maintain, and repair the current levee system. The alternative system-wide improvement plan is currently envisioned to provide a higher level of flood protection (100-year or more) for the urban Burlington and Mount Vernon areas (through a system of new and modified levees using overflow sections at critical locations to permit overtopping of the levee to occur without failure) than in the rural agricultural areas (25-year or greater). Variations of alternative 2 will be examined in detail during the feasibility study and additional alternatives may be created. Levee setbacks at appropriate locations will be considered.

WHAT ARE THE KEY AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED SO FAR TO BE ANALYZED IN DEPTH IN THE DRAFT EIS?

Issues of concern identified to date include: the potential for impacts to fish, wildlife, riparian habitat, wetlands, and cultural resources.

WHAT SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ARE CONTEMPLATED?

The principal environmental studies identified to date are those required to establish baseline conditions and identify potential impacts. These include:

Fish Use of the Lower System. Based on review of existing information and selective sampling an assessment of fish resources will be developed. Components of this work include:

- Review of existing literature and previous sampling (mainly by the Skagit System Cooperative) to identify habitat types and usage on the lower river.
- Targeted new sampling.
- Assessment of fish losses due to overtopping structures.
- Assessment of changes in fish use due to channel morphology.

Riparian Area Inventory. Existing riparian vegetation will be inventoried and values to fish and wildlife established based on a review of existing information. Potential impacts will be derived and mitigation determined based on the amount of vegetation to be removed during construction.

Wetlands Delineation. Wetlands will be identified both along the existing levee, where the project may expand into wetland areas, and along projected new levee alignments, using existing Corps of Engineers methodology. Delineations in farm land areas will be done in coordination with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Cultural Resources Survey. A survey of existing records and field investigations along potential alignments will be conducted to determine if the proposed project might impact cultural resources.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE OPEN HOUSE?

The Open House provides an opportunity for the public to informally “drop-in” to meet with Corps of Engineers and Skagit County personnel to discuss: the study in general, alternatives to be considered, and impacts to be evaluated in the EIS.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE MEETING PORTION?

During the meeting portion, a short presentation will be made on study background, the Study Plan, and planned environmental studies, followed by a public question and answer and comment session. Following that, study team members will remain to continue the Open House.

WHAT SPECIFIC INPUT IS BEING REQUESTED FROM THE PUBLIC?

The Corps of Engineers is interested in hearing public ideas regarding the Study Plan, alternatives to be considered, impacts to be addressed, and environmental studies to be performed.

HOW CAN I PROVIDE INPUT ON STUDY SCOPING?

While we will be accepting verbal comments at the meeting, we would appreciate it if you could provide all scoping comments and suggestions you consider significant in writing. We will accept your comments throughout the study, however, in order to be most useful, we would appreciate receiving your written scoping comments by the end of December. Please send them to the Corps of Engineers: Project Manager, Forest Brooks, at PO Box 3755, Seattle, Washington 98124-3755 {or e-mail to forest.c.brooks@usace.army.mil} or Environmental Coordinator, Mike Scuderi, at the same address {or e-mail to michael.r.scuderi@usace.army.mil}.

HOW WILL I BE ABLE TO PROVIDE INPUT DURING THE STUDY?

During the study, there will be a series of study workshops and meetings to discuss flood control issues, potential flood damage reduction measures, and possible impacts. You will be able to provide comments both at those meetings and directly to the Corps or the County. If you included an address when you signed-in for this meeting, you will be added to a mailing list being developed for the study, which will be used to announce meetings, provide status reports, etc. Also, at any time you can provide comments to your representative on the Flood Control Committee or attend their monthly meetings yourself.

WHAT IF A GROUP WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A PRESENTATION?

Civic groups and interest organizations can schedule presentations by Corps and/or County personnel on flooding problems and the Skagit River Flood Damage Reduction Study by calling the Skagit County Director of Surface Water Management, David Brookings, at telephone (360) 336-9400 {or e-mail to daveb@co.skagit.wa.us}.

SKAGIT FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION STUDY

Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Meeting
Mount Vernon, December 11, 1997
6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

AGENDA

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Chuck Bennett, Chair
Skagit County Flood Control Committee

STUDY BACKGROUND

David Brookings, Director
Skagit County Surface Water Management

STUDY PLAN

Forest Brooks, Project Manager
Corps of Engineers

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Mike Scuderi, Environmental Coordinator
Corps of Engineers

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Brookings, Brooks, & Scuderi

CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bennett

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Brookings, Brooks, and Scuderi

OPEN HOUSE "DROP-IN" SESSIONS

4:00 PM to 6:00PM
and
7:00PM to 8:00 PM