

December 16, 2012

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I am a member of the senior class of Mount Vernon High School, its Associated Student Body Vice President, and a lifelong resident of the Skagit Valley. I am advocating the need of funding to create a floodwall to protect the city of Mount Vernon. The Skagit River runs right by old downtown Mount Vernon and is a beautiful sight, attracting tourists, birdwatchers, sportsmen, and many others. While it offers many such attractions, it also poses a great threat to our city's businesses and residents.

The river is the main run-out of the Skagit Watershed, which includes the Baker, Sauk, and Cascade rivers as well. At the headwaters of the Skagit are three dams on Gorge, Diablo, and Ross Lakes. These regulate the water level of the Skagit to some extent. The Baker River also has two dams on it, yet the Cascade and Sauk Rivers do not. This allows their output to go unregulated, causing the water levels of the lower Skagit to rise dramatically during the rainy season and times of heavy snowmelt. As a result the river often comes within several feet of flood stage, and every once in a while, actually does crest its banks.

I lived in the floodplain of the Skagit River for seven years, until my family chose to move to a hill to escape the constant threat of flooding. When I was much younger, I remember my father going out to help fill sandbags at night as a precautionary measure. In 2006, the most recent time the river flooded near downtown Mount Vernon, he and I helped fill, haul, and stack sandbags in an effort to prevent flood damage from occurring in the waterfront area. Flooding is such a constant risk in our area that the Skagit Dike District holds a sandbagging clinic for students at local high schools. Many students at Mount Vernon High School quite literally live in fear of their family's land going under water each year.

Only after the City of Mount Vernon has obtained the remainder of the necessary funding required, totaling approximately 10 million dollars, may they begin construction of the third and final phase of a floodwall that will provide protection for all of downtown Mount Vernon, the adjacent residential areas, and the city's wastewater treatment plant. Completion of this floodwall will move all of the aforementioned area out of the 100 year floodplain, and allow merchants in downtown to renovate their property in a cost effective manner, allow construction of new structures, and improve local commerce and residential satisfaction.

It is my sincere belief that granting the City of Mount Vernon the funding necessary for the completion of this project is of the utmost importance, and without reservation, I give the City of Mount Vernon my wholehearted support.

Respectfully yours,



Benjamin S. Drake
ASB Vice President
Mount Vernon High School