

CONCERNS ABOUT PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL ENGINEERING (PIE)

1. Does PIE provide lobbying services while using state grant money?
2. Does PIE influence local officials by making political donations?
3. Does PIE propose projects and present cost figures without including environmental assessments?
4. Does PIE take liberties by calling features by different names such as levees becoming “features of the topography” or a bypass becoming a “Habitat and Flow Conveyance Feature”?
5. Does PIE’s involvement contribute to political infighting?
6. Does PIE make a lot of money off erosion and flood control projects?
7. Does PIE hire ex-government employees who supported their positions?
8. Does PIE propose projects that are outside government agency guidelines?
9. Does PIE pursue structural solutions over nonstructural solutions to flood risks?
10. Does PIE threaten local staff when they disagree with PIE’s proposed projects?

MANAGEMENT OF WASHINGTON'S OPEN OCEAN BEACHES: A BANANA REPUBLIC APPROACH?

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Background of this Report

I have had the privilege of spending a 5 month sabbatical leave in Olympia, Washington. During this time I have spoken with most of Washington's coastal geologists and have been in the field with them as well as with a number of state agency staff members and members of community organizations. Of particular interest to me is the SW barrier coast which is similar in geologic makeup to the barrier island coast of North Carolina. I am the author/co-author or co-editor of a number of books on coastal problems, the most recent (1996) of which are *Living by the Rules of the Sea* and *The Corps and the Shore*. My address until June 26 is 900 East Bay Drive, Unit A 302, Olympia WA. 98506, Phone 360 754 6958. My permanent phone No. after July 2 is 919 684 4238.

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The management of Washington States beaches is at a crossroads. Fundamental and irreversible erosion has begun. Lessons about shoreline armoring learned from New Jersey a hundred years ago are not being applied here. The first beach-destroying seawall was built on a Washington open ocean beach in 1996. Action is needed now to save the beaches for future generations.

THE PROBLEM

The situation is best summarized by a **June 4, 1997 article** in the Ocean Shore's North Coast News: "A summit on coastal erosion was recently held in Westport with special guest Tom Fitzsimmons, the new head of the State Department of Ecology. **Hosted by consultant Harry Hosey** the meeting included representatives from Pacific and Grays Harbor Counties, the cities of Ocean Shores. Westport, Long Beach and state representatives-----.

'Under contract with various governments, Hosey is coordinating all of the responses and solutions for coastal erosion in Southwest Washington". "The local input from Grays Harbor and Pacific counties [to **the multi-million dollar, five year study** of the Washington Coast by the Department of Ecology and the U S Geological Survey] **will be coordinated by Pacific International Engineering and Harry Hosey** under a contract let by the counties".

The coastal caucus made up of state legislators urged Ecology to fund Hosey to study "immediate coastal issues". They recommended that some of the money for the USGS-Ecology joint program be directed to Hosey. [To paraphrase: **Hosey acts as lobbyist for the coastal communities both in Washington DC and Olympia.** He has lobbied in congress for beach nourishment money for Ocean Shores and apparently successfully lobbied Ecology in July for the \$100,000 the coastal caucus wanted him to have for the study of "immediate coastal issues]. "Ecology did not protest the construction of the rock revetment (at Ocean Shores) and actually helped the city and property owners overcome provisions in the law that would have prohibited the structure."

The future of coastal management is completely controlled by a single contractor. In my opinion:

The contractor can be expected to be (and has been) financially motivated and to come up with costly solutions. The contractor can be expected to respond, at best, to the immediate needs of coastal dwellers, with little concern for the larger and longer term picture of preservation of the beaches for future generations. State policy, or rather lack of enforcement of it, puts the long term (several decade) quality of Washington's beautiful beaches at extreme risk. Project designs to solve the states erosion problems are mostly hard (rock seawalls and groins), not soft solutions. **Hard stabilization eventually destroys beaches.**

The **contractor's solutions are short term, not long term.** All planning, and design work is being carried out by or under the supervision of Mr. Harry Hosey of Pacific International Inc. This includes identification of problems (some of which I argue are non-existent), getting money (much of which originally came from Ecology) from communities for design work, carrying out of various studies and lobbying in Olympia and in Washington DC for federal and state money, ultimately to be contracted to or through his company. There is no evidence of impropriety but the person who lobbies, designs, coordinates and identifies problems is the same person who makes the profit. It is not a healthy

management situation. Except for the permitting process, the state has backed away from its responsibilities in coastal management. The permitting process does not work well because emergencies can be declared which allows state regulations to be ignored. At the beach every engineering project is an emergency **The permitting process, when it is followed, seems to be characterized by a lack of coordination between state agencies, exacerbated perhaps because the design and planning process is carried out entirely outside the bureaucracy.**

(Note: The entire study can be reviewed here: [Management of Washington's Ocean Beaches: A Banana Republic Approach?](#))

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Development-protecting seawalls debated

The Associated Press, **April 12, 1998**

EROSION: Opponents say beach armoring destroys beaches for the public, is costly, and often does not work.

OCEAN SHORES - A barricade of rocks dumped on a public beach to save a row of condos from the hungry Pacific is at the heart of a growing battle over the fate of Washington's wind-swept ocean beaches. The central question: Should the state allow rock walls and other "beach armoring" to protect development from erosion on the state's largely untouched south coast? Property owners, developers and some local government officials so far are saying yes - at least to temporary walls like the one here. It's an approach neighboring Oregon has already rejected, choosing to let nature take its course. Without intervention, seawall supporters say, millions of dollars in property will be lost to beach erosion, which, for reasons not entirely understood, has been quickening in recent years.

Fighting Erosion

The beach at ocean Shores receded by 35 feet in the winter of 1996, after the 850-foot-long rock seawall was installed. Geologists say it would have receded another 35 feet, and taken out the condos, had the wall not been there. Other areas along the south coast are seeing similar erosion. The wall "has been absolutely fabulous. It has done more than we had hoped for," said Terra Tosland of Point Brown Resort, which manages the wooden timeshare condos for out-of-towners. Ecology did not intervene when the city bypassed restrictions in the state Shoreline Management Act on grounds it faced an emergency - the loss of condos. But records of internal mail among Ecology regulators show debate raged hot and heavy. "If armoring is permitted at this location, we may have great difficulty arguing against it anywhere else on ocean beaches," Hugh Shipman, Ecology's geologist, told superiors a few months before the wall was built.

The man who represented Ecology in its dealings with Ocean Shores, Chuck Gale, championed construction of the wall, to the chagrin of many colleagues. Gale helped the city and its consultant, Harry Hosey, figure out how to bypass his agency's permitting and public-review processes. Gale's boss, Sue Mauermann, removed him from his role as go-between last spring, in part because the ill will between Gale and his coworkers. In January, Gale quit his 10-year job to work for Hosey's company, Pacific International Engineering of Edmonds.

On another front, Pilkey collided with Hosey over the consultant's advice and methods at Ocean Shores. Hosey's solution to coastal erosion "are in disregard to the future well-being of Washington's beaches," Pilkey says. Calling the rock barricade "very temporary," Hosey says it was a necessary stop-gap while the parties forge long-term solutions. "My company's mandate for our clients is to save them from pending disaster," he said. Strong disagreement over how to deal with shoreline erosion continues within the city of Ocean Shores as well. Patnude, the city planner, has clashed with Hosey and some of his city-government backers over what is best for the beach and shoreline homeowners. She favored moving the condos back from the brink, saying construction so close to the shore should never have been allowed. "I totally do not agree with hard stabilization structures," Patnude said. "I've seen what happens on the beach, and beaches are too precious to mess with."

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Dams on the Chehalis won't prevent floods

Report: Dams on Chehalis River won't prevent floods

By John Henderer, [The Chronicle](#), 5/6/98

Building a flood-control dam or two on the upper Chehalis River is not the best way to control flooding in the Twin Cities, according to a new report that reverses a consultant's prior recommendation.

The 113-page report released Tuesday does not abandon dams entirely. Instead, it switches emphasis from damming the upper Chehalis River to modifying an existing dam on the Skookumchuck River, which flows into the Chehalis at Centralia. The "Pre-Feasibility Analysis of Alternative" by Edmonds-based [Pacific International Engineering](#), a Lewis County consultant, recommends adding an inflatable rubber wier atop Pacific-Corp's earthen dam on the Skookumchuck River in Thurston County. A second measure calls for excavating 7.2 million cubic yards of dirt - enough to cover a football field more than four times the height of Seattle's Columbia Seafirst Center, Washington's tallest building. The excavation would follow more than five miles of the Chehalis River downstream from the Chehalis-Centralia Airport. PIE estimated the projects would cost \$93.3 million and bring annual benefits of \$9.5 million. "We feel quite strongly now that you can solve the (Interstate) 5 flooding and community flooding without upstream storage (dams on the Chehalis)," Harry Hosey, Pacific International Engineering president, told a technical advisory group Tuesday. "We don't have to go out and permit and build something new."

That's not what PIE told the Flood Action Council, a group made up of local business volunteers, in a [November 1996 report](#). PIE stated then, "A new dam project with provision of a substantial flood control storage is the only effective means to solve the majority of the existing flooding problem."

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PIE released its new report Tuesday to a technical team of county, state and federal officials organized by the Legislature as a condition of granting \$600,000 toward the work. Already under contract with the county, the PIE study now has \$1.1 million allocated toward local flood control studies. Lewis County is lobbying state congressional officials for \$2.5 million more funding from the Federal Highway Administration, said Bob Berg, county director of the General Administration Department. Officials hope to divert project money that would have been used to raise Interstate 5 toward flood control measures that benefit the freeway and the local community. Raising the freeway 2 feet above flood stage has been estimated to cost \$108 million.

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Modifying the Skookumchuck Dam has been studied by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before, and has been ruled economically infeasible. In its new report, PIE says the 15-foot high, inflatable rubber wier itself would still be economically infeasible. But combined with floodway excavation and terracing along the Chehalis River, the dam improvement would “overcome the shortfalls” each project has on its own, the report state. . . . The report acknowledges massive excavation along the Chehalis River could result in “a relatively large area of wetland disturbance,” for which required mitigation costs “could be substantial.” Officials from the state Department of Ecology queried Hose Tuesday about when he would begin addressing environmental questions. Hose said that would happen during the next stage. . . . PIE is continuing to study the feasibility of its proposals. The technical group reviewed a second-phase work proposal Tuesday that called for river cross-section surveying, “optimization” of the recommended proposals and an environmental assessment.

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Lewis County ups payment for Chehalis flood work

ENGINEERING: 'Increased' work includes lobbying

By John Henderer, [The Chronicle](#), 5/12/98

Expanded flood-control work cost Lewis County an extra \$17,500 in its contract with Edmonds-based engineering consultants, Pacific International Engineering. County commissioners approved the contract amendment Monday, paying PIE for what it called “increased” work, including lobbying in Washington, D.C., and preparing for state-mandated project oversight. The contract amendment effectively treats PIE's lobbying in Washington as “increased” work orders from the county, although the original \$455,000 contract appears to have included this work. Last year's 11-page contract asked PIE to “contact other local, state and federal agencies as appropriate to facilitate project financing.” The contract amendment adds \$5,000 for a three-day trip to the nation's capital, plus \$6,000 more to finish a lengthy report after apparently being distracted by two trips in March.

. . . PIE had estimated it would spend just \$38,700 for agency and client coordination. But by April it had spent more than \$100,000 on these efforts, Berg said. “They used that money up on other things that we asked them to do,” he said. Money for the amendment will be paid from the county's flood-control zone district fund, which itself will need a \$150,000 loan from the county road fund, Berg said.

. . . The county asked PIE to perform the extra work, Berg said, to help prepare for a meeting with a Legislature-mandated technical oversight committee. The Legislature ordered the oversight as part of a \$600,000 direct appropriation to the county in the latest session. From the state funding, \$560,000 will go to PIE. The technical group held its first meeting last week when PIE released its “Pre-Feasibility Analysis of Alternatives” report for flood control on the Chehalis River. One of PIE's main selling points with the

commissioners was its promise not only to design flood-control measures but **to find money to fund the improvements.** “The proof’s in the pudding,” Berg said. “Don’t we have \$600,000” He said odds may be 50-50 or better the county will get another \$2.5 million federal money it needs to continue the work. PIE labeled its additional work under the \$17,500 contract amendment as four separate tasks:

- Lobbying in Washington from April 27 to 29 for \$2.5 million in Federal Highway Administration funding: \$5,000.
- Preparing for the technical committee meeting: \$4,000.
- Finishing the report after apparently being distracted by March travel: \$6,000.
- Coordinating a feasibility analysis for the next phase: \$2,500.

Commissioners last year allocated \$300,000 toward flood-control efforts, an equal share coming from the county general fund and from the roads fund. But during budget cutting last December, they slashed this year’s \$150,000 general fund contribution to just \$50,000. **That triggered an equal cut from the road fund allocation because the state Auditor’s Office said in a Skagit County finding that road funds could cover only half the funds toward flood-control work,** Berg said. Interfund loans are not unusual, and this one will be repaid from the state’s money, Berg said. Most of the \$150,000 loan, \$120,000, will be used as “cash flow” to cover expenses in the interim. The rest covers the contract amendment and a \$13,000 shortfall created by last year’s budget cutting.

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Special state audit reveals irregularities in erosion grants

By Tom Hyde

The North Coast News, **September 30, 1998**

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Officially, Ecology requested the audit of its own program to check its processes and procedures and specifically to check coastal erosion grants because the agency knew it had treated them differently, according to Ecology Public Information Officer Sandy Howard Rudnick. But Ecology also had concerns that one company had gained so many contracts in Southwest Washington apparently without a competitive award procedure, and that funds were being spent on lobbying. People in the agency were **“very uncomfortable with the fact that a single engineering firm is gathering a great deal of business in regards to flood control and coastal erosion issues out at the local government level,”** according to documents from the auditor’s working file obtained under an open records request by The North Coast News.

Local governments contracted with Pacific International Engineering (PIE) in all eight grants reviewed. Ecology officials also expressed concern about whether “the awards are actually being made properly, given the noncompetitive and regular nature of the awarding system they described for us. They are afraid about whether the local government payment to PIE is actually going for lobbying activities,” according to auditors documents. The audit determined that in four out of the eight grants local governments did not solicit for qualifications of engineering firms. Under state law, local governments are required to publish a “Request for Qualifications” to solicit firms. However, this does not apply if an emergency is declared. The auditor's office found that the City of Ocean Shores did not produce any evidence of solicitation and no explanation. . . .Both Pacific County and Montesano did not solicit until a year after initial work, although Pacific County did declare an emergency. Centralia did not solicit qualifications either, although it used the same contractor the county was already using.

Under many of the grants, lobbying was done, which is not allowed by Ecology's guidelines. However, lobbying using state funds is allowed under a wide range of circumstances. And some of the grants approved by Ecology included lobbying tasks. Pacific International Engineering often “packages” contracts with work seeking federal or state financing, which some city council members in Ocean Shores said was a deciding factor in awarding the EIS project to PIE instead of CH2MHILL.

But PIE principal Harry Hosey disagrees with the characterization of lobbying. “It is not lobbying, what it is, is getting the information to the decision makers at their request,” he said. “The cities make the presentations, we just supply the information.” “ **This company does not provide lobbying ... to make sure we do not run into a question, we have registered as lobbyists.**”

Hosey and Pharos Corporation principal Judith Shaman are both registered at the federal level as lobbyists, said Hosey, but not at the state level, he confirmed. Chuck Gayle of PIE, a former Ecology official who worked on coastal erosion here for the agency and suggested PIE to the city, is registered with the state as a lobbyist. “The audit was clean,” Hosey said. The money was only spent on items authorized by the Department of Ecology.”

The audit also found that, with the one exception of Centralia, there were no application materials on hand for the FCAAP grants and in some cases contractors wrote the grant scope of work statements for Ecology's signature. Not all of the grants, however, were intended to go through the regular competitive award process since some were the result of Governor's request or actions by the Legislature. The auditor noted that “there seems to be a great deal of political activity surrounding the grants ..” The audit also found that in many cases grants were “back dated” more than a year in one case, to cover work already well under way or nearly completed.

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Only cost stands in the way of controlling flooding

By Sharon Michael, [The Chronicle](#), 9/28/98

Money is the only thing standing in the way of Lewis County's flood control project, a group of city and county officials learned Saturday. Using a computer model of the 1,000-square-mile Chehalis Watershed developed for the county last year, Pacific International Engineering representatives have worked out designs that could reduce flood levels in the area of Highway 6 in Chehalis, as well as keep Interstate 5 through the Twin Cities high and dry during 100-year flood levels. An earlier PIE proposal that engineers said could reduce flood levels at Mellen Street in Chehalis from 7 feet to 1 foot was criticized by Chehalis Councilor Wayne Galvin because it did not relieve flooding in Chehalis in the Highway 6 area.

PIE engineer Harry Hosey said the new alternative also could eliminate all flooding in Chehalis up to the 100-year flood level. The alternate design would involve creating a causeway under Highway 6 to allow water to flow through, and constructing bypass water storage ponds in the area. "We know we can do the job for you on a technical basis," Hosey told Council of Governments representatives Saturday. "We have to show we can do it on a financial basis. This project is money dependent, as every project is." Commissioner Richard Graham has been the county's lead lobbyist for federal money for the \$80 million project. Current legislation before Congress includes \$2.5 million for preliminary design work. Next year, the county would ask the federal government for \$60 million, and ask state legislators to approve \$15 million to \$20 million. That money would be available in 2000. Construction is estimated to take two to three years. . . .

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Our opinion

Coastal erosion equates to big money and lots of shortcuts

The process bears close watching

The North Coast News, [September 30, 1998](#)

In the last few weeks, I've spent quite a bit of time trying to answer a few seemingly simple questions. What I thought were a few simple questions turned into a major research project.

- How much has the City of Ocean Shores spent on coastal erosion issues to date?
- How much has been authorized?
- How much has gone for lobbying?
- How much has come from the city, how much from the state?

It was surprising, unbelievable even, how difficult it was to get this basic information. Surprisingly, no one could answer any of these questions with certainty. The city is still trying to justify expenditures with authorized contract amounts. That, in itself, was enough to pique my interest so I decided to take some time and tilt at the windmill.

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Having followed the ins and outs of coastal erosion issues here for nearly three years it was surprised to discover the city has authorized the expenditure of about \$635,000 for coastal erosion work since June of 1996 under six agreements with Pacific International Engineering/Pharos Corporation Joint Venture Consultants. \$ 100,000 of that is still sitting out there for work on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to find a long-term solution to erosion.

Another \$1.2 million has been conditionally contracted for completion of the EIS if the city can obtain funds. Add to that \$150,000 from the Legislature may be spent for installation of the geotubes next month, and \$600,000 in private funds that went to the “wave bumper.” Now you've reached a figure of about \$2.6 million for public and private stopgap measures, planning, studies, and some preliminary engineering for coastal erosion work in Ocean Shores. That doesn't include extensive amounts of city staff time. We'd be better off with Hanford, it might be cheaper.

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The city's firm of choice Pacific International Engineering has six signed agreements with the city. Three were amendments to contracts that expanded the scope of work and added more money to the projects. Only one of the contracts went through a competitive hiring process - the EIS. Under state law, local governments are required to publish a “Request for Qualifications” to solicit proposals from engineering firms. This can be sidestepped by declaring an emergency, as can some permitting and requirements for a public process. Six different agreements signed by the city council, overlapping projects, contract amendments, and confusing city disbursement records, it's no wonder people are having trouble following the money.

After reviewing all the documents, it appears that the city has coughed up about \$160,000 from general tax revenues for coastal erosion work since 1996 while the rest of the funds have come from state grants, the Governor's Emergency Fund, and direct state legislative appropriations.

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The report found that the state FCAAP funds (Flood Control Assistance Account Program) were spent on authorized expenditures. But the audit also found that some state

funds went to lobbying (including Ocean Shores), a practice contrary to Ecology's policy; that seven out of eight grants were awarded without grant applications (including Ocean Shores); and that in four out of the eight grants, the local government did not solicit qualifications from engineering firms or request proposals for contracts (including Ocean Shores). In Pacific County's case, the effective date of the grant was more than a year before the grant was signed. All of the erosion projects involved Pacific International Engineering.

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It is also disturbing when an engineering firm packages lobbying with its other services. While there may be nothing legally wrong with this, it makes for a messy process. It can raise doubts as to whether science is being manipulated to present “better” worst case scenarios, or shift local government priorities from “who will give us the most cost-effective and quality engineering work” to “who can get us the most bucks.” It would be especially disturbing if local governments felt they had little choice but to hire a particular firm because of its lobbying.

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Did a half-dozen meetings over four months really cost \$180,000? Well, no, actually they didn't. Only about \$58,000 went to communications and public meetings. Overall project coordination with the city and agencies cost another \$58,000 (or about \$23,000 over budget). “Funding acquisition,” including lobbying efforts, cost about \$20,000. Work on the actual environmental impact document itself cost about \$12,000 while nearly \$30,000 in coastal engineering work has been billed to the city.

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Bottom line

There have been quite a few “anomalies” regarding coastal erosion projects. While each may appear minor, the trend spreads through Southwest Washington and, as a whole, seems more significant. It would make sense for the state auditor to take a closer look at local government contract awards and administration. When simple questions can't be answered simply, there is something wrong.

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Federal short of need by 90 %

By John Henderer, [The Chronicle](#), 10/16/98

Federal transportation funding to continue a major flood-control study of the Chehalis River fell 90 percent short of Lewis County's \$2.5 million goal, but a consultant said the money may be available elsewhere. The \$ 1.1 million project will receive just \$250,000 from the Federal Highway Administration, 10 percent of the \$2.5 million Lewis County commissioners sought, said Rob Nichols, press secretary for U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash. "Part of the reason was that Slade was the only one carrying the water there on behalf of the Centralia-Chehalis area," Nichols said of Gorton's lobbying efforts.

The project will also receive \$200,000 funding through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "We're going to have to bridge the gap here somehow," said Judith Shulman, president of Pharos Corp., a consultant for the county. No budget has been set for the project, said Harry Hosey, manager of Edmonds-based Pacific International Engineering, but the setback will slow, not end aspects of the work. "There's a number of potential funding sources available and the county is pursuing those with vigor," Hosey said.

The request faced an uphill battle on two fronts: It didn't fit federal guidelines for highway projects because the proposed project is outside the Interstate 5 right of way, and an influential congressman thought it smelled of pork. U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, opposed the funding request because he opposes earmarking transportation funds for specific projects, said **Hosey, who lobbied for the funding**. "It's not pork," Hosey said earlier. "It's truly a very cost-saving project (but) that is chairman Wolf's concern. Hosey said an exception to the federal rules would have made sense, noting he was involved in a similar unconventional project that was funded. A \$20 million project to build a 200,000 ton "rock groin" in the ocean to preserve Highway 106 near Willapa Bay won funding from the state Department of Transportation. . . .

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Consulting firm could be out of job at Ocean Shores

By Jeff Burlingame, [The Aberdeen Daily World](#), 11/21/98

OCEAN SHORES - As city officials worked all-day Thursday to pare a lengthy list of long-term erosion-control options to a manageable number, representatives from several state agencies pitched in suggestions.

Noticeably absent from the meeting was Pacific International Engineering - the consulting firm hired 2.5 years ago to help find a long-term erosion solution. By all indications, the firm may not be at any future meetings, either. "The city has apparently chosen to use the state to do the work for free," said Harry Hosey, PI Engineering's coastal communities manager. "But they haven't told us about it." The fate of the

Edmonds company should be decided Monday, when the city council will respond to a letter from PI Engineering requesting action to be taken on the firm's contract.

In the Nov. 10 letter - sent to City Manager Jack McKenzie - company representatives discussed their displeasure with the uncertainty of their contract. “(We) understand that the City plans to use City staff and has also requested assistance from various state agencies to perform work associated with the coastal erosion ...” the letter reads. “You have previously informed us that funds are not available to complete the scope of work originally contemplated under our existing contract. “Based on this understanding, we recommend that the City either terminate our current contract, or draft a revised scope of work consistent with the City's plans and budget. **“PI engineering will discontinue all work at this time until clear direction is received from the City.”**”

. . . Though the official decision on PI Engineering's contract will come from the council, recent actions indicate the city has already made up its mind to go it alone. . . . Exactly what happened to strain the relationship between PI Engineering and the city depends on who you ask. Hosey says his firm realized in September that the city was running out of funding for the project. At that time, he said, he developed a status report for the city which presented several courses of action. **Among those was the option for the city to continue on its current course, which would require coming up with an additional \$250,000, he says.**

After hearing its options, the city decided to stay the course and continue preparing the EIS, saying they would borrow the \$250,000 contingent on a “guarantee that the state legislature would reimburse,” Hosey said. “We advised the city that it's impossible for the state legislature to guarantee anything,” Hosey said.

Eroding coastline.

PI Engineering was hired in 1996 to help the city find a long-term solution to its eroding coastline, located just north of the North Jetty. In some places, the protective dune is near the breaching point. If the breach occurs, consultants say the entire southern end of town will flood, causing millions of dollars in damage to expensive city infrastructure and private property. So, with the help of PI Engineering, the city began searching for both a temporary and permanent solution.

Hosey says much of the **relationship has been frustrating.** “**We've made numerous recommendations to city staff on courses of action and many times the city staff does not take our recommendations,**” Hosey said. “**we're consultants; we're hired because we're experts.** “**It's frustrating for us to be hired for our expertise and have it rejected. If they are not going to take our recommendation, they shouldn't have hired us.**” Hosey says his firm has a long track record of success in working with Twin Harbor cities.

In Westport, PI Engineering has helped the city procure \$17 million in funds to close a breach in its coastline. At North Cove, his company helped with a \$22 million project to keep State Route 105 from washing into Willapa Bay, Hosey says. **“Ocean Shores is the**

first and only project we've not been successful on,” Hosey said. “And it's a serious problem they are facing. This is an extremely complex and difficult project, primarily because the city doesn't have the funds to do it.

“But the impacts to the city are in the neighborhood of \$70 million if they do nothing. It's a terrible dilemma.” If the city decides to go it alone, it needs to pare down the current list of 20 alternatives to a manageable number so they can present them to the state legislature before the session in January. The hope is that the state will secure funding in its next budget for the project. “We're under a lot of pressure to get it done,” Sue Patnude, the city's director of community development said Thursday. “and it's going to be a lot of work.”

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Food report due Wednesday at PIE hearing

Findings: Engineering firm to give best ways for people of Twin Cities to keep dry during next major flood

By John Henderer, [The Chronicle](#), 12/15/98

Citizens will get a first-hand look Wednesday evening at what a \$1.1 million study has produced so far as the best alternative to keep Twin Cities residents out of harm's way when the next major flood hits. Pacific International Engineering Inc., a consultant for Lewis County, will “plain two alternatives it has studied. The chairman of a technical oversight committee has expressed concerns Pacific International's study is “biased” toward a favored alternative, according to a letter obtained by The Chronicle. However, Monday he said his concerns may have been a misunderstanding. For more than a year, Pacific International has worked for Lewis County to devise a flood-control solution. To varying degrees, Pacific International has considered dams, dredging, riverbank excavation, diverting floodwaters onto fields, or some combination of these.

The first plan would lower flooding significantly, but it would worsen flooding downstream with “peak flow increases,” according to Pacific International's draft interim report published last month. Pacific International refers to its second alternative as “the most promising option,” “more cost-effective and environment-friendly.” Unlike the first alternative, this one uses farmers' fields to store floodwaters. To get floodwaters there, Pacific International suggests excavating an oxbow lake near Highway 6 west of Chehalis, raising the highway, and diverting floodwaters under it into the fields. Excavation near the Mellen Street bridge, a “bottleneck” to floodwaters, would be less drastic, and the dirt would be trucked onto the fields to build a big berm, stopping floodwaters from draining until the storm subsides. The plan also includes smaller excavation projects elsewhere. Plans to store more floodwaters behind the earthen Skookumchuck Dam remain a primary component of both alternatives. It's unclear whether Scottishpower's proposed purchase of PacifiCorp, which owns the dam, may affect this component.

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North Cove -Washaway Beach

Erosion fighting at North Cove may spare road but not homes –

By David Scheer - Daily World writer, [The Aberdeen Daily World](#) January 16, 1999

North Cove - The jetty the state Department of Transportation built to save Highway 105 has been a good news-bad news story for residents of North Cove, who may still lose their property. More than 80 people, most of whom live near Washaway Beach, packed a university-caliber lecture in the North Willapa Grange Hall Thursday night. They heard an update on the 1,000-foot rock jetty built to protect a vital link of the highway connecting Westport and Raymond. The good news: A preliminary survey shows the sand-sucking currents that were eroding the beach and undermining the road are moving south, away from Highway 105, according to Vladimir Shepsis of Pacific International Engineering, the company paid to monitor the area. Thanks to the state project, Pacific County most likely won't be "split" by the loss of the road, County Commissioner Pat Hamilton said. Engineers hoped the jetty would also protect homes in the area.

Which brings us to the bad news: The jetty may not be successful in protecting the homes of many Washaway Beach property owners. Early surveys show that since November, underwater erosion has been halted as far as 3,000 feet north of the jetty's outward-jutting groin of rock and underwater dike. But for now, the protection tapers off about that far north, said Shepsis. Most of the Washaway Beach neighborhood, a couple thousand feet farther up the shore, remains outside the jetty's "shadow," the engineer said. The engineers hope that will change in the next year or two, and as the new underwater system stabilizes and the channel reshapes, erosion at Washaway may slow or even stop, Shepsis said. But it will still take a chunk of the neighborhood to fill in the gape offshore left by years of gutting currents, the engineer noted. . . .

Originally, the North Cove jetty project was to be built in tandem with offshore dredging that would create a deep center channel. But the channel proposal was nixed by state resource agencies. And a proposal to build two jetties - one at the highway and one closer to Washaway Beach - was impossible for funding reasons: The DOT could only dedicate money to save the road, for which the second jetty wasn't necessary. The single-jetty project originally called for a 2,200-foot spit of rock. But the fast-track project had to go through "every state and federal agency known to man," said Commissioner Hamilton. Getting clearance caused delays, including a six-month holdup sparked when the Army Corps of Engineers raised navigation issues. Meantime, \$32 million in state funding began to trickle away. The final project was to be 1,100 feet long, at a cost of \$23.5 million. The dike was trimmed again by 90 feet, when engineers realized erosion had eaten more of the jetty's base before the construction could begin.

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Erosion issues put senior city officials under constant threat of being fired

Shores portrayed as a “rogue” for dealing with issue on its own, incurs wrath of neighbors

By Tom Hyde, The North Coast News, **March 24, 1999**

“City Manager Jack McKenzie and Community Development Director Sue Patnude should be fired and Pacific International Engineering (PIE) reinstated as the city's contractor for erosion,” is the message local city council members in Ocean Shores say they have been getting from other local governments, and the contractor himself, for over a year. Once only discussed in closed executive sessions, city council members have been more vocal in recent months over the pressure they have received from elected officials and staff from numerous other local governments. The pressure is ugly, inappropriate and unwarranted, councilmembers seem to agree. “Every meeting we would go to, certain past consultants would say that we just had to fire Sue or Jack,” Fred Winge said last month in a special city council study session. The meeting was held to determine whether the city still wanted to remain in the “coastal communities” group, a consortium of local governments dealing with erosion including Westport, Pacific County, Port of Willapa, the Port of Grays Harbor, and Grays Harbor County. For the time being, the city has decided to stay on board. Councilmembers have stood by their staff throughout the process and city officials have tried to take the high road. But the issue has been frustrating and provoked disbelief and anger. To sum up, Councilman Peter Jordan said, “It's none of their bloody business who our staff is.”

Interference with staff going back to 1997

The pressure on city elected officials started as far back as 1997. PIE was then under contract with the city to develop a plan to address the erosion at the southern end of the Ocean Shores. Community Development Director Sue Patnude was working with the firm on the issue. As part of the process she pushed for an independent technical review committee with coastal scientists and participants from state agencies, a move which was initially opposed by Pacific International. Patnude also pushed for a permit process for the placement of geotubes on the beach, instead of the emergency action being proposed by the consultant, saying that the agencies would quickly kill anything less than a full permit process. Patnude then began asking PIE for more detailed billing information on expenses submitted to the city by PIE. “Within days I was in an executive session with the city council,” she said. In December of 1997, Patnude was called before the city council in a special executive session and pitted against Harry Hosey, the principal at Pacific International Engineering. While neither staff nor city council members will discuss what happened in the closed meeting, Patnude remained as community development director and the project moved forward. But the independent technical review committee was soon disbanded. A councilmember said at the time, on the condition of not being quoted, and a city official confirmed, that Hosey had initially

requested a special unannounced meeting of the city council outside Ocean Shores to discuss city staff. The meeting was never held since it would have been a violation of the state open meetings act. . . .

City turns to the state for help on EIS

The city released Pacific International Engineering from its contract late last year, ostensibly due to lack of funding, after PIE requested an additional \$250,000 to continue work on the project. Rather than cough up the money, which the city said it didn't have, Ocean Shores chose instead to enlist the help of the state and develop an environmental impact statement (EIS) on its own, a document which seeks to develop a long-term strategy to control erosion problems. A draft of the document is set for release within a month.

“The state agencies came through for us in fine style. We've come a long way in a short amount of time,” said McKenzie who also has high praise for the Governor's office. Councilmembers are still expressing frustration and concern over spending large amounts of money on the project in the past and seeing little return. The issue came to a head when the firm, which had been paid about \$175,000 for the development of an EIS, presented an interim report to the city council and requested an additional \$250,000 to continue with the project.

“By the time we got to the \$175,000 mark (on the EIS), all we had done is have three public meetings and some other meetings, and a document that had work that was already done,” said McKenzie. “I think there is a feeling on the former consultant's part that he's missing out on a major cash flow. **We're approaching the million dollar mark and we don't have a whole hell of a lot to show for it.**” Councilman Jordan expressed his anger of the process saying, “we had a consultant telling us we had to give him more money, funds we didn't have,” said Jordan. “I was very upset with Mr. Hosey to put us in that position. **It was basically blackmail.**”

. . . A wedge between Ocean Shores and other coastal communities

The issue of funding and the consultant have driven a firm wedge between the city and the other coastal communities, all of which have contracts with PIE. Councilmembers say they have continuously been lambasted at coastal communities meetings by officials saying state agencies are using Ocean Shores as a wedge to drive the communities apart. **Take control and get rid of senior staff is the standard advice they receive, say councilmembers.** By embarking on its own to do the EIS, and to take control of seeking funds, the city has been portrayed as a dangerous rogue and a threat to regional funding proposals. New councilmember Terry Veitz attended her first coastal communities meeting on February 12. **She called it a “very intimidating atmosphere.”** “I didn't feel a working together atmosphere in that meeting,” she said. Hosey sought to meet with Jordan personally on a number of occasions while still under contract with the city, Jordan said. “Harry Hosey told me what the coastal communities have told you,” he

explained to the city council. “That Ocean Shores was a rogue and we must listen to him about who its staff should be.”

Consultant well respected

While Ocean Shores may continue to have problems with its former consultant, Hosey is well respected with senior members in the Legislature and state Congressional delegation as someone who “gets things done.” In the late 1970's and early 1980's, Hosey had an environmental engineering company “that was known throughout North America for its ability to gain permits for environmentally sensitive projects, mostly hydroelectric plants,” according to a 1991 article that appeared in the Wenatchee World. In 1984, Hosey was recruited to rejuvenate and head up the Early Winters' development project in the Methow Valley of Washington's Cascades. Hosey claimed to have taken up the project “more as a favor to high ranking state officials” than as something he sought, according to the article. Plans included a ski resort. The project went bust in 1994, although proposals for a scaled back version, without the ski resort, continue today. After Early Winters, Hosey got back into engineering and began working on coastal erosion issues in Westport. Hosey is a registered lobbyist on the federal level, as is his wife, Judith Shulman of Pharos Corporation, which is often a joint venture partner with PIE on projects.

Hosey has described himself in the past as “an extension of Norm Dicks staff,” the Congressman that represents Ocean Shores and Washington state's senior member of Congress. And Hosey's own statement of qualifications he submitted to the city several years ago states that Norm Dicks personally recommended Hosey's firm as a consultant to the Quileute Tribe to work on jetty repair issues at La Push. . . .

. . . The priority is at home

For the time being, Ocean Shores plans to remain a member of the coastal communities group for the purpose of sharing information. But the bottom line expressed by the city is that it will put its citizens and needs first while trying to work with the other communities. At the same time, the city is making substantial progress on doing its own EIS, with substantial help from state agencies. It has also contracted with the world-renowned Battelle corporation to conduct an economic analysis of the area at risk from erosion at the southern end of Ocean Shores, a very important part of the impact statement, say staff. Patnude said Monday night that they have also expanded the scope of the impact statement to include overwash and flooding from the North Jetty. Following the release of the draft impact statement, expected within a month, the city will hold public meetings, incorporate comments, and issue a final environmental impact statement which will identify a long-term strategy for erosion control. At that point, the city will be ready to detail out a plan, probably with outside assistance. Both Patnude and McKenzie have survived attempts to have them removed from their positions, or pushed out of the development of an erosion strategy. As he often does, McKenzie expresses his position, and that of the city administration, in unequivocal terms. “Every fifth of the month when I whip out that paycheck I sign to myself, it says the City of Ocean Shores

on it. It doesn't say coastal communities,' it doesn't say PIE,' it doesn't say the State of Washington.' Ocean Shores is where our priority needs to be.”

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OUR VIEWS

[The Chronicle](#) editorial, 4/1/99

BOWS: To **Harry Hosey, Pacific International Engineering manager** for striving to ensure his firm's study of flood control possibilities for Lewis County paid by public funds doesn't duplicate what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, also publicly funded, is doing related to flood control here. Avoiding duplication of effort by various federal, state and local governmental agencies and any consultants like PIE they may hire should be of major concern to taxpayers. It has happened all too often because of lack of coordination and cooperation or because of incompetence. **Lewis County** is the lead agency in a partnership of five local governments **currently seeking an additional \$1.1 million in public funds** to continue the Chehalis River Basin flood-control study. At the same time, the Corps is looking to secure at least \$1 million in federal funding from Congress this year for a feasibility study based on preliminary work on the proposed flood control projects by PIE. The Corps at some point is likely to become lead agency on whatever course of action is agreed to. **Hosey meets regularly with the Corps to coordinate work going on now by the two entities to ensure it doesn't overlap and waste taxpayer money.** And to ensure maximum efficiency and that progress is made toward achieving the ultimate goal of substantial, long-needed flood control in the Twin Cities area.

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Flood Study Summit

The fight might be history

John Henderer, [The Chronicle](#), 4/24/99

A summit this week may have quelled **political infighting** that flared late last year and early this year over a \$1.1 million Chehalis River Basin flood-control study. Officials who attended Wednesday's event at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Seattle offices said the meeting, which was closed to the public, seemed to address concerns that had developed previously. . . . The memo wars started last fall, when the chairman of a technical committee overseeing the study **accused project consultant Pacific International Engineering of producing a “self-serving” report.** The official said PIE's study gave brief treatment of alternative flood-control measures. The dispute escalated early this year, when four state and four federal agency directors signed a Feb. 2 letter to Graham and Col. James “Mike” Rigsby, commander of the Corps' Seattle District. **The administrators' letter expressed concern about the pace of the study, along with analysis of environmental**

and hydrological effects. “In the urgency of the moment, we must not forego the analysis necessary to address the legitimate concerns of constituents (downstream and) outside your jurisdiction,” the directors said.

IN RESPONSE, LEWIS COUNTY officials circulated a letter garnering even weightier political signatures **U.S. Sens. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., and Patty Murray, DWash.**, as well as eight other elected officials. The letter called for Rigsby to organize the summit. “I think some of those that signed that letter understood better now,” Graham said. “**The colonel wasn't very happy having his name attached to that letter.**” Grays Harbor County Commissioner Bob Beerbower, who sits on the flood-control study executive committee with Graham, said Corps officials assured the group it would address environmental concerns. “They were assuring the state agencies that they're not going to skip anything, and they're bound by federal law,” Beerbower said. “I think that's what the whole thing was about: that no one's going to cut any corners.”

After initially lobbying the Federal Highway Administration to pay for flood-control measures on the Chehalis, the executive committee switched its focus to the Corps. “That's why we told the Corps to be the lead agency,” Graham said. The agency has been preparing a project study plan to outline a schedule for the study. It will build on groundwork placed by a \$1.1 million effort thus far by Pacific International Engineering. It takes a lot of work to get a project like this through and done right,” said Gerry Arbios, Corps spokeswoman. “We're trying to move as fast as we can to ensure that (residents) have some protection.” **Meanwhile, the county continues to hope for \$1.1 million more from the Legislature in a transportation spending package to continue PIE's work.**

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PIE Wins \$2.2 million study

County willing to continue flood-control work by Edmonds engineering firm

By John Henderer, [The Chronicle](#), 6/29/99

Flood-control work on the Chehalis River Basin likely will continue to be led by an Edmonds-based consultant, Pacific International Engineering. Lewis County commissioners selected PIE on Monday from a field of six candidates, all of which had submitted statements of qualifications to continue the \$2.2 million study. Commissioners discounted objections by Hollis “Red” Cox, Doty, who complained they ignored allegations he raised about PIE manager Harry Hosey. If the county and PIE can negotiate a satisfactory fee and scope of work, the engineering firm will resume work within about a month, Hosey said in an interview.

Other applicants for the work included Northwest Hydraulic, Tukwila; Gray and Osborne Inc., Seattle; West Consultants Inc., Bellevue; RH2 Engineering, Redmond; and Skillings-Connolly Inc., Lacey. “Three of those companies are extremely good in this area,” Hosey said Monday. “We knew that we were up against some very stiff

competition so, frankly, we went into it scared.” Although PIE has been the lead consultant for the work so far, additional state funding required a competitive process to continue the study.

A panel of six officials reviewed the sometimes lengthy proposals, which serve as professional résumés with past engineering success examples and biographical information about principal characters in the firms. Three firms were immediately disqualified because their applications did not include required documentation.

Among the remaining three, PIE led scoring among the six reviewers, tallying 945 points. Northwest Hydraulics followed with a score of 881 and Skillings-Connolly recorded 608, according to a score sheet released by the county.

All of the reviewers scored PIE above the competition, except one who gave Northwest Hydraulics an equal score. The county did not release any additional information explaining the scoring procedures. The scorers included Lewis County Engineer Pete Ringen, Thurston County Engineer Dale Rancour, **Grays Harbor County Public Services Director Mike Daniels**, and Centralia Community Development Manager Terry Calkins. Cox criticized commissioners for selecting PIE. “I gave you a book to read on them and how they work, and I'll be damned if you didn't pick him,” Cox said of Hosey. The book - whose innocuous title “Mazama: The Past 100 Years” belies its gossipy flair - describes Hosey's lead role in the failed Early Winters ski resort venture in the Methow Valley.

In the Peanut Butter Publishing work, author Doug Devin details Hosey's work financing Early Winters studies and “spending at record rates.” Devin, who was on the Early Winters board of directors, describes Hosey “going at a frenzied pace” and “obsessed ... with control,” even describing the disintegration of his marriage. “Oh, that thing,” **Hosey said** of the book, when asked for a response. “**It's a novel. That is pure fiction. He was a disgruntled employee of mine.**” Commissioner Russ Wigley, who acknowledged that he read Devin's work, explained the board tried to keep an arm's length from the review process and not influence it. “This was done blindly and it was done comprehensively,” Wigley said of the review. “We had nothing to do with it.” **PIE, which maintains close contact with key political figures, rose above the competition for its ability to obtain funding, Wigley said.** Cox remained convinced Devin's work is accurate, and left the commissioners' meeting incensed. “I can't seem to get through to nobody,” he said. “I may be just an old logger, but I can read and I can tell right from wrong.” . . .

To date, the county has paid about \$1.1 million to PIE to find and evaluate flood-control alternatives. The Legislature contributed \$600,000 of the money through the state Department of Transportation, and recently added another \$1.1 million. As part of the next \$1.1 million work, PIE will coordinate project developments and activities; develop and evaluate alternative solutions to reduce flooding; coordinate technical aspects such as surveying, geotechnical and flood hydraulic modeling with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and update flood maps used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. PIE began its Lewis County flooding studies shortly after the devastating 1996 flood, hired by the Flood Action Council, largely made up of Twin Cities business officials.

Lewis County commissioners hired PIE in 1997 after taking over the lead on flood-control issues.

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Coastal erosion has towns on edge

As Washington beaches begin to go out with the tide, the state is scrambling to devise a plan that landowners fear may not help

Sunday, September 17, 2000

By Jim Lynch of The Oregonian staff

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Unlike Oregon, Washington doesn't have a coherent plan to deal with oceanfront erosion in part because it hasn't needed one until recently. But it's scrambling to put one together now, and many coastal property owners fear they'll soon lose their ability to protect their investments. Brady Engvall, a 68-year-old Westport oysterman, broods over a different nightmare: a coastal free-for-all in which the public surrenders control of the looks and vitality of its beach to the rich people who chose to build along its volatile edge. "Why should we give it up for a few people who've got a few bucks?" asks Engvall, who has spent his entire life on the shore. "Let nature take its course, and move back."

Washington is perhaps the last coastal state to grapple with the inevitable erosion dilemma: Should public beaches be "armored" to protect private properties, given that man-made barricades may trigger more erosion, steepen beaches and ruin seashore ambiance?

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For decades, Washington's beaches widened while Oregon's winnowed.

Since 1968, oceanfront property owners along Washington's southwest corner have watched their land expand 400 feet westward.

In fact, until the early 1990s, Washington's coast had just one main erosion hot spot. Aptly named Washaway Beach, the northern tip of Willapa Bay has lost so much ground so swiftly that more than 100 properties on Pacific County tax rolls are under water at high tide. But the dams and dredging along the Columbia River have decreased the volume of sediments swept north. And this lack of new sand combined with brutal winter storms wrought erosion crises, including: A storm blasted a hole in a seemingly invincible rock jetty protecting the town of Westport in 1993 and threatened the city's sewer treatment plant. Thirty-foot waves dissolved Ocean Shores' southern dunes in 1996 and menaced \$60 million in condos and homes. A huge swath of Washaway Beach vanished in 1997, bringing high tide unnervingly close to a bend in Washington 105.

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Firm's remedies criticized

State and federal officials responded to the onslaught by launching an unprecedented study of the coast -- examining erosion and accretion patterns during the past 4,000 years. Pacific International Engineering of Edmonds, Wash., responded with swift solutions. PIE has spearheaded about \$60 million in coastal erosion remedies during the past seven years: bolstering the Westport jetty, erecting a boulder barricade in front of Ocean Shores condos and extending a rock barrier seaward near Washaway Beach.

Josh Baldi of the Washington Environmental Council says it's troubling that an engineering company seems to guide the decision-making on how best to tackle coastal erosion issues on public beaches. "We question whether PIE is really doing the communities a service in leading them to believe that they can beat back the Pacific Ocean," Baldi says, adding that he advocates "letting the ocean breathe."

The council was alarmed enough by the "beach armoring" precedent at Ocean Shores to contest PIE's project and still threatens to sue if the barriers aren't removed. PIE Manager Harry Hosey says his company is simply responding to emergencies. He also stresses that PIE's projects are environmentally benign.

Sue Patnude, former Ocean Shores planning director, describes PIE as an unusual full-service company. "There's a lot of companies that can do this work, but there's not a lot of companies out there that can do the engineering and the lobbying," she says. "I think their ability to bring funding in, and to get the political forces involved, raises a lot of questions."

"We don't provide any lobbying services whatsoever," Hosey says. Although his company is registered to lobby in Olympia and Washington, D.C., Hosey calls the lobbyist filings precautions that allow company brass to attend meetings between lawmakers and coastal clients. Hosey's coastal work is often supported by U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., who represents many oceanside towns. Dicks sits on the House committee that oversees spending by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has financed much of PIE's work. Hosey and Dicks met with Corps staff at Dicks' Tacoma office in May to suggest that the Corps suspend its study of erosion issues at Ocean Shores until after PIE-proposed jetty modification could be examined, says Steven Babcock, a Corps project manager. Two weeks later, he says, the Corps received a note from Ocean Shores requesting the same, and that's what happened. Dicks spokesman George Behan says Dicks enjoys working with Hosey -- who has contributed a combined \$8,000 to Dicks' last four re-election campaigns -- because he gets things done. "We brought him in early on some of our first problems and kept him involved in Ocean Shores and other areas," Behan says. "We're getting things done quickly when it was extremely important. Harry was able to cut through the state bureaucracy."

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Flood Solutions Discussed

EDC hears proposals to curb flooding in Chehalis River Basin

By Amy Emerson, [The Chronicle](#), 11/12/2000

With concern about the approaching flood season on the minds of Twin Cities residents, the Lewis County Economic Development Council discussed proposed flooding solutions at its regular meeting Thursday morning. The guest speaker was Chuck Gale, a representative of Pacific International Engineering, a flood consultant for Lewis County. "We are in the permitting place of getting the project really built," Gale said. "After 100 years of struggling with this problem, we are on the verge of entering the construction phase for flood control."

Gale noted the large amount of federal flood-prevention funding likely destined for Lewis County. Legislation to that effect was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate. If signed into law by the president, millions will be given to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for projects pertaining to flood prevention. U.S. Rep. Brian Baird, D-Wash., has previously told The Chronicle about \$1.5 million will be allocated specifically to Lewis County. Gale said this money, combined with further efforts to prove the economic value of flood prevention in the Chehalis River Basin, would give the Twin Cities "more effective leverage in obtaining additional federal funds." The Pacific International Engineering representative discussed some of PIE's proposals thus far.

"We are going to evaluate all of the alternatives and options, and then we will take them to Congress," said Gale, adding that would occur sometime after the end of 2001. The possibilities include modifying the earthen Skookumchuck Dam to hold back more water, placing an inflatable rubber weir atop the dam, and excavating near the Mellen Street Bridge, thus enabling that portion of the Chehalis River channel to hold more water within the bank, as well as further river channel excavations and levees. "Everyone involved in getting the flood-prevention project this far deserves a pat on the back," said Gale. "We are in a good place, but there is more work ahead." "This is really exciting. Something is finally going to get done," EDC President Bill Lotto told the audience.

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Half Moon Bay (Surfrider Foundation, Half Moon Bay editorial, November 22, 2001)

For several years, Surfrider Foundation has been following closely the dramatic erosion events on Washington's open ocean coast and adjacent bay shorelines. The Department of Ecology's Southwest Washington Coastal Erosion Study identified expected future erosion along the Washington coastline. Situations like the breach of the South Grays Harbor Jetty in Westport the erosion of the beach near the North Grays Harbor Jetty in Ocean Shores and the massive erosion at the mouth of Willapa Bay have brought many

concerns to property owners, coastal municipalities and thousands of Washington State citizens who enjoy and depend upon Washington's natural sandy beaches. . . .

. . . In 1998, the Surfrider Foundation took legal action against the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) when the agency introduced a plan to place a rock wall along the entire beach of Half Moon Bay in Westport, Washington. Surfrider Foundation recognized that this misguided plan to armor Half Moon Bay would have destroyed the entire beach in the Bay, eliminating beach walking and surfing which in recent years has become a source of critical income to the tourist economy of Westport. . . .

. . . In the summer of 1999, a settlement was reached between the Surfrider Foundation and the Corps relating to the revetment extension in Half Moon Bay. Perhaps the biggest victory for Surfrider Foundation, beach-goers and the citizens of Washington State is that the Corps abandoned its plan to place a rock wall along the entire beach of Half Moon Bay.

Additionally, the settlement required the Corps to strengthen its commitment to beach nourishment in Half Moon Bay, making it more likely that surfers and other beachcombers could continue to enjoy the Bay into the future. The settlement made long-term beach nourishment a component of the Corps' commitment to preserve natural sandy beaches.

However, the Corps has not met its obligation to maintain the beach. Recent events in Half Moon Bay have significantly eroded the beach and have dramatically impacted recreational and environmental resources in the area. Additionally, the wave refraction mound built at the end of the South Jetty at Half Moon Bay designed by the Corps Waterway Experiment Station and Pacific International Engineering seems to be dramatically increasing the erosion immediately adjacent to its construction, making the likelihood of a breach in the South Jetty as we saw in 1996 imminent. The wave refraction mound has failed to meet its intended purposes to “refract” wave energy away from the beach. . . . Basic coastal geology allows that any hard structure in the “impact zone” will cause the beach to erode faster. It is also basic knowledge to surfers because we know how and where waves break, and for the most part, what causes them. The wave refraction mound in Westport is negatively impacting the beach and surrounding resources because it is a hard structure on a sandy beach and therefore increases the erosion rate in front of and adjacent to its placement. It causes the wave energy to impinge directly on the beach, eroding and steepening the beach.

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Erosion control efforts weather storms

By Ashley Shomo - [The Aberdeen Daily World](#) writer, 1/29/2002

WESTPORT - Early this winter, the coast took several hits: Record rainfall, towering waves and punishing winds - cumulatively the storm of a century. But after \$22 million

worth of anti - erosion work over the past eight years - including a miniature Westport in Mississippi - the beaches held up better than anyone expected, and the work is almost done. "The beach barely moved," said Harry Hosey, the president of Pacific International Engineering of Edmonds, the consultant for the City of Westport. "They were big waves - really big waves. It was packing a lot of energy on the beach." . . .

A new group was formed - the Coastal Communities of Southwest Washington. It secured grants to study solutions and work through the politics and turf wars that had hampered relationships with the Corps. The cooperation has produced results, according to Hosey. "The bottom line was that this project that failed in 1994 experienced a stronger set of storms and worked perfectly (this year)," Hosey said last week. "This is very much an experiment." In all, the Corps has spent about \$22 million in research and construction in an effort to keep the shifting sands stable. Federal scientists at the Engineering Research & Development Center in Mississippi developed a model of Half Moon bay that would fill a large auditorium. The tank has water, waves and land, just like a mini - Westport. . . .

Now that the storms are over - hopefully the worst of them, at least - and the numbers are in, Hosey and Arden say that it could have been a lot worse. "This was the biggest energy challenge in probably 100 years," Hosey said, referring to the forces of nature. From Oct. 20 to Dec. 31, Hosey recorded four of the 15 worst storms since 1982. The waves reached up to 30 feet and came crashing ashore 20 seconds apart. It was relentless. "The failure turned out to be related to rain," the consultant said. "The rain collected and made huge gullies." After the storms, the Corps filled the ravines with sand and built the beach back to where it was. The rest, Arden said, is simply maintenance. "You expect that you're going to have to come in periodically and nourish the eroding areas," he said. "It looks real good that we'll be able to do some maintenance and dredging to keep the system working." In addition, the Corps will plant dune grass to help the sand hold when it pours. Although the Corps and Coastal Communities are flush with success, no one is claiming perfection. "It's been a misunderstanding that any of us were saying that we had found the magic solution that ends it or fixes it," said Randy Lewis, the city administrator at Westport. "Basically, erosion is going to continue. What we're attempting to do is manage it to where we can keep ahead of it and prevent it from doing damage to critical facilities," he said. "We're not so arrogant that we're going to say we can stand up and put a halt to Mother Nature."

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Westport erosion battle continues

By Levi Pulkkinen - Daily World writer, [The Aberdeen Daily World](http://www.aberdeen.com), 3/17/2003

WESTPORT - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' motto is Essayons. That's French for "We will try," South Jetty project manager Hiram Arden notes. Translating it into success is the hard part. For more than 100 years, the Corps has tried to control the ocean current churning around Westport. Last week, at the Westport Maritime Museum lecture

hall, the Corps entertained new ideas on its South Jetty erosion control effort. Westport's beaches have changed dramatically since the Harbor jetties were completed in the early 1900s. While beaches grew immediately following the South Jetty's construction, during the last 10 years sections of beach facing the ocean and within Half Moon Bay eroded, threatening the jetty and, many fear, Westport itself. The Corps arrived at Westport in 1898 to build the South Jetty, and has been a presence here ever since. In 1994, the Corps dumped 600,000 cubic yards of dredged material into the neck of land separating Half Moon Bay from the ocean after the sand spit was washed away in a savage winter storm late in 1993. . . .

Much of the discussion centered on a 4 - year - old wave refraction mound inside the bay. Designed to eliminate erosion on the eastern side of Half Moon Bay, the mound has shifted the erosion toward the bay's western lip near the 1993 breach site, according to George Kaminsky of the Ecology Department. He is co - director of the Southwest Washington Coastal Erosion Study. Kaminsky said he believes the refraction mound may be doing more harm than good. "One thing we should be looking at," Kaminsky said, "is the affect of the mound on the erosion in Half Moon Bay. Because of the mound, we have a higher erosion level at a critical spot. **We've maintained a crisis.**" Initial plans for the refraction mound called for roughly three times the amount of cobblestone - size rock that was eventually dumped on the beach, and the mound's supporters blame the reduction for its mixed performance. "Had the mound been put in the way it was designed, had the cobble been put in the way it was supposed to, we would not be having this problem," Westport Mayor Berkley Barker said at the meeting.

Arden said environmental concerns prevent the Corps from installing more rock at the site. **Others at the meeting rejected the suggestion from engineers with Pacific International Engineering that material "of a more robust grain size" be added to the site. The Edmonds - based engineering firm installed the refraction mound and is currently involved in a study of its effects.** Washington Fish & Wildlife habitat specialist Bob Burkle suggested the Corps reconsider removing or modifying the jetty before considering a hard solution to the bay's erosion. . . .

* * *

Corps wants more rock near jetty

By Levi Pulkkinen, [The Aberdeen Daily World](#) Writer, Thursday, **July 10, 2003**

WESTPORT - In an attempt to revive an erosion - control plan originally scaled back due to environmental concerns, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has announced its intention to place an additional 40,000 tons of gravel and stone cobble on the western shore of Half Moon Bay near the South Jetty. Cobble is defined as stones up to 12 inches in diameter. In this case at least 50 percent will be less than three inches in diameter.

. . . Arden said that, instead of absorbing the eroding wave energy, the smaller transition area essentially forced the energy further down the beach. The new proposal, currently open to public comment, calls for the placement of rock on a 1,000 - foot - long section of beach between the South Jetty to the Coast Guard observation tower overlooking the bay in the hope that a larger transition area will eliminate the erosion threat. The proposed project, expected to cost between \$400,000 to \$600,000, was first offered in 1999 as part of a diffraction mound project. The mound - essentially a pile of dredged material dumped off the western lip of Half Moon Bay - was supposed to set the currents entering the bay on less destructive paths.

. . . According to its request for public comment, the Corps now believes erosion at the breach site can be temporarily slowed by using the amount of rock originally suggested by coastal - engineering firm Pacific International Engineering when it presented the refraction mound scheme. . . .

Performance questioned

As reported in The Daily World earlier this year, the diffraction mound's performance was questioned by a number of the state's coastal - erosion experts at an inter - agency meeting put on by the Corps. There, Department of Ecology scientist George Kaminsky told Corps officials and the representatives of the mound's installer, Pacific Engineering International, that the mound has focused erosion on the site of the 1993 breach. "One thing we should be looking at is the effect of the mound on the erosion in Half Moon Bay," Kaminsky said March 17. "Because of the mound, we have a higher erosion level at a critical spot. We've maintained a crisis." Arden said the Corps is currently studying the diffraction mound's effect on the bay, and that changes to the mound may be necessary. He said the current proposal should not be construed as a final solution to the erosion issues in Half Moon Bay. . . .

* * *

Friday, December 26, 2003

Longtime city employee leaves Centralia

By Dian McClurg dmcclurg@chronline.com

Terry Calkins' first job as an engineer for the city of Centralia in 1972 was to build a wall of sandbags keeping back the Skookumchuck River as it threatened to flood Bridge Street. More than 30 years later, as he leaves his position as Centralia's community development director, Calkins talks about continuing his work on the Chehalis River Flood Project. He is leaving his city job at the end of the month to begin a new career with Pacific International Engineering, the engineering firm hired by Lewis County to work on its flood control project.

“Pacific International is the company that helped us pull out of 70 years of study, study, study with the (U.S. Army) Corps of Engineers to a point where we now have a real project,” Calkins said. “I am really pleased I have the opportunity to help make this project really happen.” Calkins will work part time for PI Engineering as part of the firm's Olympia office, but he will operate in the Twin Cities community, said Chuck Gale, the firm's project manager. “Terry knows a lot of people, and they know him,” Gale said. “His background in municipal government is a huge plus. He will be able to keep everyone completely informed on the details of the project as it unfolds.” Beginning Jan. 2, Calkins can be reached locally at 520-0931 or through the Olympia office at (360) 352-2232. His e-mail address will be terryc@piengr.com.

. . . “I'm very, very optimistic that this time around we're going to get something built,” Calkins said. The Chehalis River Flood Reduction Project is a partnership between Lewis County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Lewis County is the sponsor for the Corps project, and is joined by Centralia and Chehalis, as well as Grays Harbor and Thurston counties. Washington State Department of Transportation is also a participant, since the Interstate 5 corridor is a major beneficiary of the project. The new gas tax will fund \$30 million in project development and construction costs on a cost-sharing basis with the federal government.

* * *

January 13, 2004

A flood of money returns to Lewis County and the Twin Cities

By Brian Mittge bmittge@chronline.com

A million-dollar gamble has paid off for the Twin Cities and Lewis County, whose leaders signed an expensive agreement 18 months ago to keep a local flood control project alive. On Monday, the county commission accepted an agreement with the state Department of Transportation, which is returning a total of \$1 million for Centralia, Chehalis and Lewis County governments to split. Local leaders had agreed in early summer 2002 to pay \$350,000 each for studies necessary to meet an urgent deadline for including a mammoth Twin Cities flood control project in a federal funding bill. Ironically, the big rush turned out to be largely unnecessary because the U.S. Congress didn't pass a Water Resources Development Act in 2002, or even in 2003.

Still, the local money went toward environmental studies and plans that would have needed to be done eventually, local leaders say. The money approved Monday will go back into county and city reserve funds. The state DOT is able to pay back the money because a 2003 transportation package included \$30 million for what is known as the Centralia Flood Damage Reduction Project, although it also includes Chehalis. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would pay for the bulk of the project, variously estimated at \$80 million to \$100 million. Because Interstate 5 was deluged in 1990 and 1996, the DOT has agreed to pay nearly all of the “local match” required for construction, meaning

very little out-of-pocket for local governments. Actual ground breaking depends on federal authorization and funding, and is still at least a year away.

Terry Calkins, recently retired as the Centralia community development director, said at the time local leaders met in April 2002, he didn't think the local governments would get the money back. "It's good news," said Calkins, now working as a consultant for Pacific International Engineering, the firm putting together the flood control project for Lewis County. Lewis County Commissioner Richard Graham, point man for flood control efforts in the Twin Cities, said he always thought the money would be returned, and has been pushing for it.

Soon, however, local governments might have to pump their own money back into the flood control effort. As it stands now, the Army Corps of Engineers' plan would improve the Skookumchuck Dam so it can release water quickly in preparation for a big flood event. Downstream, the Corps would build levies around the Twin Cities, and possibly build a low bridge on state Route 6 to allow floodwaters to move away from Chehalis.

Its plan does not include a provision popular with local leaders that would expand a choke point on the Chehalis River at Mellen Street. Graham and local leaders propose digging out a bypass so that high waters wouldn't back up toward the Chehalis-Centralia Airport and the urban areas south of Mellen Street. The Army Corps hasn't included that in its plan, but local leaders hope that if they pay for a study showing its benefits, the Mellen Street bypass can be included in the final Corps plan. Graham said the county and the cities might have to kick in \$40,000 to \$50,000 each to pay for the Mellen Street studies. Centralia City Manager J. D. Fouts said he hopes the Mellen Street study doesn't cost that much, but said the city wants to help the flood project move forward. "It's slower than some people anticipated," Fouts said, "but in comparison with some past projects, it's going much faster."

* * *

Local flood control project is still fluid

Friday, February 13, 2004

By Brian Mittge, bmittge@chronline.com , [The Chronicle](#)

Eight years ago this week, Twin Cities residents were ripping out carpet, throwing away water-soaked treasures and shaking their heads in disbelief after the worst flood they'd ever experienced. Vowing to prevent a repeat of the flood that peaked Feb. 9, 1996, Lewis County citizens rallied around proposals to hold back the waters. Now the result of those efforts await federal action, and the earliest such work could begin is in 2006, a decade after the 1996 flood. Centralia and Chehalis city councilors and county Commissioner Richard Graham plan to fly to Washington, D.C., next month to push for federal funding and approval of an \$80 million to \$100 million project to improve the Skookumchuck Dam, and to surround the Twin Cities with protective levees.

...
Hoping to yank out such worries by the roots, the Olympia-based flooding consultant for Lewis County is putting together a plan that focuses on habitat improvements, with flood reduction a secondary concern. And whatever you do, don't use the b-word: "bypass." Renamed the "Mellen Street Habitat and Flow Conveyance Feature" last month, the still-undefined project could create off-channel habitat for coho salmon, create or restore wetlands and, incidentally, keep water from backing up and creating such a massive lake in the floodplain upstream. "We won't call it a bypass, although it will function as a bypass," said Marie Garrett, a senior environmental planner for Pacific International Engineering. Speaking at a meeting Thursday of the Chehalis River Flood Executive Committee at the county courthouse in Chehalis, she said the No. 1 issue is "permitability." "If it does not work from a habitat standpoint, it does not work," Garrett said, later adding, "just designing some flood management feature and tacking on a few things to mitigate impacts will not be a success." Local leaders hope they can convince the Army Corps of Engineers that this kind of project helps the environment and decreases Twin Cities flooding without making it worse downstream. If they can prove that, they want the project included in a larger project set for construction later this decade. Until the Corps is on board, however, local governments would have to pay for the studies themselves.

The "scope of work" for the Mellen Street project study will be finished later this spring, according to PIE consultants, and would have to be approved by Lewis County, Centralia and Chehalis. Graham has estimated the cost at up to \$50,000 for each of the three governmental entities, but the payoffs could be substantial if the project ends up being built.

As the flood control proposal stands now, surrounding the Twin Cities with levees would, according to computer models, reduce flooding in most developed areas, but would increase it in some other places. Floodwaters would be about 8 inches higher than they were in the 1996 flood outside the levees at the confluence of the Chehalis and Newaukum rivers, according to PIE computer models. Moving more water through Mellen Street would drop that level by around 2 feet, according to PIE projections, drastically adding to protection of the city of Chehalis and outlying areas. "This opportunity here is too good to be missed," said PIE consultant Chuck Gale.

According to leaders in the Chehalis Indian Tribe downstream, however, the Mellen Street proposal misses the mark altogether. As good neighbors, the tribe supports the flood control project as it stands now, said David Burnett, chairman of the Chehalis Tribal Business Council in a recent interview. "Just like everybody else downstream, we just want to know we're not going to get flooded out," he said. Mark White, director of natural resources for the Oakville-based tribe, was more blunt about any type of bypass at Mellen Street. "If they try to include it in the Corps plan, we'll oppose it," he said. Comparing moving more water through the Mellen Street hourglass to cutting the top off a pop bottle to empty it faster, he said it's common sense that flooding would worsen downstream.

Not so, say the upstream engineers. Lewis County's consultants say that the ground rules for their flood control studies have always been that they couldn't make flooding worse downstream. The key, they say, is a 30-year-old dam upstream of Bucoda on the Skookumchuck River. The flood control proposal centers around modifying the dam to hold back more of the first floodwaters, releasing them gradually after the bulging Chehalis River has gone down. The "Mellen Street feature" would change the timing, not the amount of floodwaters moving downstream, they say. "Whatever is done, you can't enhance downstream flooding," said Garrett. "That would have to be one of the main criteria that would have to be met."

* * *

Saturday, March 27, 2004

New Army Corps commander introduced to local flooding

By Brian Mittge bmittge@chronline.com

The wheels of government grind slow but exceedingly fine, as the saying goes, and sometimes the revolving door of governmental leadership spins faster than those wheels of paperwork and progress. That's the case for plans to build a flood control project in the Twin Cities. Since 1997, when plans for a local flood project really got rolling, the Seattle division of the Army Corps of Engineers has had three different commanders. "It seems like we're always having to bring people up to speed," Lewis County Commissioner Richard Graham said Friday at a meeting to do just that for the latest leader of the Seattle Army Corps office.

Col. Debra M. Lewis, commander and district engineer for the Army Corps' Seattle district, which includes the Chehalis Basin, visited the Lewis County Courthouse to learn about a project that, local leaders say, needs her strong support to move forward. In a standing-room only crowd of local officials and consultants, Lewis said she is committed to helping reduce flooding in Centralia and Chehalis. "The one restriction is how much money we have in the pot," she said. "As of now, the Army Corps budget has no funding for its work with the Lewis County project this year."

The Corps has also received comments showing that some "key people" have serious concerns about the project, she said. Even the least controversial part of the plan, modifying the Skookumchuck Dam to hold back water from flowing into Centralia during floods, still needs funding from Washington, D.C., and possibly new congressional approval. Still, the new local Army Corps commander said she sees value in the seemingly endless checks and balances of pushing projects through the bureaucracy. "Only the fittest survive," she said. Lewis, who attended Friday's meeting in a green camouflage uniform, took over as commander of the Seattle Army Corps division in July of last year. She said she will be the Seattle commander for another 2½ years. The Seattle commanders have typically been rotated out after two or three years. . .

. . .A frequent topic at the meeting was the Chehalis Tribe, which has expressed serious concern about the county's idea of building a “conveyance feature” to move more water through a choke point on the Chehalis River. Without that feature, the flood control project will require more than 11 miles of levees to ring the Twin Cities at a cost of \$70 to \$75 million, said Harry Hosey, manager of the county's flood control consulting company Pacific International Engineering. If something can be done to help move more water through the Mellen Street area, the number of levees could be slashed, their height reduced and the cost cut in half, he said.

The Chehalis Tribe, which has a reservation downstream near Oakville, worries that anything which moves more water away from the Twin Cities will mean higher flooding downstream. The tribe has been actively involved in flood prevention discussions, but opted not to take a seat on the Chehalis River Flood Reduction Project Executive Committee, according to Lewis County's consultants. However, the group sent the tribe a letter on Monday asking for a meeting to discuss the flood project.

Until then, another downstream official, Grays Harbor County Commissioner Bob Beerbower, said he's not going to let efforts to protect Centralia and Chehalis cause more flooding down the river. Beerbower has been active with the flood reduction group, in part, he said, because “whatever they do here will affect us down there.” From knowing what the group is doing, he said, “I feel a lot more confident about what's happening.”

* * *

Saturday, July 02, 2005

River flooding project takes new turn

By Brian Mittge bmittge@chronline.com, [The Chronicle](#)

Nick George / The Chronicle. This stretch of the Chehalis River between Centralia and Chehalis runs near Airport Road, center left, and Interstate 5, far left. Midway Meats is on bottom left. Current plans call for eventually rebuilding Airport Road on top of a new floodwall here to save space for the future expansion of the freeway to six lanes. The difficulty of juggling all these plans has recently caused Lewis County leaders to refocus a local flood control project. Lewis County has dropped its longtime flood consultant and refocused its attention on an extensive system of levees in a effort to control Chehalis River floods, but a lack of federal money is still keeping the project stuck in slow motion.

Early last month, Lewis County leaders declined to renew their contract with Pacific International Engineering, which has guided the county's flood control project since being hired by a local citizens group in 1996. The most recent two-year, \$1.6 million contract expired Thursday. The local officials in charge of the flood control project have turned their attention away from the high-tech modifications of the remote Skookumchuck Dam favored by PIE, although Lewis County still hopes this fall to

explore a little-known tunnel under the dam that possibly could be modified for flood control and fish habitat enhancement.

The local focus now is on completing the layout for a plan to expand the isolated dikes that already surround much of the Twin Cities. “PIE was under contract to do that, but they focused on the dam work,” Lewis County Public Works Director Mark Cook said. “We felt it prudent to reevaluate our relationship with PIE ... the board (of county commissioners) has always extended their contracts. The board is saying we will not extend this one.” A major reason for the change in perspective is that Louisiana Avenue's planned extension to Airport Road, seen as a way to relieve traffic around Wal-Mart and the new Home Depot in north Chehalis, comes into immediate conflict with the need to raise Airport Road for flood control.

Chehalis city officials had said Home Depot could not open until the two roads were connected, but a clause in their agreement would allow the retailer's doors to open without the road extension if the project couldn't be permitted — a difficult task with so many immediate plans by different governmental entities for Airport Road. . . .

. . .”That's one of the big issues. Everything now is tied to the I-5 widening, and if we never get the flood control project completed the way that it was originally set out, we're never going to get I-5 completed,” said Lewis County's flood control project manager, county commissioner Richard Graham. . . .

. . . For now, Lewis County, Centralia, Chehalis and the Washington Department of Transportation have decided to take a step back from the larger projects PIE had been exploring. A June 13 letter to the Edmonds-based company said Lewis County would end its eight-year relationship with the consulting firm effective June 30 — the scheduled end of a contract that had already been extended once. Lewis County, the state DOT, Centralia and Chehalis “desire reevaluating the Centralia Flood Reduction Project and believe it is the best interest of the region to conduct that reevaluation at this time,” the letter signed by the three county commissioners reads, noting, “PIE has been indispensable to the community in revitalizing the region's flood control project.” The contract will not be renewed, although PIE may apply along with other engineering firms to consult for the company in the future, Cook said.

* * *

Playing the waiting game Worries of floods, feds fueling MV riverfront effort

By LEVI PULKKINEN Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON — The prospects for revitalizing this city's historic downtown and riverfront could hinge on where the federal government puts the high water mark for a 100-year flood. Unless the downtown core can be removed from a federal list of flood-prone areas, the redevelopment concepts unveiled last week will have little chance of coming to fruition, city officials said. City officials — like property owners from Rockport to Fir Island — are waiting to hear whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will accept new flood projections developed by a consultant hired by Skagit County. The preliminary version of the Mount Vernon riverfront revitalization plan calls for the creation of a 50-foot-wide berm stretching from Lion's Park southward almost to Mount Vernon's city limit. Some existing structures in the area between the revetment and First Street would be razed and replaced by mixed commercial-residential buildings, according to the conceptual plan. Proponents say a band of fill dirt 3 to 4 feet higher than the current level of the revetment would likely protect the city from all but the largest floods. And it would likely answer the city's arguably more pressing concern — an expected increase in the 100-year flood level established by the federal government.

FEMA is currently preparing to redraw the flood insurance maps for areas threatened by the Skagit River, said Jana Hanson, Mount Vernon's director of development services. Hanson and others said the agency could potentially double the minimum foundation heights in many areas of the county, including Mount Vernon's downtown. . . .

. . . The existing rules have slowed growth in the city's downtown, said Mount Vernon Mayor Bud Norris. In addition to the costs of flood insurance, building to the higher level adds additional costs that discourage would-be builders, he said. It has a limiting effect on investment, on how far people will invest downtown," Norris said. The current flood insurance maps were adopted by Skagit County in the mid-1980s, said Chal Martin, director of the county's Public Works Department. Now, FEMA is preparing to update those maps, and possibly raising the level to which structures must be impermeable to floods, he said. In downtown Mount Vernon, that could mean the 100-year flood levels could be increased to 7 to 8 feet, Martin said. . . .

. . . But leaders around Skagit County are hoping to be spared new restrictions from the federal agency because of a new study commissioned by county governments. Conducted by Edmonds based Pacific International Engineering Inc., the new flooding study predicted 100-year flood heights about 20 percent lower than the projections

currently being used by FEMA. The agency is reviewing the study and is expected to decide whether to use the new projections in coming months. The firm also is consulting Mount Vernon on flood protection for downtown revitalization. Norris called the current FEMA 100-year flood projection “the most negative scenario you can imagine.” In addition to using what Norris and others believe are bad historic records, the current FEMA projection does not take into account a variety of flood protection measures, including the county’s levee system. . . .

. . . Don’t call it a levee

Officials from county governments and dike districts are attempting to hash out a countywide flood protection plan. While they do, Norris said Mount Vernon hopes to move forward with its own plan to protect downtown. Harry Hosey, president of Pacific International Engineering, introduced city leaders to a preliminary proposal Thursday that called for a 50-foot-wide berm. . . . Whatever its final shape, the berm would not be considered a levee or dike, said Esco Bell, Mount Vernon’s director of public works. FEMA requires that any levee or dike be certified before it is included in flood planning, and the certification process is long and costly, Bell said. Instead, the berm would be presented to the federal agency as “a feature of the topography” like any other hill. . . .

* * *

Millions gone with the tide

A jetty built in 1998 to protect Highway 105 might be making coastal erosion worse

SUSAN GORDON; The News Tribune

Published: September 17th, 2006

In 1998, the state spent \$27 million on a pile of rocks to protect a remote highway along one of the fastest-eroding coastlines in the country. The 400,000-ton jetty, or groin, as engineers call it, near Washaway Beach in southwest Washington was supposed to last 40 years. But the structure has failed to defend against the mighty forces that give the Pacific County beach its name, and has allowed Mother Nature to wash away millions of taxpayer dollars. Last winter, waves as high as 22 feet ripped into the embankment alongside Highway 105, which connects Raymond with Westport. The hole left guardrails nearly hanging. An emergency patch job – more than 8,700 tons of rock – cost \$487,000. But a long-term fix is likely to cost millions more, state engineers say. At least one expert believes the jetty might be partly to blame for the washout. Others say the jetty is powerless to protect itself, let alone the highway, from erosion. “It really hasn’t had any impact at all,” said David Mark, a civil engineer who studied the problem. Some critics – including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – predicted problems even before the jetty was built. But the project went forward because of locals’ desperation, an engineering firm’s advocacy and the availability of federal money.

Washington Department of Transportation managers stand by the investment. Sometimes it takes many years to win that battle against Mother Nature,” said Don Wagner, the department’s southwest regional administrator. . . .

. . . HISTORY OF SEVERE EROSION

Washaway Beach, or Cape Shoalwater, on the north shore of the inlet to Willapa Bay, is notorious for erosion. On average, more than 150 feet of coastline disappear each year, and some years significantly more. Tides influence some of the erosion. A huge volume of water passes through the mouth of the bay in a tidal cycle. The rate over one tidal cycle is twice the annual rate of discharge passing through the Columbia River at The Dalles, Ore., engineers say. Winter sometimes brings brutal storms and waves that chew up the shore. Extremely high waves don’t strike every year, but over time they keep coming. Between 1974 and 1997, more than 35 houses fell into the water. In the past, erosion has destroyed a town, a lighthouse, a lifesaving station, a clam cannery, a school and a Grange Hall. . . .

. . . Before the jetty was proposed, the Transportation Department took steps to protect the most exposed stretch of Highway 105. In 1995, workers erected a 500-foot-long rock bulkhead. In 1997, another 1,820-foot rock barrier was under construction when an independent engineering firm proposed a more permanent solution. Pacific International Engineering, based in Edmonds, has for years advised coastal communities on erosion response. In the case of the jetty, the company also helped identify Federal Highway Administration emergency relief money to pay for it. Harry Hosey, one of the company’s principals, told state, local and federal officials that the rock bulkheads were a Band-Aid, according to Corps records. Without a more substantial project, he said, erosion would bisect the highway within a few years. “The work was done in a great hurry, and there was not a tremendous amount of written analysis before the plan,” said Johannessen, who reviewed much of the paperwork last year for the state Transportation Department.

Critics foresaw problems before the jetty was built. For months before permitting construction, the Corps dogged proponents with concerns. Pacific International Engineering modified the jetty’s design in response to the Corps’ insistence that the jetty would make the already dangerous inlet more treacherous for navigation. Now, its chief designer, who no longer works for Pacific International Engineering, and others say the change might be one of the reasons the jetty doesn’t work as planned.

Civil engineer Mark and coastal geologist Andrew Morang concluded that the jetty does nothing to protect the shoreline and is, in fact, falling apart. The toe of the jetty, which was designed to rest 90 feet below the water’s surface, has collapsed. “Almost immediately (after construction), it started unraveling,” Morang said. As part of the construction project, workers piled loads of sand east of the jetty to help buffer the roadway and existing bulkheads against high waves. Originally, engineers estimated the beach would have to be “renourished” with sand every six years. But in June 2005, Johannessen found that more than half of the sand had disappeared during the winter following the jetty’s construction.

Johannessen, of Coastal Geologic Services in Bellingham, also pointed out that the embankment east of the jetty appeared to be eroding away, the result of “flanking” erosion typical of projects of this type. His report states that Pacific International Engineering noted this possibility in a final technical report. But the company didn’t modify its design to address it. “Groins are famous – infamous – for causing down-drift erosion, in this case on the east side,” Johannessen said. “When waves bend around a structure like this the wave refraction can actually focus wave energy on an area ... that is to the east.” In retrospect, state officials might have been better off if they had more seriously considered moving the road before sinking taxpayer money into the jetty, he said. . . .

. . . Vladimir Shepsis, who designed the jetty for Pacific International Engineering but is now part owner of another firm, didn’t know about the breach until contacted by The News Tribune. He said part of the problem is the Corps’ refusal to permit the jetty to be built to the proposed length. Also, the volume of fill deposited on the beach east of the jetty fell short due to budget limitations, he said. . . .

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Public Disclosure Commission Website Information, www.pdc.wa.gov

SWECKER DANIEL P	05/20/2004	\$500.00	HOSEY HARRY		
NORRIS BUD E	11/07/2007	\$500.00	HOSEY HARRY	SELF EMPLOYED	ENGINEERING
SIMS RONALD C	03/31/2005	\$125.00	HOSEY HARRY P	PACIFIC INT ENGINEERING	OWNER
SIMS RONALD C	02/17/2004	\$75.00	HOSEY HARRY P		
GRAHAM RICHARD A	08/24/2004	\$50.00	HOSEY HARRY	PACIFIC INT'L ENGINEERING	OWNER
GRAHAM RICHARD A	05/10/2004	\$50.00	HOSEY HARRY		
GRAHAM RICHARD A	02/18/2004	\$50.00	HOSEY HARRY		

Sen. Swecker represents Centralia-Chehalis, Ron Sims is the King County Executive, Richard Graham is the Lewis County Commissioner who is the “point man for flood control efforts in the Twin Cities” and Bud Norris is the Mount Vernon Mayor.