

Appendix A – Glossary

100-Year Flood – A term used to define an extreme flow rate that has a one percent chance of being exceeded in any given year. The 100-year flood is a flood that is equaled or exceeded once every 100 years on average. The term should not be taken literally as there is no guarantee that the 100-year flood will occur within a 100-year period or that it will not recur several times.

Alluvium – Material, such as, sand, silt, or clay, deposited on land by rivers and streams.

Alternatives – Combinations of measures.

Basin – The area within which all surface water – whether from rainfall, snowmelt, springs, or other sources – flows to a single water body or water course.

Biennium – A period of two years.

Channelization – To straighten by means of a channel.

Community Rate System (CRS) – A program developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to encourage - by use of flood insurance premium reductions - community and state activities that go beyond the basic National Flood Insurance Program requirements; the CRS gives communities credit for certain activities to reduce flood losses, facilitate accurate insurance rating, and promote the awareness of flood insurance.

Crest – The highest point of a wave.

Cubic Feet per Second (cfs) – The unit by which discharge or river flow is commonly measured.

Dam – A barrier constructed across a waterway for controlling or raising the level of the water.

Debris – Objects such as logs, trees and other vegetation, building wreckage, vehicles, shopping carts or dead animals carried by water in a flood (or wind, as in a hurricane or tornado).

Delta – A triangular alluvial deposit at the mouth of a river.

Demographics – Statistical characteristics.

Dike – An embankment, especially of earth, built to control flood waters.

Distributaries – Branches the river breaks into before it flows in to Puget Sound.

Drainage Basin – The boundary of a river basin that is defined by natural topography.

Ecosystem – An ecological community and its environment interacting and functioning as a unit.

Epoch – A historical period; era.

Erosion – To wear away or become worn away by or as if by rubbing or abrading.

Estuary – The wide lower course of a river into which the tides flow.

Evapotranspiration – The combined process of water converting to vapor (evaporation) and via plant tissues (transpiration).

Flood / Flooding – An overflow of water onto land that is normally dry.

Flood Control Structures – Structures such as dams, dikes, levees, drainage canals, and other structures built to modify flooding and protect areas from floodwaters.

Flood Insurance – The insurance coverage provided through the National Flood Insurance Program.

Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) – An official map of a community on which the Federal Emergency Management Agency has delineated both the special hazard areas and the risk premium zoned applicable to the community. FIRMs typically identify the elevation of the one percent annual chance flood and the areas that would be inundated by that level of flooding; they are used to determine flood insurance rates and for floodplain management. FIRM maps are available at the Skagit County Planning and Development Services.

Flood Stage – A site-specific river level, at which flood damage may start to occur, and usually occurs at or above the top of the riverbank. Flood heights are often measured relative to the flood stage elevation. At the Concrete and Mount Vernon gauges, flood stage is 28 feet.

Flood Storage Pool – A volume of space in a reservoir reserved for storage of flood water.

Flood Warning – The second basic advisory issued by the National Weather Service. A flood warning is issued when flooding conditions are expected to develop. In some cases, the flood warning will be river stage or height reading. The National Weather Service tries to issue flood forecasts with an accuracy of plus or minus one foot. But there are many variables that can enter into this forecast. Some of the variables are difficult to predict, yet have great impacts on flood forecasts.

Flood Watch – The first of two basic advisories issued by the National Weather Service. A flood watch is issued when conditions are favorable for flooding. A watch does not mean that flooding will definitely occur, but it does give a community an early notice of potential flooding and allows the community to review flood safety steps.

Floodplain – The land area adjoining a river, stream, watercourse, ocean, bay or lake, which is likely to be flooded. The extent of the floodplain may vary with frequency of flooding being considered.

Floodplain Management – A decision-making process whose goal is to achieve appropriate use of the nation's floodplains. Appropriate use is any activity or set of activities that is compatible with the risk to natural resources and human resources. The operation of an overall program of corrective and preventive measures for reducing flood damage, including but not limited to watershed management, emergency preparedness plans, flood control works, and floodplain management regulations.

Floodplain Resources – Natural and cultural resources including wetlands, surface water, groundwater, soils, historic sites, and other resources that may be found in the floodplain and that provide important water resources, living resources (habitat), and cultural/historic values.

Floodproofing – The modification of individual structures and facilities, their sites, and their contents to protect against structural failure, to keep water out, or to reduce the damaging effects of water entry.

Floodway – A regular channel of a river, stream, or other watercourse, plus the adjacent land areas that must be reserved to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than one foot.

Floodway Fringe – The portion of a flood plain that is inundated by floodwaters but is not within a defined floodway. Floodway fringes serve as temporary storage areas for floodwaters.

Floodwater Conveyance – A volume of water passing through a given area.

Gauge – An instrument for measuring levels of water.

Geology – The science dealing with the origin, history, and structure of the earth.

Glacial Outwash – Gravel, sand, and silt, commonly stratified, deposited by glacial melt water.

Glacial Till – Unsorted, nonstratified rock material transported and compacted by glacial ice.

Hydraulic – The study of movement of water.

Hydroelectric – Of, pertaining to, or using electricity produced by the power of running water.

Hydrograph – A graphical method used to represent flow over a specified period of time.

Hydrology – The properties, distribution, and circulation of water.

Hydropower – Hydroelectric power.

Infrastructure – The basic facilities needed for the functioning of a system.

Lahars – Slurries of volcanic rocks, sediment, and ash mixed with water that rush down streams and river valleys leading away from a volcano.

Levee – An embankment built to prevent a body of water, especially a river, from overflowing.

Measures – Small stand-alone projects.

Permeability – Measure of water's ability to move through soil.

Phase 1 Flooding – Phase 1 floods inundate low areas near the Skagit River, may cover a few small sections of roads, and occur every few years on the average. These floods generally do not cause significant damage in the Skagit River Valley. A large phase 1 flood occurred in December 1989.

Phase 2 Flooding – Phase 2 floods inundate a wider area and may cause significant damage. A large phase 2 is approximately what occurred in December 1975 which was

estimated to be a 10-year flood event (the magnitude of a flood that would have a 10% chance of occurring on any given year.)

Phase 3 Flooding – Phase 3 floods can cause catastrophic damage in the valley. A very large phase 3 flood would be considered a 100-year flood which means the probability of a flood of this magnitude would have approximately a 1% chance of occurring in any given year.

Regulatory Floodway – The area regulated by federal, state, or local requirements to provide for the discharge of the base flood so the cumulative increase in water surface elevation is no more than a designated amount (not to exceed one foot as the minimum standard set by the National Flood Insurance Program).

Repetitive Loss – A flood-cause loss of more than \$1,000 to a repetitive loss structure.

Repetitive Loss Structure – A structure for which two or more losses of more than \$1,000 (building and contents combined) have been paid since 1978.

Riparian – Of or on the bank of a natural course of water.

Riverine – Related to, formed by, or resembling a river.

Stewardship – The conducting, supervising, or managing of something.

Structural Measures – Measures such as dams, reservoirs, dikes, levees, floodwalls, channel alterations, high-flow diversions, spillways, and land-treatment measures designed to modify floods.

Subbasin – A tributary basin of a large drainage basin.

Substantial Improvement – Any repair, reconstruction, or improvements of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure either before the improvement or repair is started or if the structure has been damaged and is being restored, before the damage occurred.

Terrace – An old alluvial plain, ordinarily flat or undulating, bordering a river, lake, or sea.

Topography – Detailed physical features of a place or region.

Tributary – A creek, stream, or river fork feeding the major watercourse in the area.

Watershed – The boundary of a river basin that is defined by natural topography.

Wetland – A wet, swampy lowland area.

References:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

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Snohomish County. 2003. *Draft Public Review Stillaguamish River Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan*. Snohomish County, WA. Snohomish County Public Works.