

SKAGIT RIVER IMPACT PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes from May 31, 2006

Present: Bud Norris, Charles Bennett, Jana Hanson, Sharon Dillon, Scott Thomas, John Schultz, Jon Aarstad, Neil Hamburg, Tom Karsh, Gary Rowe, Harry Hosey, Kevin Rogerson, James Geluso.

Call to order:

Mayor Bud Norris called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

Mayor Norris began the meeting with a request from the committee to clarify the agreement that the partnership entered into at their last meeting in April. At the meeting in April there was consensus amongst the members of the partnership and all three of the County Board of Commissioners, to collaborate on the effort to draft legislation for Congress to direct the COE to operate Baker Dam. However, it has come to the attention of several of the members through an email from the County, which the BOCC approved draft legislation and forward it to Congressman Larsen's office. The language was not given to the SRIP and in fact was contrary to the position and draft language that the SRIP attorneys had drafted. **Scott Thomas** concurred with the information presented by Mayor Norris. **John Schultz** indicated that the attorneys had specifically disagreed with the proposed language that was approved by the BOCC. The attorneys had submitted a draft of legislative language to the county but never heard back from the county. Also, the County has sent out an email to interested parties with the attached legislation approved by the BOCC and did not include any of the SRIP members in the email. **Norris** questioned County Administrator Gary Rowe whether each of the commissioners had agreed to the language.

Gary Rowe indicated that all three commissioners reviewed the language and approved it to be forwarded to Congressman Larsen's office. **Kevin Rogerson** reminded the group that there had been formal action taken in the form of a motion at the Steering Committee meeting in April which included all three of the commissioners, to work together on the legislative language. There was general discussion regarding the language approved by the BOCC which endorses the GI Study without specifically spelling it. **Rowe** stated that the BOCC has supported the continuation of the GI Study.

Jon Aarstad requested that Gary Rowe go back to the BOCC and ask them to rescind the approved language and replace it with the draft supported by the SRIP and forward this language on to Congress.

1.0 Status and Report of WSDOT Study:

Harry Hosey discussed his meetings with each of the dike districts to go over in depth the study that has been completed on the hydrology and potential measures. **Hosey** stated that a written

record of each meeting has been provided to each District. The action items from each meeting with the Dike Districts will be formatted into a guide for the partnership to follow with respect to preparation of the WSDOT funded study. The projects will be coordinated with the entire partnership. A detailed presentation of Skagit River Flood Protection Report has now been made to the SRIP Cities and Diking Districts partners by Hosey. A presentation has not been made to Sedro Woolley or to the BOCC. The materials in the report represent a culmination of information that was presented at the workshops which were hosted by the county and PI Engineering. Members of the SRIP together cumulated over 700 hours of meeting time at the workshops.

Hosey explained Phase II of the study. One of the goals of the Phase II study is to address how measures will protect transportation infrastructure. A meeting is being scheduled with the WSDOT to discuss the various flood control measures and their benefit to state transportation infrastructure and to educate WSDOT on the general flood issues and impacts that the new FEMA maps will have on the highway and road systems. The significant storage projects that are beneficial to all members of the partnership and therefore should receive priority focus are increases to Baker and Ross Storage and implementation of new off channel storage at Nookachamps. It appears that the Nookachamps project could possibly achieve 100 year protection for Mount Vernon and Burlington. **Hosey** emphasized that our state senators requested that Skagit County work together with all of the entities within the County on a coordinated plan and effort to protect state transportation systems. Plans for flood control measures that include protection of transportation systems are more likely to receive state funding. The measures will not only protect the transportation systems but also our communities. The report on the flood control measures and cost for implementing those measures is due to the legislature by December 2006. The report will present next steps for requesting funding to build the projects.

Action Item: Engage Dike District 20 and perhaps combine a meeting with DD 20 and Sedro Woolley.

2.0 Briefing on Mount Vernon Flood Protection Plan for the Downtown Waterfront Area:

Hosey briefed the committee on the Mount Vernon Downtown Master Plan and proposed improvements for flood control. **Hosey** discussed that PI Engineering would use Corps 100-yr hydrology and water surface profiles as a conservative starting point to design the protection measures for downtown Mount Vernon. **Neil Hamburg** discussed how the North Bend, above the Lion's park, is considered an outlet for flood flows if there is a break in the levee between BNR bridge and the Freeway bridge. **Chuck Bennett** stated that DD #12 is continuing to acquire property for levee setback. **Aarstad** mentioned the City of Burlington's moratorium on building too close to the dikes to provide adequate area for future levee setbacks. **Hosey** indicated that he will prepare a technical memo on storage for the City of Burlington based on the proposed levee setbacks.

Thomas questioned whether flood control projects will enhance salmon habitat. **Hosey** responded that the projects will not encumber salmon habitat. PIE will initiate discussions with the agencies to discuss these issues as part of their work on Phase II.

Norris asked Gary Rowe if Cockerham Island is being considered by the County as a possible flood control project. **Rowe** stated that it is being studied. **Schultz** asked Gary Rowe if Chal Martin, Lorna Ellestad and Dave Brookings will be attending future SRIP meetings. **Rowe** responded that he does not know the answer to that question.

3.0 Discussion of problems associated with using the Corps peak flood flows:

Hosey presented tables and charts comparing 100-yr peak flood flows at Sedro Woolley between the Corps and Stewart. The COE 100-yr flow is 235,300 cfs without additional storage at Lower Baker and 225,400 cfs with 29,000 acre feet of storage. PIE's hydrology results in 100-yr peak flows of 196,600 cfs and 181,400 cfs respectively. The PIE figures replace the Stewart estimated flood flows with flows close the Stewart's estimates at Sedro Woolley. The existing protection measures on the lower Skagit system can contain about 145,000 cfs. The PIE estimated peak flows can be reduced to the 145,000 cfs system capacity with additional Baker storage and new off channel storage at Nookachamps (without Baker storage the Nookachamps dikes need to build to an elevation of 47). The COE estimated peak flows cannot be contained with a combination of additional Ross and Baker storage and new Nookachamps storage. The Corps GI Study is estimated to cost county tax payers up to \$1million/year for 3 years and is estimated to take at least 9 years to move through the Corps process for approval to fund a project. The cost benefit analysis and environmental impacts of a Corps project present a great risk of having a project funded. If the Stewart flows are removed from the Corps analysis there appears about 7,000 cfs difference between the COE estimate of 100-yr peak flows and the PIE estimate.

Norris asked if the County is aware of the cost of the GI Process. **Rowe** answered that he understands the cost to be approximately \$1million for the entire county share. **Hosey** indicated that if FEMA throws out the Stewart report, FEMA will redirect the COE to revisit their model. The GI study will stop and start all over again. Additional storage of 29,000 ac-ft at Lake Shannon will require approximately 31,000 acre feet of new off channel storage at Nookachamps to reduce peak flow to 145,000 cfs. The more storage we have at Baker the less investment needed at Nookachamps. More storage in Lower Baker is better than more storage in Upper Baker.

Norris asked if the committee thinks we should formally request the BOCC to abandon the GI Study. There was general discussion regarding this issue but no action was taken.

There was discussion regarding the recent letter from Carl Cook of FEMA and the troubles that FEMA and the COE are having with running the model. **Rogerson** expressed concern over the FEMA letter and suggested a formal letter of response from the SCOG written by the SRIP regarding the insinuation that FEMA has already come to a decision without consulting with the local entities regarding hydrology. This could be perceived as an Appearance of Fairness issue.

5.0 Update on NHC Review of Applicability of Stewart Report: **Hanson** reviewed the memo sent from the County on the progress of NHC's review. It was suggested that NHC meet with the dike districts and for interviews.

6.0 Update on PSE Litigation: **Rogerson and Schultz** provided brief updates.

7.0 Process for Obligating the Federal Appropriates, Safety-LU, of \$2.7M for Flood Control: Norris asked about the appropriation and what it can be spent on. Hosey provided a history of the appropriation and that it is intended for use on projects, construction, of measures that protect transportation infrastructure, on in the case of this particular appropriation, the bridges. The money could go towards the Nookachamps project and justified in that this project will provide protection of transportation infrastructure.

8.0 Amendments to Inter-local Agreement: discussion on the proposed changes. Hanson requested that all parties have there comments on the edits to her by 6/9/06. If no comments are submitted parties should have the recent amended versions approved by their commissions/councils, executed and sent back to Hanson.

Next meeting: June 29, 2006 from 10:00 – 12:00.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:0 pm.