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To: skagitFACT@gmail.com
Subject: Skagit FACT Newsletter

Dear Skagit FACT members,

This newsletter is to update you on the current status of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's new flood maps for the Skagit Valley.

Goals

- **Accurate Flood Maps** - The Cities of Mount Vernon and Burlington, as well as Dike Districts 12, 17 and 1, have been working with Skagit County since last October to put together an appeal of FEMA's initial proposed maps, which showed some potential inaccuracies in both the hydrology (amount of water estimated) and hydraulics (manner in which water flows through).
- **A Flood Project underway for the Skagit Valley** – Once the first thing (accurate maps) is accomplished, it will take remarkable (and unprecedented) cooperation within this community to achieve the bigger thing: a flood protection project for this Valley.

Current State of Affairs

- With the assistance of the K&L Gates law firm, our local officials have been able to convince FEMA to re-examine their software modeling (hydraulics) which is the reason that the new maps from FEMA are currently delayed.
- Just recently it has come to light that the local government's concern with FEMA's software modeling was in fact well founded, as the Army Corp of Engineers (the agency producing the new maps for FEMA) did find errors in how it was projecting the water flow through our community.
- Once this problem with the Corp of Engineers' (or COE's) hydraulic modeling is corrected, it appears that FEMA will release the COE's preliminary maps without addressing the more serious concerns that have been brought to light with the hydrology they are using, which will make an appeal of their maps by this community still very much necessary.
- Another important issue regarding flood control for Skagit County is the current re-licensing of the Baker River Hydroelectric Project by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). During this re-licensing effort, a Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) study is completed to determine in part how equipped the dams are to handle the most severe flood event. At that time any needed improvements to get the dams into compliance with current regulations must be completed before the dams are re-licensed. We must pay attention to this process to make sure that all valid interests are taken into account and that our communities are well protected by the Upper and Lower Baker dams before they are re-licensed.

Next Steps

- As a review, a large part of our local government's concern with FEMA's hydrology revolves around four historic floods estimated by James Stewart back in 1922 (before the gage was installed on the river). Stewart's estimates for these four floods are significantly out of sync with all the floods that have been recorded by the Skagit River's gage for the past 80 years, and also appear to be out of sync with physical evidence found in historic homes that should show signs of being flooded according to Stewart's estimates, but do not. Studies on these homes, particularly in the Crofoot area, are currently being completed by a joint effort between Burlington and the County. This evidence will be added to the already compelling scientific appeal that the local governments have prepared as an alternative to the COE's maps that FEMA is planning to adopt for our valley.
- It has been encouraging for this community to see a willingness within the FEMA organization to put the mapping process on hold as questions have come to light regarding their maps. We have great hope that FEMA will allow this remapping process to be taken before an independent three member expert panel for review, as our local governments are requesting. This will ensure an objective consideration of the maps that our local governments' engineering firms have produced as alternatives to the COE's maps that FEMA is proposing to use.
- For the sake of our environment and the safety of our communities, we must ensure that due attention is given to the PMF study of the Upper and Lower Baker dams as the FERC re-licenses the Baker River Hydroelectric Project. Skagit FACT will be organizing a trip this spring to visit the dams. Stay tuned for an invite!

Skagit FACT wants to express our deepest appreciation for the excellent and proactive efforts of the city leaders of Burlington and Mount Vernon, as well as the Dike Districts 12, 17, and 1. We are also grateful for the very effective support from the County with regards to this important remapping process. Our community has also received timely support from our Federal representatives, especially Congressman Rick Larson, and for this we are thankful as well. We also would be remiss not to mention Larry Kunzler and the great resource he (and his website, www.skagitriverhistory.com) has been for this community as we tackle these issues. Skagit FACT is hopeful to see continued successful collaboration, as well as a healthy broadening of the interests involved, as this issue moves from the first thing (new maps) to the bigger thing: an actual flood protection project getting underway for this community!

As we stated in our last newsletter, your continued interest and assistance is key to maintaining a strong grass roots effort to ensure our valley is taken care of through this remapping process. We'll keep you posted.

Thank you,

Your Skagit FACT Executive Committee

The mission of the Skagit Flood Advisory Conference Team is to advise and educate citizens, businesses, and local governments on issues and impacts of flood policies and regulations with attention to safety and quality of life concerns of the region.