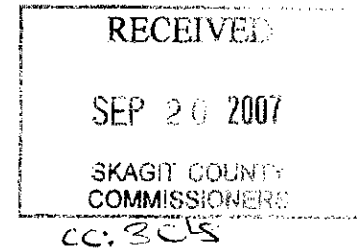




FEMA

September 17, 2007

Sharon Dillon, Chair
Skagit County Commissioners
1800 Continental Place Suite 100
Mount Vernon, Washington 98273-5625



Dear Commissioner Dillon:

This letter is to update you and your staff as to the current status of the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) being conducted for the lower Skagit River. Over the last couple months, several key pieces of information and new data were shared with our office related to the FIS. Accordingly, we will be modifying our study and maps with the results. Our original timeline for releasing the preliminary FIS results was set for mid-summer 2007; however, the revised schedule delays preliminary map release until late November to early December 2007 at the earliest. Depending on this year's flood season, this timeline may be extended into early 2008 if necessary.

Following the public release of our study contractor's "draft" maps and study data last spring, concerns were raised by Skagit County Geographic Information System (GIS) staff related to the accuracy of the floodplain boundaries shown on the maps. Because the Flo2D model uses 400' grids or "cells" to define where and how deep water gets, the external boundaries of the special flood hazard area did not correspond well to known ground features. To remedy the issue, FEMA acquired new, more accurate, LiDAR topographic maps that use 2' contour intervals. County GIS staff and FEMA worked jointly to re-delineate areas subject to the 100-year flood based on the new maps to reduce inadvertent inclusions of high ground into the special flood hazard area. This issue was resolved productively and the results will be included in the preliminary maps.

During the GIS mapping process, additional areas of "high ground" were identified in the vicinity of the confluence of the Samish and Skagit Rivers. In coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Skagit County, we folded in a study conducted on the Samish River by CH2MHill in the late 1990s and updated a previously existing hydraulic model used by the USACE Seattle District. Using the new information, we were able to redefine flooding and base flood elevations associated with the lower Samish River downstream of where it exits the "canyon" onto the Skagit River delta.

Because these two rivers flood under different circumstances, we believe this information will be critical to local planning efforts. Our preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (pFIRM) will show these two floodplains as distinct until the point at which the Skagit River base flood elevations exceed those of the Samish.

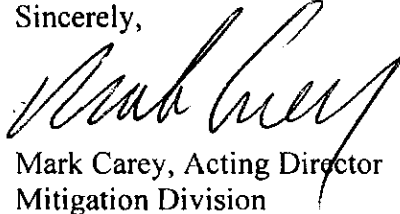
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Additional new data was provided by the U.S. Geological Survey in a recently published Scientific Investigations Report (2007-5159) to re-evaluate the 1921 peak discharge at Skagit River near Concrete. We received an official copy of this report on August 10, 2007. This new report revises, and definitively establishes, several peak flows. This revision affects the hydrology used in the FIS. As such, we tasked our study contractor to revise the FIS hydrology and re-run the Flo2D model to map the results factoring in levees, new base topographic maps, and revised hydrology. This work is currently underway.

Factoring the updated topography, additional data on the Samish River, and USGS report, FEMA made a decision to postpone the release of preliminary maps until the adjustments were made. We believe this delay is based on technically sound data and is warranted; it improves the accuracy of our maps. We will continue to evaluate data relevant to this study submitted by Skagit County communities and interested parties. Should the submitted information warrant, we will modify our study and maps accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact Ryan Ike of my staff. He can be reached at the address above or by calling (425) 487-4767.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Carey", is written over the typed name and title.

Mark Carey, Acting Director
Mitigation Division

cc: James E. Voetberg, Director, Skagit County Public Works
Chuck Steele, WA Dept of Ecology
Col. Michael McCormick, District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

RI:bb