

SKAGIT COUNTY DIKE DIST #12 Hazard Mitigation Plan 2003

Skagit County Dike District #12 was originally incorporated in 1895. Additional areas have been annexed into the district since that time; areas east of Burlington to including the area where United General Hospital is was annexed in early 1950's and an additional area near the southerly portion of Padilla Bay was annexed in 1994. As of this writing, the District is preparing to annex and take over the functions and duties of Skagit County Dike/ Drainage District #8. This will bring the total area served by Dike District #12 to about 20,000 acres.

Over the years farmland provided the bulk of monies for the Districts budget. In the late 1970's and early 1980's an increase in commercial development began in the Burlington area. In the 1990's, and continuing on through the present, the area in and around Burlington has become extremely developed with additional residences as well as commercial, industrial, and retail development. While this explosion in growth has benefited the Skagit County Dike District #12 financially, due to a large tax base to draw from (2003 assessed value of \$ 1,116,000,000), it has, none the less, caused some difficulties as well. While the District has worked diligently to upgrade the levee, in an effort to provide increased flood protection, this work has resulted in increased development since the community feels a greater sense of security. The increase in development and greater sense of security creates the need to do even more to protect the area in addition to increasing the liability and responsibility that Skagit County Dike District #12 has to protect its constituents and an ever increasing tax base. The District has been working with the City of Burlington to fend off development pressure in the area next to the levee.

The 1990 floods were a wake up call for flood control in Skagit County. With back to back floods again in 1995 and additional flooding in 1996, it was clear that something else had to be done to increase the level of flood protection within the lower floodplain. The existing Skagit River levees were being pushed to their maximum and, in the case of Fir Island, beyond their capabilities to protect life and property. Dike District 12 has embarked on a bold plan to try to provide better protection for its constituents.

Since 1990 the District has reconstructed its levees upstream of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Bridge. These levees were reconstructed to exceed United States Army Corps of Engineers standards (15' top with 2:1 slope) with levee tops varying from 30' to 50' in width and with levee back-slopes as great as 6:1. This was done in the hopes to prevent a catastrophic failure during a future flood event. The wider tops coupled with longer, gentle back-slopes will allow flood waters high enough to over-top the levee to flow slowly and smoothly onto the floodplain in a more controlled manner thus allowing time for an evacuation.

The District has been actively purchasing land adjacent to the levee downstream of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Bridge to allow for the future setting back of the levee which will allow the river much needed room to safely convey the larger floods of late.

Skagit County Dike District #12 has worked a great deal with the Seattle District of the United States Army Corps of Engineers since the 1990 floods. In addition, the District works with other local governmental agencies including law, fire, emergency management, search and rescue, and other dike districts. Skagit County Dike District #12 has a mutual aid policy within its Standard Operating Guidelines which allows it to help others in flood emergencies, as was the case in 1990 floods when the District delivered over 90,000 sandbags to Mt. Vernon, Conway, Fir Island and several other areas.

The District will remain committed to its duty to protect its constituents and to prepare for emergency situations. The District recently worked with the City of Burlington to develop an evacuation plan that can be activated for flooding as well as other hazards.