



SAMISH ISLAND COMMUNITY MEETING FEBRUARY 27, 2023

This document includes an overview of topics discussed during the community meeting held on February 27th, 2023, as well as a list of questions posed by those in attendance.

Please note: This is not a perfect transcription of the meeting. If you would like access to the full audio, please email Danica Sessions at danicas@co.skagit.wa.us.

PUBLIC WORKS:

- Limited resources available to fix the issue on Samish Island Road. The County recognizes that the road will most likely need to be raised but more information is needed and the County will need more resources to do this.
- Of those who live in unincorporated Skagit County, approximately 6 cents of every dollar paid in property taxes goes to the road fund. County oversees 800 miles of roads as well as bridges, and this includes routine maintenance. This stretches the Road Fund, making funding very limited.

What is the County currently doing to address the issues with Samish Island Road?

Public Works has submitted an application for funding to Representative Lekanoff for a resiliency study that will help determine how to proceed with the road, including potential repairs, road raising—and by how much, etc.

What would it take to bring the Alice Bay dike to standard?

The dike must be brought up to a level of standard that the dike district would be comfortable with. The question is how to pay for this and what information is needed? Dike District 5 needs elevation information before an estimated cost can be established and a funding strategy developed with the County and other partners. County is actively working with Skagit Land Trust, the Dike District, and Padilla Bay to determine next steps.

Who owns the dike?

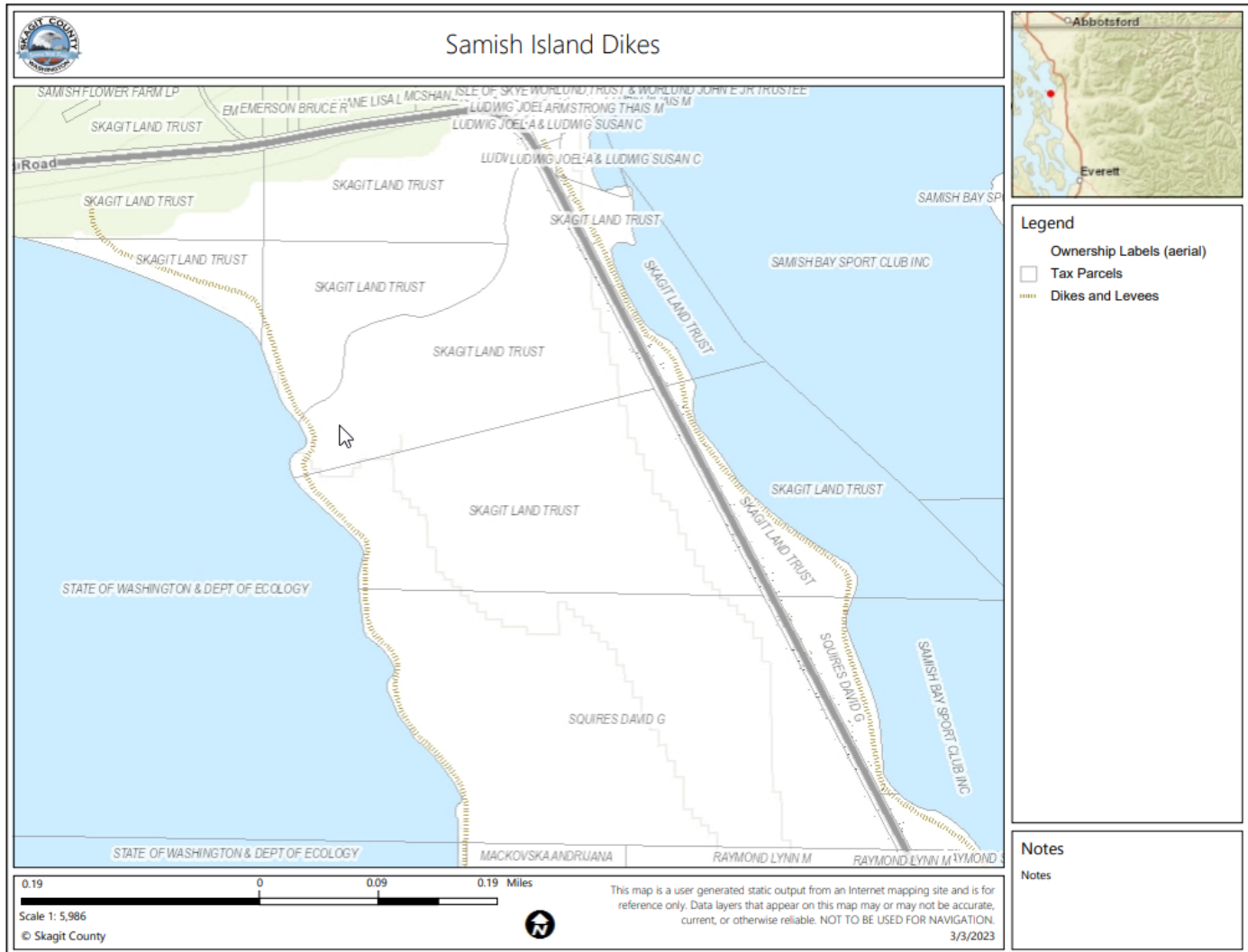
The dike is not a part of Dike District 5 and the County doesn't own any dikes. The majority of the infrastructure in question is privately owned by either the Skagit Land Trust or local landowners.

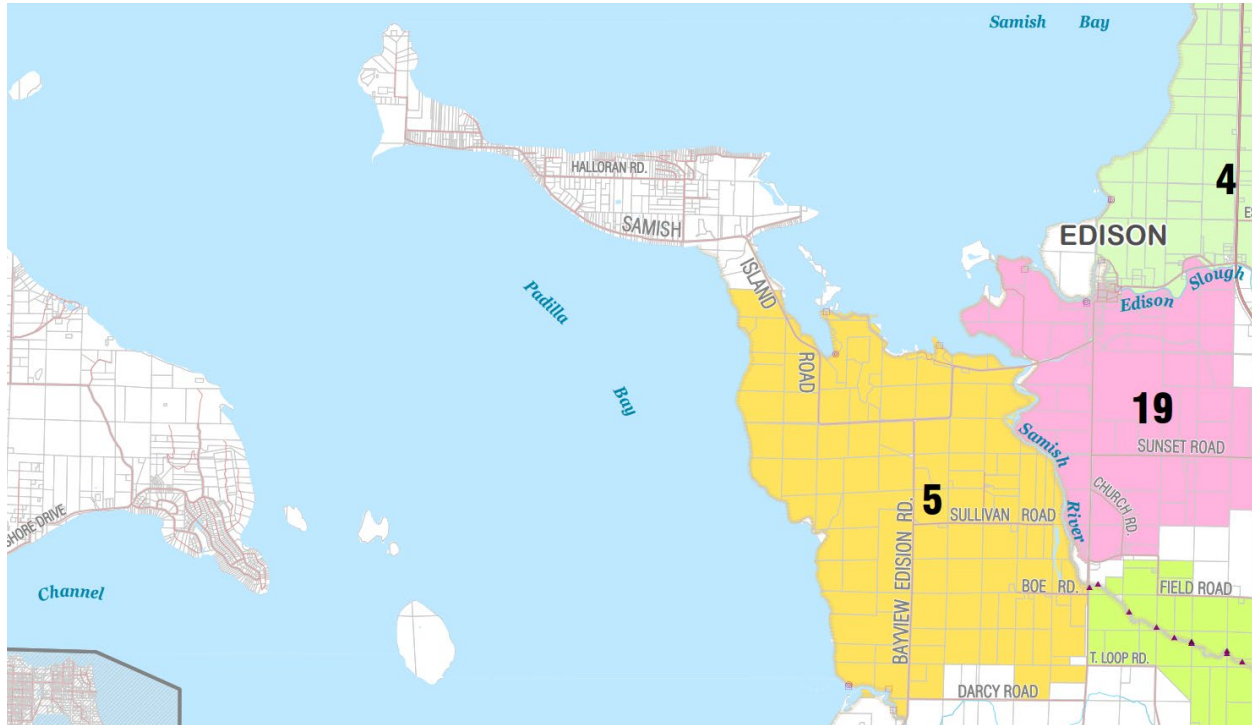


Who has responsibility for the dike? Where does the dike start with the private section?

In early 1900s, residents of certain districts could decide whether or not they wanted to be a part of a diking district. Those who opted out were left in charge of their own dikes. Present day concern that private dikes do not have the funds like dike districts to maintain existing dikes.

New property owners might not provide easement to allow dike district access. This could pose issues for neighboring residents.





How many private owners are we talking about?

Dikes were once owned by Squires, but then were divided between Squires and the Skagit Land Trust. There is a third owner on the corner, as well.

Land in section 36 until 1956 was state land.

Does the county own the road?

Yes, the County has a 50 foot right of way. Generally, 25 feet on each side of the center line.

Does the County have a solution for a more robust dike?

County needs to understand what the level of improvement needs to be and cost. Limitations of what we can do to raise things because you force the water to go somewhere else. Having conversations with Dike District. Most concern is around privately owned dikes. County's position is to work with Dike District to potentially take over maintenance of these dikes if brought up to standard. Dike District (DD) would be happy to do so but needs to be brought up to standard.

Need to work through process with DD to annex dikes into Dike District. Talking primarily about East side dike on Alice Bay.

Most of the property is owned by Skagit Land Trust. Conversations happening. Funding needs to happen to bring them up to standard.



Are residents required to maintain private dikes or can they “let them go”?

Need to work together on solution moving forward.

[Molly Doran, Skagit Land Trust] Alice Bay Dike history—state owned it and then county moved it. Blocked a slough causing land to sink. Private dike is actually part of the road infrastructure. We put \$70,000 plus tax into the dike for emergency fix. Raise dike to same as Dike District 5 but no rocks on the outside. Should be an okay standard. –DD5 says that it is 6 inches lower.

What I’ve heard is the first step is to do a resiliency study. Is that correct?

The County submitted an application this legislative session for funding for a resiliency study. Stakeholders are on the table and conversations are happening in the interim between partners. Waiting on results of this funding ask. Should know by end of legislative session—usually by April.

Funding will cover scientific modeling needed to evaluate the resiliency of Samish Island Road (its sole road access connecting Samish Island to the mainland) in response to sea-level rise, and our changing climate patterns. Furthermore, this feasibility study will also provide proposed options and associate preliminary cost estimates for retrofits options or alternatives to increase Samish Island Road resiliency rating, and to assist this community to be more robust.

Skagit Land Trust is also working on a restoration study, expected to be completed in the fall.

[Kari Odden, Skagit Land Trust] Funding for restoration planning and feasibility study. Feasibility study is taking into account infrastructure (although not to the extent that the County would need) but will provide initial baseline information that can be shared with the County.

What was the County’s request for funding to Rep Lekanoff?

Budget Proviso request was \$350,000. This would give the County some options for modeling, sea level rising, resiliency, etc. Lekanoff came to County specifically asking what she could do.

How long was the road closed during December 27th event?

4 hours although cars continued to access roads despite signs being posted on the mainland side. County on continuous improvement process—County working with Fire District, proving cones and signs so they can be posted on the Samish Island side if/when another closure happens.

[speaker??] Different timelines brought up: What needs to happen short term to keep the road open? Resiliency study is looking long term for understanding what is necessary to solve problem long term. 10 years out?

If the dike fails on private land, what are the options for the County to fix it?

County could partner with Dike Districts—funding and sandbagging. Depends on the situation. County’s job is to keep the road open as long as possible, and as safely as possible.



Why can't you make the dikes higher?

Dike district is not allowed by permit to keep raising dikes. Must have an elevation that they are shooting for.

[Dike District] Can raise by 8 inches.

What is the role of the Army Corps of Engineers?

Army Corps has the final permit—can stop a project. Is a federal agency thus overseen by the federal government.

Why is the County not dealing with the road itself which has sunk below the tide level? What is the County's responsibility?

County has asked for funding to conduct a resiliency study. Study will help to come up with a plan on how to improve and ensure access to Samish Island.

Could a bridge be built over areas of the road that have seen flooding? Could this be a permanent, long-term fix?

A feasibility study is the first step. There isn't any existing study with data that the County can analyze at this time. A feasibility is probably only the first step in the process.

Has there been discussion about installing a bridge similar to situation in Jefferson County?

Skagit Land Trust purchased the property and their doing studies for long-term planning. County is looking at partnerships but it isn't the County's role to tell the Land Trust what to do.

[Kari Odden, Skagit Land Trust] Skagit Land Trust isn't doing studies for the road. Hopefully the County will receive funding from the state so that The Skagit Land Trust's study and the county's resiliency study can be looked at together to help inform next steps.

Misc. comments:

- Raising a dike could have unintended consequences—it moves water down the line. Could impact someone living downstream. Mississippi and New Orleans given as prime example of this.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

Presentation highlights:

- Emergency Resource Guides for preparing for earthquakes, water outages, landslides, etc. Access information on the Public Health website: www.skagitcounty.net/health.
- Questions about septic systems and access to potable water, contact Public Health at (360) 416-1500.



DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

Presentation highlights:

- DEM brought Tsunami Siren to Samish Island, provided by state at no cost to County. Sounds every 1st Monday of the month at noon. Those who are in close proximity get courtesy text 15 minutes prior to alarm. Blue lights for those who are hearing impaired.
- Refilled sand following Thanksgiving. Locations wasn't on DEM's list before this event. Have refilled 5 times since then. Contact your fire chief if you need sandbags.
- DEM is responsible for County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Provides trainings to cities, community partners, etc on how to operate during emergencies.
- Sign up for [Code Red](#) for emergency alerts.
- November 2021 flooding event was declared an emergency by President Biden. Funding available for those who submitted damage assessment forms for this event.
- Presidentially declared emergencies do not happen very often. This type of funding (FEMA) is very hard to get.
- Everyone has a personal responsibility to be prepared for an emergency. The County is limited in what they can do when an emergency strikes, especially if roadways are down. Recommendation is to have at least 2 weeks of food, water, medication, etc.
- Learned that Samish island does not have its own emergency response plan. DEM has begun conversations with fire chief to begin drafting this plan. Community meeting will be planned with residents to discuss.
- County DEM relies on National Weather Service for weather forecasts. December event was 2 feet higher than forecast, showing that this scale of event was not anticipated, either by the County or the National Weather Service.
- Low barometric pressure, King Tide, and snow melt as combining factors that resulted in the December 27th flooding event.

Audience questions:

Was there a warning on Code Red on December 26th, 2023 to alert residents of King Tide Event?

There would have been but Skagit DEM did not receive notice of this weather prediction from NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration].

Nobody knows what the Tsunami sirens are. Need more community education.

Need to provide more training on what these sirens mean.

Can Tsunami sirens be used for other events other than tsunamis?

When the County builds out this system, the County would be able to. The state can at this point.

If the state can, why didn't the state use it for the King Tide event?



DEM found out about the king tide issue after the fact. Did not receive notice from NOAA. DEM has had follow up conversations with NOAA to discuss this issue with communication.

Misc. comments:

- Include the Shellfish community as they have infrastructure to haul people around, especially in light of an emergency situation.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT:

- Department deals with new and existing structures.
- Optional program (Community Rating System)—county works closely with FEMA to identify risks to structures and looks out how to mitigate risk. Includes proper construction, safety, community outreach. Performance of county and what the departments do to address risk mitigation, results in a 25% discount to individual flood policy holders.
- County can help to identify risks to your current existing building: safety, reduce flood insurance costs
- Average flood level on Samish Island is 9 feet above mean sea level. Would put a few feet on people's property at 1% risk of flood (commonly referred to as 100 year flood).
- Event on December 27th exacerbated anything FEMA has already identified as risk.
- New construction being built on columns/peers to allow water and debris to flow under and out. Would decrease risk of damage.
- PDS can help identify risk and work with folks on estimates based on lidar technology through county GIS.
- County can do site visits to help residents identify risks and work through mitigation techniques.
- Elevated peripheral utilities (like heat pumps) is another way to increase level of safety.
- County asks that people assess their risk for flooding in advance of potential event.

How long would it take for a resident to get a permit through Planning & Development?

Current permit times through PDS is 40 days, assuming all documents are submitted correctly.

Availability of FEMA funding for building related projects?

FEMA may be able to provide funding for buy-outs and elevated buildings. Requests have to come through the county. County working on allocating time and staff to identify this funding for people.

Closing remarks/comments:

- Snow caused Island access to shut down for 5 days, and then impacts from mud slides. Discussion should be had about dumping stuff over the bay.



- Number of locations on island, aside from Samish Island Road, where roads are subject to erosion and mud slides. Roads will be lost unless something is done.
- Public Works does long-range planning, but County also needs help from residents to keep County apprised of issues/concerns.
- Concern regarding speeding on the island.
- Introduction of Padilla Bay and discussion of its partnership with Skagit County and Skagit Land Trust.
- Discussion about roadway on Guemes; response from County regarding repairs worth \$50,000.
- Request for a ferry.