

MEETING SUMMARY

Advisory Committee Meeting Flood Control Zone District December 10, 2012 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Location

Hearing Room, Skagit County Administrative Building, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon.

Meeting Purpose

For the Flood Control Zone District (FCZD) Advisory Committee (AC) members to conduct normal business and:

1. Acceptance of Meeting Summary
2. Skagit River General Investigation Update
3. Farm, Fish, Flood Initiative
4. To determine next steps and assignments, if any, for Technical Committees (TC)

Acceptance of September 17, 2012 AC Meeting Summary

Jason Easton made the motion to accept the meeting summary. Larry Kunzler seconded. Motion passed (12/0/0).

Skagit River General Investigation (Skagit GI) Update

Kara Symonds recently attended a flood workshop put on by the Skagit Climate Science Consortium (SCSC), at which the future of the river, precipitation in the basin, and flooding were discussed by a group of scientists. The notion is that levels of precipitation will change in the future, thus effecting snow levels and flood risks. Their website further explains by using models based on several scenarios, these changes can be quantified over time.

More documents will be posted to the County website including the presentation from the last AC meeting, a summary of all public comments received regarding the alternatives, as well as, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) summary of the alternatives process. It was expressed later in the meeting that Kunzler would have preferred the comments be better documented; specifically what WSDOT shared with the USACE. Many comments do not appear to have been written down. Dan Berentson understood WSDOT to say the cost-to-benefit ratio of keeping water off I-5 may not be feasible. WSDOT was tasked with providing numbers to the USACE for review.

The Skagit GI's Project Development Team meets occasionally via teleconference. The USACE is in the alternative analysis phase. Focus is on the contract with Northwest Hydraulic Consultants (NHC). NHC will be studying the economic impacts and hydraulic effectiveness of floodways, overland flow bypasses, and levee setbacks. The alternatives will be built into the HEC-RAS model. The data will be overlaid with economics, infrastructure, and crops, etc. They will also be reviewing and isolating parameters related to the way the Burlington Northern Santa Fe bridge effects flooding and modeling. It is well known that enormous log jams can form at the bridge. Regarding overland flow, Kunzler recalled a case in which the Supreme Court issued a decision that temporary flooding could be considered a taking. This should be explored further. NHC's other tasks involve reviewing storage at the Upper and Lower Baker Dams, and the benefits from each.

Berentson added that once all the information is gathered, the community will be involved in picking its preferred alternative before the 30% design is drafted. The County has tentatively budgeted \$600,000 for 2013, and again in 2014; scheduled to be done in 2015. He has tasked Symonds with organizing a public outreach plan for the Skagit GI. He went on to say the AC will be one of the first groups from which to request input throughout the Skagit GI process, or the “3x3x3” – to finish a three-inch document, in three years, for \$3 million.

When asked about the environmental process of the study, Symonds stated NEPA is ongoing, and will address the community’s preferred alternative.

There is still concern that when a community preferred alternative is chosen, funding will not be available to put a project in place. Kunzler compared this process to the failure of the plan in 1979; voters turned it down. Berentson’s view is that public outreach is different this time around. Easton and Stan Nelson expressed the ongoing importance of informing the public that everyone is affected by a major flood, because people can forget the damage a flood causes. Leonard Halverson and Robert Hughes stated concern that land taxes will not be a popular way to fund a flood project. Halverson suggested timber sales could possibly fund the County’s portion of a project.

Farm, Fish, Flood Initiative (3FI)

Berentson pointed out a number of people from the AC are involved in the 3FI: Bob Carey, Daryl Hamburg, and Stan Nelson. Committees have been formed to review several parts of the 3FI. One committee has focused on the hydrodynamic model, another committee has begun to look at critical mass for the functioning of agriculture, while yet another committee will review farmland preservation. Several entities are participating in the 3FI, such as the Nature Conservancy, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Western Washington Agricultural Association, several dike districts, Skagit County Public Works, and Skagit County Preservation of Farmland.

Again, the goals of the 3FI are to establish restoration habitat in tidal areas to meet the requirements of the *Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan*, reduce flooding in the delta, and protect and improve agricultural land and infrastructure. Hamburg and Bob Carey explained the 3FI balances flood control measures with agricultural protection in a geographically different area from the Skagit GI.

The tide gate initiative requires the agricultural community to convert 2,700 acres of land to fish habitat in the floodway. Kunzler suggested the Skagit GI be redirected based on Gary Jones’ suggestion of putting in a proper drainage system that local farmers could use year round, thereby contributing to the preservation of farmland. The words “flood risk reduction” appear to not resonate with the public. Robert Hughes echoed this notion by tacking on that multiple spillways would more than likely be more effective in flood risk reduction.

Other

Before starting with the Public Comment period, Hamburg asked the County to provide a list of the AC’s attendance. Pursuant to resolution #R20120338, if a member misses more than three consecutive AC meetings, then such member may be asked to step down from the Advisory Committee. This is subject to approval by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners. Hamburg is interested in knowing member commitment in order to keep the AC strong and successful.

Easton updated the group on the Envision program, stating a 16-member Advisory Committee has now been formed. Last year, the program received a grant from the State Department of Commerce for the transferring of development rights in an effort to conserve lands.

Public Comment

Jones agrees flood risk reduction will need to be sold in a certain manner so that everyone understands flooding affects the whole of the County.

Bob Helton spoke to sea level rise; it is estimated to rise five feet by the end of the century. Sea dikes that protect much of the farmland could possibly be damaged by storm surges. He has suggested altimeter data, of land location, could lead to finding what would happen if sea dikes did not exist. Kunzler added it would behoove the County to know how the water table would be affected. Carey stated the SCSC is looking to the public for topics to study; they are a resource. Kunzler would like the USACE to study tides during historical floods throughout the whole system. Helton said the USGS can determine an astronomical tide from fifty years out.

Dan O'Donnell suggested a flood control authority be established around the time the 30% design of the community preferred alternative is completed. He assured the County of no criticism when he stated anything tied to the County can potentially be suspect to the public. A more neutral authority may have better success with funding a flood project. Funding could come from a levy. Berentson stated the AC is a separate governing entity from the County. He compared it to the flood control authority established in Truckee, California. Similarly to the AC, the group in Truckee ranks projects and makes decisions by consensus. When the AC comes to a decision, it is then passed to the supervising authority to consider.

With the end of the Public Comment period, the next date for the AC meeting was set for Tuesday, February 19.

Suggested Next Steps and Meeting

1. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 19.

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

PRESENT AT FCZD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING:

Name	Representing	Affiliation	Present	Absent	Proxy
Anderson, Mayor Mike	Cities and Towns	City of Sedro-Woolley		X	
Boudinot, Bob	ETC	Skagit Land Trust	X		
Boudreau, Mayor Jill	Cities and Towns	City of Mount Vernon			X Esco Bell
Carey, Bob	ETC	The Nature Conservancy	X		
Carlson, Todd	LUTC	WA Dept. of Transportation		X	
Easton, Jason	LUTC	LUTC	X		
Flaig, Dean	DDTC	Drainage District 21	X		
Halverson, Leonard	At-Large	Sterling Area	X		
Hamburg, Daryl	DDTC	Dike District 17	X		
Hughes, Robert	LUTC	Ag. Adv. Committee	X		
Kunzler, Larry	At-Large	Skagit River Flood Historian	X		
Nelson, Stanley	DDTC	Dike District 22	X		
Pflug, Dave	ETC	Seattle City Light		X	
Sexton, Mayor Steve	Cities and Towns	City of Burlington			X Brian Dempsey
Solomon, Shirley	ETC	Skagit Watershed Council	X		

STAFF	
Name	Affiliation
Berentson, Dan	Skagit County Public Works
Hash, Henry	Skagit County Public Works
MacMullen, Meghan	Skagit County Public Works
Symonds, Kara	Skagit County Public Works

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES	
Name	Affiliation
Chesterfield, Blaine	City of Mount Vernon
Ertel, Cory	Puget Sound Energy
Helton, Bob	Citizen
Jones, Gary	Attorney for Dike Districts 3, 17, and 22
Lagerlund, Nels	Agricultural Advisory Board
O'Donnell, Dan	Citizen
Radabaugh, David	WA State Department of Ecology