

Mill Creek

Alternatives Analysis and Design

UPDATE #1

Through November 2024

OVERVIEW

South Skagit Highway, a Skagit County owned road, travels along the South side of the Skagit River and crosses over Mill Creek near milepost 18. This section of roadway is within the floodplain of the Skagit River and the alluvial fans of Mill and Savage Creeks resulting in routine flooding and damage to the road. The Mill Creek bridge is too small for sediment transport and the Savage Creek culvert is a partial barrier to fish passage. The County is currently assessing various alternatives to improve the road and fish passage/habitat in this area.

This phase of work is expected to be completed December 2025.

All updates can be found on the Mill Creek website which is located at:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PublicWorksSurfaceWaterManagement/MillCreekFeasibilityStudy.htm>

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

In 2012, the Skagit River System Cooperative completed a Habitat Scoping Report evaluating the impacts of the highway on the Skagit River floodplain. This report identified over 60 acres of floodplain to be isolated by the road as well as 5.2 acres of wetlands and 21.7 acres of partially impacted fish habitat. You can find this report [here](#).

Building on this work the Skagit River System Cooperative, working closely with Skagit County, identified four alternatives and completed a detailed analysis and conceptual design in an effort to select a preferred alternative to advance for design and construction. You can find that report [here](#). These alternatives were costly and with no clear funding pathway the conceptual designs were shelved.

Since that time many new funding options have become available. This provided the County with the needed confidence that a more solid pathway towards funding existed. In 2023 the County was awarded a \$458,263.00 grant from the State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and an additional \$100,500.00 from Puget Sound Energy. In the fall of 2024 we solicited consultants, eventually selecting KPFF to complete an updated alternatives analysis and design.

UPDATE

- *Funding* –
 - None currently. The County and partners are watching available funding announcements and will likely apply for grants in 2025.
- *Design* –
 - KPFF kicked off design work in September 2024.
 - County staff has been working to secure right-of-entries for all properties. Most are in hand!

- Survey -
 1. Drone work was completed in November 2024 with LiDAR. LiDAR does not take aerial photographs but instead LiDAR imaging technology is used to determine ground contours in thick forested conditions. This saves us from having to have a survey crew walk the entire area. Some areas have been surveyed on the ground and “ground-truthed” to be sure our LiDAR data is accurate.
- Geomorphology –
 1. Surveys of the creeks were completed in some locations to determine possible road locations. More information in the next update!
- *Communication and Stakeholder Outreach* –
 - Skagit County staff has reached out to most of the adjacent property owners personally.
 - Letters were sent to all neighbors within 400’ of the project area. These letters requested a response from interested parties to receive updates.
 - The County launched the Mill Creek website.

UPCOMING

Skagit County is waiting to receive conceptual drawings from KPFF and their suggested relocation. County staff will then present the alternatives to the Board of County Commissioners.