

Skagit River System Flooding and Transportation Infrastructure

Flooding has the potential to cause extensive damage in Skagit County and disrupt both the state and local transportation systems. Our infrastructure interest includes Interstate 5 (I-5) and six other state highways that serve the region. Regional or localized flooding could adversely impact these transportation facilities, disrupting services and interrupting the movement of people and goods. For this reason, we are an active partner in the evaluation of flood impacts on the management of our state transportation systems.

Flood management planning is important

I-5 is an essential link to key population centers, for people and goods traveling between Western Washington and British Columbia, Canada. This corridor traverses the Skagit River. In absence of flood control, Skagit County estimates a 100-year flood event could cause I-5 closures (similar to the 2007 event in Lewis County) between Bow Hill, to the north, and Conway Hill, to the south, for as long as five days, costing nearly \$15 million in delays and commerce.



Regional or localized flooding could adversely impact I-5, disrupting services and interrupting the movement of people and goods between Western Washington and British Columbia.

As steward of the state transportation system and leader in long-term planning for the interstate, we have participated in the county's flood planning efforts as a stakeholder and supporter of a multi-agency effort to form a comprehensive flood risk reduction strategy.

Status

Two projects are currently underway. Skagit County and the U.S. Department of Army Corps of Engineers (COE) embarked on a General Investigation (GI) Study of Skagit River flooding in 1996 to determine appropriate flood mitigation measures. This study is still in progress, and

is expected to be completed by 2014 (provided that additional funding is found). To complement the COE GI Study, and to help provide local, “in-kind” match, Skagit County has initiated a Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan process based on Washington State Department of Ecology’s guidance. This plan, in concert with the COE GI Study, will provide Skagit County the ability to seek federal, state and local funds and obtain permits for flood control projects. WSDOT will incorporate these plans into its transportation facility plans and projects.

Agencies involved

Partners in the flood planning process include:

- Skagit County, cities, local diking districts and tribal governments
- Federal Agencies: The [U.S. Department of Army Corps of Engineers](#), [Federal Highway Administration](#), [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#), U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Washington State: Department of Transportation, [Department of Ecology](#) , [Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), [Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development](#) , [Department of Natural Resources](#), [Emergency Management Division](#)

Next steps

- WSDOT will participate with the COE GI study and Skagit County’s Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan as a member of the Board of Supervisors Advisory Committee and Land Use Technical Committee.
- WSDOT will complete the Interstate Master Plan for I-5 in the urban area of Mount Vernon/Burlington/Skagit County in summer 2008. This plan will reflect the work to date on the County’s flood reduction planning and be updated when that flood planning process is completed if necessary.

How Can I Get More Information?

For questions about the Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan, contact:

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For questions about WSDOT’s role in Skagit County’s flood management planning efforts, contact:

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