

**SULTAN PLANNING BOARD  
AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

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ITEM NO: D-1  
(Material is from the 12.16.08 PB Packet Item P-4)  
**Planning Board Members PLEASE bring your material from the 12.16.08 Meeting with you)**

DATE: January 6, 2009

SUBJECT: FEMA Flood Restudy

CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Knight, City Administrator

ISSUE:

The issue before the Planning Board is to:

1. Discuss the information received from Snohomish County regarding the FEMA Flood Restudy.
2. Receive an update from staff on the efforts to coordinate with Snohomish County, FEMA and the Public Utility District #1 (PUD) to understand the FEMA Flood Restudy and address Sultan's concerns.

SUMMARY:

Snohomish County staff presented an update on the FEMA Flood Restudy of the Skykomish and Sultan Rivers to the City Council and Planning Board at the joint meeting on November 18, 2008.

One of the primary concerns raised during the joint meeting was the decision (requirement) by FEMA under *Guidelines and Specifications for Flood Hazard Mapping Appendix C (Attachment A)* not to include the storage provided by the Culmback Dam and Spada Lake when calculating the 100-year flood flows on the Sultan River.

This decision will have a major impact on the Sultan community. Under the current assumption of "no storage" at Spada Lake, the calculated 100-year flood flow is 59,000 cfs (cubic feet per second). This is significantly higher than the actual maximum measured unregulated flow of 47,000 cfs for 100-year flood and 58,600 cfs for 500-year flood (from 1935-1965).

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At the present, the assumption of “no storage” will result in increased Base Flood Elevations (BFE). Adjusting the BFE has the potential to “void” affected Letters of Map Amendment (LOMA). Residents with LOMA’s do not pay flood insurance. Following final approval of the restudy in 2010, residents and businesses with affected LOMA’s will need to pay flood insurance. Flood insurance is calculated on a sliding scale in relation to the building’s elevation above the BFE. The more clearance above the BFE the lower the insurance rate. For example, \$100,000 of insurance for a structure 3 feet above the BFE, would be \$196/month. A structure at the BFE would be \$741/month<sup>1</sup>

New development and substantial redevelopment in the affected areas would need to meet requirements for building above the revised BFE.

The City of Sultan and Snohomish County are working closely with FEMA and PUD staff to explore alternatives for measuring the flood storage provided by Spada Lake and meeting FEMA’s requirements for including flood storage in the hydrological modeling.

Since the joint meeting City staff have taken the following steps:

1. Met with Snohomish County staff - Chris Nelson; study consultant - Larry Karpack with Northwest Hydraulic Consultants (nhc); and FEMA.

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the *Guidelines for Flood Hazard Mapping* and criteria the Culmback Dam and Spada Lake must meet to be considered as “flood storage”. Attachment B is a copy of the meeting minutes.

There is a second conference call with FEMA scheduled for January 10, 2009. Staff from the City, Snohomish County and FEMA are tentatively planning to meet in Sultan to tour the City, Spada Lake and the dam on January 27, 2009. The purpose of the meeting is to give FEMA staff an on-the-ground experience and understand the impacts of increasing the 100-year flood from 44,000 cfs (current effective rate) to 59,000 cfs.

Outcomes:

- Coordination between City of Sultan and Snohomish County
  - Meeting scheduled with FEMA on January 10 to discuss agenda for on-site tour of Sultan and Culmback Dam
  - Meeting scheduled with FEMA on January 27 to tour Sultan and Culmback Dam
2. Participated in a flood storage discussion (Attachment C) with PUD, Snohomish County and other stakeholders as part of PUD’s relicensing of

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<sup>1</sup> 2007 post Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) residential rates (\$100,000)

the Jackson Hydroelectric Power project (Culmback Dam) under the Federal Regulatory Energy Commission (FERC).

Purpose: Discuss PUD's normal operating practice for managing Spada Lake storage. Determine whether there is an opportunity to quantify PUDs normal operating practice to meet FEMA's criteria for flood storage.

Outcomes:

- Coordination between City of Sultan, Snohomish County and PUD
- Meeting scheduled with PUD and stakeholders on December 18 to continue flood storage discussion
- Letter from Snohomish County to PUD (Attachment D) requesting an amendment of the study plan for FERC relicensing to include a study of alternatives for providing dedicated flood control and process-level flows.
- Consideration of application, with other Sultan stakeholders, to FERC as an "intervenor" (Attachment E) in the relicensing process. Snohomish County is considering this alternative as well.

#### DISCUSSION:

There is a convergence of issues related to the FEMA flood restudy and PUD's relicensing of the Jackson Hydroelectric Project. Sultan is fortunate because the relicensing effort provides an opportunity to engage with PUD and potentially have PUD establish a set of operating procedures for the dam that meet FEMA requirements for flood storage.

The bigger issue is the long term impacts of further restrictive flood regulations for development within the floodplain. There is a very real possibility the flood restudy will make redevelopment in Sultan's downtown core prohibitively expensive. From a long-term (10-20 years) perspective it is likely flood regulations will become restrictive to the point of choking off development in Sultan's historic business district.

Now may be the time to begin a conversation within the community about the long term viability of Sultan's historic business district. In the meantime, City staff will continue to work with Snohomish County, PUD and FEMA to recognize the important flood storage provided by Spada Lake and reduce to the lowest level possible the flood insurance premiums paid by Sultan residents.

#### FISCAL IMPACT:

Snohomish County is providing excellent staff support and assistance to Sultan during the restudy process. We have developed a strong partnership with Snohomish County. Snohomish County staff is doing the majority of the work.

At some point, it will be necessary for the City to contract with a hydrologic consultant to review the restudy report and represent Sultan's interests. This is an unfunded budget item and will need to be discussed with the City Council. Depending on the scope of work, a contract could cost anywhere from \$4,500 to \$15,000.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

1. Discuss the information received from Snohomish County regarding the FEMA Flood Restudy.
2. Receive an update from staff on the efforts to coordinate with Snohomish County, FEMA and the Public Utility District #1 (PUD) to understand the FEMA Flood Restudy and address Sultan's concerns.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A – Guidelines and Specifications for Flood Hazard Mapping Appendix C – Section C.1.1.1
  - B – December 3, 2008 meeting minutes with Snohomish County and FEMA
  - C – December 4, 2008 Aquatic Resources Work Group Meeting
  - D – December 10, 2008 Letter from Snohomish County to PUD (Attachment D) requesting an amendment of the study plan for FERC relicensing
  - E - FERC Intervenor
  - F - King County presentation on Flood Restudy October/November 2007
  - G - October 27, 2008 nhc Memorandum on Hydrology for the Sultan River
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