

February 24, 2009

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Re: Howard Hanson Dam

Dear _____

As King County Council members and Board members of the King County Flood Control Zone District, we wanted to make sure you were aware of damage that was recently discovered at the Howard Hanson Dam on the Green River in King County and ask that you fully support the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' efforts to repair the damage and the dam's flood protection capacity as soon as possible.

This week the Executive Committee of the King County Flood Control District received a briefing on damage to the Howard Hanson Dam that was discovered following major rain storms in January of this year. We understand that as a result of this damage, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is limiting the capacity of the dam to protect its structural integrity until the problem can be identified and resolved. The Corps indicated that the problem is not likely to be identified and resolved before the next flood season and ultimately could take between two and six years to repair.

We are extremely concerned about this issue because the Howard Hanson Dam is the primary flood control facility for all of the Green River, protecting the cities of Auburn, Renton, Kent, Tukwila, and large areas of unincorporated King County. As you know, thousands of our citizens live and work in the areas protected by the Howard Hanson Dam. We learned at our briefing that while the dam's capacity restrictions are in place, a storm similar to the one that occurred in the Puget Sound region just this past January could cause flooding that would result in \$2 billion in property damage in the Green River Valley.

The impacts of such a flood in the Green River Valley would be felt throughout the entire State of Washington. An independent study by EcoNorthwest found that a shut-down of the floodplains in King County would result in \$46 million in daily lost economic output, because many of our region's major employers, such as Boeing, Starbucks, and Safeway have major facilities in the Green River Valley. As the largest warehouse and distribution hub in the entire Northwest, the companies that are protected by the Howard Hanson Dam supply our region with groceries, food service products, gasoline, medical supplies, and other critical provisions. The BNSF Railway's International Gateway also runs through the Green River Valley, connecting commerce in the Northwest to the rest of the world. The Howard Hanson Dam also protects critical public facilities such as the County's wastewater treatment plant in Renton.

In short, the Green River Valley is the lifeline of the entire Puget Sound region, and we rely on the Howard Hanson dam to protect that lifeline. Given the vital importance of the Howard Hanson Dam in protecting not only the valley cities, but the entire economy of the State of Washington, we have asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for details on its plans and timelines for identifying and repairing the damage to the dam and

restoring its full flood protection capacity. We also asked the Corps to provide us with information about how the repairs can be expedited.

In a letter to the Corps following our briefing we asked for the following information:

- ☐ The Corps' plan and timeline for learning the extent of the damage of the dam, including studies being performed, etc.
- ☐ The possible short and long-term fixes for restoring the dam's full protective capacity
- ☐ Once the extent of damage is known, the Corps' plans and timelines for returning the dam to its full protective capacity
- ☐ The Corps' plan for protecting the Green River Valley from flooding while the dam repairs are under way
- ☐ The Corps' plan for protecting the County's levees and other flood protection infrastructure from damage that may result from the impaired capacity of the dam
- ☐ The Corps' estimate of potential damage that could result from the impairment of the dam and the likelihood of such damage
- ☐ The Corps' plan for emergency response efforts in the event of flooding on the Green River
- ☐ The Corps' protocols for releasing water from the dam
- ☐ Anything that the County or the Flood Control Zone District can do, within our purview as local governments, to support the Corps' efforts.

We greatly appreciated the cooperation and assistance from the Corps on numerous projects last year. The projects that were completed on the Green River significantly enhance the flood protection for our residents and businesses. However, the levees on the Green River can only supplement the protection provided by the Howard Hanson Dam, which is the reason that we are extremely concerned to learn that the dam's flood protection capacity is now impaired.

Public safety has always been of paramount importance to King County officials. The County has earned and maintained the highest FEMA CRS rating for flood protection of any county in the country. In addition, the Washington State Department of Ecology called the 2006 King County Flood Hazard Management Plan a "model" for all such plans.

Despite our longstanding leadership on flood protection, following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, we were determined to do even more to help prevent a similar disaster in our region. In 2007, the King County Council and the King County Executive took the extraordinary step of forming a separate government entity with taxing authority to implement flood protection projects throughout King County. The King County Flood Control District now levies approximately \$32 million per year to supplement State and Federal flood protection funding.

However, as local governments, our ability to address this problem is limited. The Howard Hanson dam is owned, operated and maintained exclusively by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In response to the damage at the Howard Hanson dam, we are already coordinating emergency response operations with the cities in the Green River Valley and will increase staffing at our flood warning center in the event of potential flood conditions. We will also be opening our flood warning center earlier than usual and are implementing a new state-of-the-art automated emergency notification system.

These response measures, as important as they are in the event of an emergency, are no substitute for preventing a catastrophe in the first instance. Given the urgency of the situation, we need your full support in helping to ensure that the Howard Hanson Dam is restored to its full flood protection capacity as soon as possible and that interim solutions are fully explored.

Thank you for your assistance on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Julia Patterson
Chair
Flood Control District Board of Supervisors

Reagan Dunn
Chair
Flood Control District Executive Committee