

Public Works Department River and Flood Update

Gary Stoyka, Natural Resources Program Manager
Julie Anderson, River and Flood Division Manager

Public Works and Health Committee
August 11, 2026



Whatcom County Public Works

December 2025 Flood Repairs (Ongoing)

- **Truck Road Emergency Repair**
- **Levee Repairs**
 - Hannegan
 - Bylsma
 - Ritter Road
- **Levee Inspections/ Other Minor Repairs**



Ongoing Flood Capital Projects

- **Ferndale Levee Improvements**
- **Glacier-Gallup Alluvial Fan Restoration**
- **Abbott Levee Improvements**
- **Dahlberg Wetland Mitigation Site**
- **Fish Camp Integrated Fish-Flood Project**
- **Hudson Road Bridge Replacement - Alternatives Analysis**
- **Everson-Nooksack Flood Mitigation Berms (initiated in 2025)**



State and Federal Funding

- **Floodplains by Design**
 - 2021-23
 - 2023-25
 - 2025-27
- **Proviso Grant**
- **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Grant (HMGP)**
 - Acquisition: 4481-01 and 4635-03
 - Elevation: 4635-01 and 4635-02
- **HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**
 - Match Grant
 - Resiliency Planning Grant
- **FEMA Public Assistance Grants**
- **2026 Legislative Proviso**
- **Applications for Funding**
 - Floodplains by Design 2027-29
 - FEMA- Flood Mitigation Assistance Acquisition
 - 2027 Legislative capital budget request



Nooksack Transboundary Flood Initiative

- Washington State, British Columbia, Whatcom County, City of Abbotsford, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Lummi Nation, Sumas First Nation, Leq'a:mel First Nation, Matsqui First Nation
- Leadership, Policy, and Technical Tables
- Coordination between FLIP and Sumas River Watershed Flood Mitigation Planning (SRWFMP) Initiative (includes City of Chilliwack)
- SRWFMP recently released Sumas River Watershed Flood Mitigation Plan



Flood Communications & Community Engagement

- Hired Additional Flood Communications Capacity
 - Hired Consultant (starting August 2026)
 - Increased Staff Support from Public Works Natural Resources
- Hosting Flood Awareness Week- October 12-19
- Planning a Community Event During Flood Awareness Week - October



The Big Issues

- Nooksack sediment production and historical river constraints have led to sediment accumulation
- Climate change has led to bigger and more frequent atmospheric rivers and overflow events
- Historical Nooksack channel to Fraser River is natural overflow
- FEMA no-rise permitting and mitigation requirements



The Strategy

- Widen the Corridor - from Everson Downstream
- Everson-Nooksack Berms
- City of Sumas Flood Mitigation Planning & Projects
- Basin-wide Acquisitions and Elevations
- Infrastructure Improvements (e.g. Slater Road, Haxton Way)
- Short-Term and Long-Term Flood Hazard Reduction Actions

Total ~\$480 Million Estimated Cost



FLIP (Floodplain Integrated Planning) Steering Committee

- Technical committee consisting of representatives of Whatcom County/ Flood Control Zone District, small cities (Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, Sumas), Tribes (Lummi and Nooksack), Agricultural Community, participation from Department of Ecology
- Recent FLIP Priorities
 - Preliminary Allocation of Commerce Grant (legislative proviso)- \$13 million
 - Developing Funding Request for Next State Budget
 - Developing a Governance Structure



Commerce 2026 Legislative Proviso- \$13 million

- Everson-Nooksack Berms- \$4.25 million
- Widen the Corridor- \$4 million
- Sumas Early Action Flood Mitigation Projects- \$3 million
- Integrated Floodplain Acquisition and Restoration- \$750,000
- Early Action Flood Mitigation Projects- \$500,000
- Nooksack Tribal Community Flood Access- \$500,000

Additional steps for state contracting and contract negotiation with WA Department of Commerce



Current River & Flood Capacity Constraints

- **Project Delivery Needs**
 - Technical Consultants
 - Project and Grant Management
 - Construction Management
 - Property Acquisition and Structure Elevation
 - Community Engagement/ Outreach
- **Internal Staff Capacity**
 - Evaluating long-term staffing needs for PW River & Flood
 - Re-assigning some PW Natural Resources staff in short-term



River and Flood Budget/Staffing Constraints

- **Local Funding Constraints**
 - Rising construction costs and bigger capital projects are increasing required local match
 - Not all secured grants cover County staff time
 - Staff capacity limited across department, including Natural Resources and Stormwater
- **Short and Long-Term Solutions**
 - **Short-Term/Stop Gap**
 - Leaving one Natural Resource position vacant and re-classifying and re-assigning staff – Will result in impacts to Natural Resources Programs
 - Delaying some flood projects
 - **Long-Term**
 - Requesting continued and additional flood capacity funding from Ecology
 - Seeking banked capacity in the Flood Fund



Questions?

