



**WHATCOM COUNTY  
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION**

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**Elizabeth Kosa**  
Public Works Director

# MEMORANDUM

**To:** The Honorable Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive  
The Honorable Members of the Whatcom County Council

**Through:** Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Director *LBF*

**From:** Gary Stoyka, Natural Resources Program Manager *GS*

**Subject:** Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee Recommendation to Board of Supervisors Regarding U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Levee Repairs

**Date:** 5/22/26

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At the May 14, 2026 meeting, the Flood Control Zone District (FCZD) Advisory Committee (AC) unanimously passed a motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve cost share funding to allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to repair sections of the Ritter Road and Bylsma Levees damaged during the December 2025 flood event while still pursuing long-term flood management strategies. Furthermore, the AC recommended that the Board of Supervisors amend Resolution 2010-055 to reduce the required FCZD fund balance by the amount of the cost share to fund these repairs.

## **Background and Purpose**

During the December 2025 flood event, two sections of levees along the Nooksack River, Ritter Road and Bylsma, were damaged. Both of these levees are in the USACE PL 84-99 program wherein the USACE will repair these levees to USACE standards with the local sponsor providing a 20% cost share. Both of these levees are in areas that are being contemplated for levee setback as part of the "Widen the Corridor" strategy to reduce future flood impacts at the Everson Overflow and other areas in Whatcom County. These levees largely protect agricultural lands and associated infrastructure, but also protect some residences, outbuildings and public infrastructure. Failure to maintain these levees could result in them being dropped from eligibility in the PL 84-99 program.

The USACE stated their intention to conduct all repairs of damages from the December 2025 flood events throughout the state by October 2026. FCZD staff have inquired about the possibility of doing minor repairs this year and using the remaining allocated repair funding to implement a locally-preferred alternative (LPA) at a later date that is more in-line with the long-term plans for flood management on the Nooksack River. Using funding for an LPA is an option under the PL 84-99 program. Given their stated October 2026 deadline, the USACE is not willing to consider the LPA option. However, the USACE did provide two options for levee repair:

(1) rehabilitate in place, regrade the waterward slope and replace lost riprap, or (2) rehabilitate in place with smaller rock toward the bottom of the waterward slope transitioning to a vegetated slope toward the top and slightly enlarging the crest and backslopes.

Staff discussed the possibility that the proposed repairs are not consistent with the proposed long-term management plan for the river and that there is a possibility that these repairs may need to be removed in the future. However, because the “Widen the Corridor” strategy has not been adopted by the FCZD or other floodplain management partners, the AC felt that these levees need to be repaired in order to maintain eligibility and until such time that an alternative is able to be implemented. Staff also informed the AC that there is not sufficient funding in the budget to fund the cost share for these repairs and implement the adopted capital program. Rather than reducing funding for any current capital projects, the AC recommended that the cost share funding be taken from the required \$5 million minimum fund balance established in Resolution 2010-055. The AC also recommended that the FCZD pursue the “smaller rock” rehabilitation.

The USACE has told staff that they need a decision on whether the FCZD is going to proceed with these repairs in early June and a check for the cost share by late June in order to proceed. This schedule does not provide adequate time for staff to bring forth a supplemental budget request to the Board of Supervisors before making a decision on the repairs.

### **Funding Amount and Source**

The estimated cost for the Ritter Road and Bylsma cost shares is \$116,100 and \$133,160. There are sufficient funds in the 2026 FCZD budget for emergency repairs to cover these cost shares; however, that would reduce the amount of funding available for any emergency repairs that may be necessary between now and December 31, 2026.

### **Recommended Action**

The Board of Supervisors pass a motion to authorize the USACE to proceed with the “smaller rock” rehabilitation of the Ritter Road and Bylsma levees using funding provided in the 2026 FCZD budget for emergency repairs on an interim basis until the Board of Supervisors can consider passing a resolution reducing the required FCZD fund balance.

Please contact Gary Stoyka, Natural Resources Program Manager, at 360-778-6218 or [gstoyka@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:gstoyka@co.whatcom.wa.us) if you have any questions or concerns regarding this recommendation.