



Jon Hutchings
DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Satpal Singh Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive and
The Honorable Members of the Whatcom County Council

THROUGH: Jon Hutchings, Public Works Director

FROM: Paula J. Harris, River and Flood Manager *PJH*
Gary Stoyka, Natural Resources Manager *GS*

RE: Proposed Amendments to Whatcom County Code Title 17 Flood Damage
Prevention

DATE: July 1, 2021

Enclosed is an ordinance adopting amendments to Whatcom County Code Title 17 Flood Damage Prevention for your consideration.

▪ **Requested Action**

Public Works respectfully requests that the Whatcom County Council consider the proposed minor amendments to Title 17 and approve the ordinance adopting the amended code, subject to a public hearing. Proposed amendments are categorically exempt from SEPA per WAC 197-11-800(19).

▪ **Background and Purpose**

In January 2021 FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) began implementing new minimum requirements or Class prerequisites for freeboard for all participating CRS communities.

The CRS is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). In CRS communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community's efforts that address the three goals of the program:

- Reduce and avoid flood damage to insurable property
- Strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the National Flood Insurance Program
- Foster comprehensive floodplain management

Whatcom County is a participating community in the CRS program and must have an adopted floodplain management ordinance that meets the new CRS Class prerequisites prior to the scheduled cycle verification visit on October 12, 2021.

Whatcom County is a CRS Class 6 rated community which provides a 20% reduction on flood insurance premiums in unincorporated Whatcom County. Failure to adopt these amendments prior to the date of cycle verification visit would reduce Whatcom County's CRS rating to a Class 9 which only provides for a 5% reduction on flood insurance premiums to the community.

The CRS Floodplain Management Specialist for FEMA and Public Works staff identified minor revisions that are necessary to ensure consistency with the updated CRS Class prerequisites. The State NFIP Coordinator and Public Works staff also identified minor amendments necessary to comply with FEMA's recent policy update on Agricultural and Accessory Structures (#104-008-03) including associated local variance process.

The CRS Floodplain Management Specialist and State NFIP Coordinator have reviewed and approved these amendments to code for compliance with the NFIP and CRS manual. The revised code was presented to the Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee at their meeting held on May 13, 2021. The committee voted in unanimous support of these amendments.

A final staff report is enclosed which provides a detailed analysis of each section of code proposed for revision.

Encl.