Overview of Levee/Vegetation Issue

King County Flood Control District

January 24, 2010

Jim Waldo, Lara Fowler
Key issues

• Existing federal standard = effectively no vegetation on levees
  – Seattle District variance allows vegetation up to 4”

• Proposed federal policy:
  – revoke all variances,
  – require new variances with more limitations,
  – more review, less local control

• Concerns:
  – Conflicting federal mandates for federal levee funding, Endangered Species Act, and Clean Water Act
  – Costly
  – Funding may not be going to highest safety priorities
  – Difficult/ expensive process to receive approval from HQ offices (in D.C.)
Key Goals

Create regional program that provides for

1. Safe & effective levees,
2. Functional habitat, and
3. Cost effective use of scarce resources
Two track process to achieve goals

• **Track 1**: Targeted outreach to provide room in national U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Policy Guidance Letter (PGL) for regional program

• **Track 2**: Advising and assisting staff to develop a functional and cost-effective regional program
Track 1: Policy Guidance Letter

• Key focus: secure a decision to provide room in national standard for regional program

• Key Dates:
  – Corps HQ issued draft PGL in Feb. 2010
  – Regional federal exec. letter Aug. 2010
  – Issuance of final PGL proposed for Oct. 2010
    • Initially delayed to Dec. 2010
    • 2nd decision to delay until 1st Q 2011
Effect of proposed Corps decision:

• Revocation of existing variances
• Procedural requirements and substantive standards to be met
• 6 months to submit new variance request
• Approval by Corps HQ office in D.C.
Track 1: Outreach Efforts

• Local governments, State of Washington, and other stakeholders
• Other affected states: California, Oregon
• Impact of effort:
  – Letters, other contacts, and communications to Corps HQ, other federal agencies
  – Two delays in Corps’ final decision on PGL
  – Additional serious consideration of regional issues
Key Federal Stakeholders

White House

Council for Environmental Quality  
Nancy Sutley

Corps of Engineers- HQ  
LTG General Robert Van Antwerp  
(Dep.Commanding General  
MG Merdith W.B. Temple)  
(James Dalton, Chief,  
Engineering & Construction)

Northwest Division (Portland)  
Division Commander  
Brigadier General John R. McMahon  
G. Witt Anderson, Director,  
Programs Directorate  
Steve Fink, Levee Safety

Seattle District (part of WA, ID, MT)  
Colonel Anthony Wright

Dept. of Commerce  
Gary Locke  
Jay Reich (assistant)

NOAA Fisheries  
Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenko

Regional Administrator- NW Region  
Will Stelle

Regional Director Pacific Region  
Robyn Thorson

Congressional delegation- Washington State, California  
Ken Berg
Track 2: Develop Regional Program

- Goals: Develop a regional program that provides for
  - safe & effective levees,
  - functional riparian habitat, and
  - cost effective investment of $ directed to highest priority levee safety needs

- Various stakeholders working on this

- Our role: help troubleshoot, strategize path forward
Process for Development of Regional Program

**Goals:**
- Functional levees (structural, inspection, access)
- Functional fish & wildlife habitat
- Cost effective program

**Template:**
- Contextual factors
- Degree of risk (low/high)
- Performance
- Adaptive management based on science/research

Regional Roundtable

- Variance for other levees

W. Wash. Levee Variance template

PMP/Work Plan

Develop draft template

Refine template

Green River

Cedar River

Regional Program (end of 2011 per Fed. Exec. letter)

ESA Consultation (Timing?)

Seattle District Variance (interim guidance?)

Research: Local & National (ERDC)

Outreach

Development of final national Policy Guidance Letter
Next Steps

1. Continue to focus on ensuring room in nat’l standard for regional program (Track 1- priority assignment)

2. Assist with efforts to develop a regional program (Track 2- trouble shoot & assist)

3. Assist King County Flood Control District on other issues as needed (on call)
Questions?

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