

**2012 KING COUNTY FLOOD HAZARD MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE**  
*February 1, 2012*

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**TOPIC:**

Capital project funding for coastal flood and erosion risks

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**STATEMENT OF ISSUE:**

Should the Flood Control District's capital program include funding for coastal flood and erosion risk reduction projects?

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**BACKGROUND:**

The geographic scope of the 2006 King County Flood Hazard Management Plan includes the unincorporated and incorporated areas of King County, with a 'focus' on the major river floodplains and their significant tributaries. The 2006 Plan also includes a recommendation to cost-share hazard mapping studies with FEMA for marine shorelines so that this technical information identifying hazard areas can be made available to jurisdictions, other public agencies, as well as the residents and businesses exposed to these hazards. While the adopted plan for King County calls for a 'focus' on major rivers, the state authorization for flood districts does allow for improvements that include "the extension, enlargement, construction, or acquisition of dikes and levees, drain and drainage systems, dams and reservoirs, or other flood control or storm water control improvements; widening, straightening, or relocating of stream or water courses; and the acquisition, extension, enlargement, or construction of any works necessary for the protection of stream and water courses, channels, harbors, life, and property" (RCW 86.15.100).

When the 10-year work plan was developed for the newly formed countywide Flood Control District in 2007, the capital project list included \$2M for a feasibility study for a potential coastal project (replacement of the Elliott Bay Seawall). During subsequent discussions in 2010 of a proposal to provide additional engineering design support for the Seawall project, the technical staff participating in the Basin Technical Committees and the elected officials on the Advisory Committee did not question the need to replace the Seawall, but many requested additional clarity regarding whether the capital project prioritization policies and criteria in the 2006 Plan were intended to be applied to coastal projects such as the Seawall. The Board provided some clarification with respect to the Elliott Bay Seawall in 2011 by adopting a technical amendment to the Plan and appropriating \$4.25M for pre-engineering design support, along with a commitment to provide an additional \$25.75M in the six-year capital program. In the motion adopting the amendment, the Board cited RCW 86.15.100, noted the consequence and severity of a seawall failure on the region's economy, and cited a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finding that there is a 'federal interest' in rehabilitating the Elliott Bay Seawall.

While the decision to cost-share the Elliott Bay Seawall is not in question, the Board has requested input from the Citizen Committee to more clearly articulate a policy for coastal risk reduction actions along the unincorporated Vashon/Maury Islands shoreline and the incorporated shorelines along Puget Sound.

The Board also asked for input on urban and small stream flooding, which is related but discussed in a separate issue paper.

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**ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER (stand-alone or in combinations):**

1. Capital funding used for river and stream flooding only; limit coastal funding to existing commitments previously adopted by the Board.  
PRO: Maintains focus on reducing flood and channel migration risks in mapped floodplains of King County while continuing technical support for hazard identification and mapping. Would not impact projects identified on the existing CIP.  
CON: Coastal risk reduction projects that might otherwise be considered high priority would not be funded by the Flood Control District.
2. Capital funding for coastal areas only if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finds there is a federal interest in the project.  
PRO: Ensures that the public safety and economic benefits of the project are clearly defined and regional in scope.  
CON: Places a higher standard on coastal project funding than river floodplain projects. May displace existing high-priority floodplain projects.
3. Capital funding for coastal areas is considered only to reduce risk to public property or infrastructure.  
PRO: Ensures that public funding is not used to rebuild private seawalls and bulkheads.  
CON: Places a higher standard on coastal project funding than river floodplain projects, where public property and infrastructure are given greater weight but private property is considered. May displace existing high-priority projects.
4. Capital funding for coastal areas is evaluated based on consequence, severity, and urgency alongside other flood risk reduction actions.  
PRO: Consistent treatment of risk reduction needs, regardless of freshwater versus saltwater distinctions.  
CON: Unless additional revenue is obtained, consideration of additional needs could delay high priority projects that have already been identified along major river systems.
5. Possible addition to the options listed above:  
Capital funding for coastal areas should be provided only on the condition that additional resources are provided such that other projects are not deferred, and there is a significant cost-share from other funding sources.  
PRO: Matches expenditure increases with revenue increase so that other high-priority flood risk reduction needs are not delayed.

CON: Options to obtain additional funding are limited.

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

1. Preliminary map of public and private shoreline armoring along King County marine shorelines
  2. Flood Control District's Motion amending the 2006 Flood Plan (FCD 2011-05)
  3. Advisory Committee Annual Recommendations (August 2010):  
[http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/flooding/kcfzcd/KCFCD advisory committee 2011 draft recommendations.pdf](http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/flooding/kcfzcd/KCFCD_advisory_committee_2011_draft_recommendations.pdf)
  4. Advisory Committee Q&A on the Elliott Bay Seawall (April 2010)  
[http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/flooding/kcfzcd/03 Advisory%20Committee%20Q&A DRAFT.pdf](http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/flooding/kcfzcd/03_Advisory%20Committee%20Q&A_DRAFT.pdf)
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