Strategic Program for Floodproofing and Buyouts
Draft 10.16.12

This proposed strategy takes a step-wise approach to invest in buyouts, raising of residential structures, and flood proofing to reduce flood damages. It was developed in consultation with planners from the local governments in the Basin and the Department of Ecology.

The first step is to use existing information on repetitive losses to quickly take actions to protect structures in know areas of particular risk in the floodplain. Second is to develop a comprehensive approach to understanding what areas are at the highest risk for potential future damage to inform additional investments.

Together these two steps result in a more strategic approach that allows current and potential future funding for buyouts, raising of residential structures, and flood proofing to be targeted where the investment has the greatest certainty for long term benefits.

1. Invest to address known problems. Reduce long-term public and private expenditures for post-flood repairs by investing in a strategic program of buy outs and flood proofing for repetitive loss structures. Improve long-term resiliency by also prioritizing buy outs that allow restoration of natural floodplain functions. Based on estimates from Basin jurisdictions in Thurston and Lewis Counties there are 128 repetitive loss structures which might be candidates for elevation or buyout. This equates to and a total estimated cost of $10-15M for a combination of buyouts and elevations. Data from Grays Harbor County is still being sought.

2. Invest strategically in the future. This involves two efforts to ensure that current and potential future land use efforts, flood proofing and buy outs are targeted to where they will most reduce flood damages

First, use improved geographic information (LiDAR), damage curves, and land use information to (A) assess or model potential flood damages to existing development under a variety of flood scenarios; and, (B) assess or model potential flood damages to potential future development, assuming a maximum build out under current land use regulations, under a variety of flood scenarios.

Second, use the CRS to assess and refine jurisdictions current and potential future efforts. The Federal Emergency Management Agency Community Rating System (CRS) provides a flexible framework for jurisdictions to create flood hazard mitigation programs. Currently some jurisdictions in the Basin participate in the program and some do not. (A) Evaluate each jurisdiction’s current status relative to the CRS, assess what actions would be needed for each jurisdiction to achieve a CRS rating of 5 or greater, and provide cost estimate for these actions; (B) from this information estimate changes in flood damages that might occur if the actions needed to achieve a CRS ratings of 5 or above are achieved; (C) estimate cost savings to the community that would accrue from achieving a CRS rating of 5 or greater due to reduced flood damages and flood insurance costs. Note: the staff investment and expertise needed to
achieve and maintain CRS ratings can be significant; consider sharing some administrative resources (e.g., certified flood plain managers) across Basin jurisdictions to carry out this work most efficiently.

The estimated cost for these efforts is $200-250K, excluding any new LiDAR flights.

Taken together this information can be used to create a more comprehensive and strategic approach to flood proofing, raising residential structures, and buyouts. It will focus future local government flood damage mitigation efforts in areas and toward practices that will most proactively protect existing and new development from floods, and prevent new development from increasing flood damages.

Notes: jurisdictions that responded to drafts are very supportive of the CRS; however, some jurisdictions have questioned whether the benefits of achieving a rating of 5 under the CRS would justify the costs, particularly the administrative burden. An alternative recommendation is to study the counties and cities and target properties that have the highest possibilities of flooding. Have the State of Washington and FEMA purchase them outright working along with the cities or counties.

Some jurisdictions also have questioned whether investment in LiDAR or other studies are truly beneficial in targeting future home elevations, flood proofing, and buyouts or whether existing information is sufficient. Cost estimates would need further review and refinement prior to contracting.