

Date: May 3, 2023

From: Samish Island Resilient Access Committee
PO Box 268
Bow, WA 98232

To: Board of Skagit County Commissioners
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Re: **Response to Commissioner Letter**

We are heartened to hear that “Skagit County is still in the process of gathering and evaluating information in consideration of potential options concerning this matter.” A primary purpose of our letter was to provide you some additional information as you consider potential options and hope that it is helpful in expediting both short and long term solutions to this urgent situation.

Regarding possible factual inaccuracies in our letter, the SIRAC has taken great care to present as accurate an account as possible based on the information we have gathered. If there are inaccuracies in that information it would be helpful for us to know what those inaccuracies are. The documents included with our March 31st letter complement information relayed in January 2023 to County representatives in response to a request for factual information describing previous dike repair and maintenance work by Skagit County on private property in the subject area. The documents were sourced from various archives on the Skagit County website. We presume those documents to be accurate. If the factual inaccuracies you referred to in your April 13th response to our letter relate to land subsidence or frequency of king tide events we would welcome the opportunity to share the science and empirical data we relied on to reach our conclusions.

Not included in your response were any updates regarding emergency response protocols and changes to the community warning methods for storm tidal surge flood events. This was one of the three concerns we raised in our letter about which we would appreciate information. Emergency response protocols and community warning methods are particularly vital if dike improvements are not going to be possible.

This is an urgent situation that needs a short-term solution completed over the next 6 months before the threat of king tides returns. We remain a willing and good-faith partner to collaborate on whatever that solution might be and hope that concerns about a “potential for litigation” do not hinder that process.

You suggested in your response that it would be more appropriate and productive for us to reach out to Dike District No. 5 and the property owner. We are doing that on an on-going basis and have found both the Dike District and the property owner to be very helpful. It is our view that it is appropriate and productive to reach out to you as well. We understand that roads and

public safety are the County's responsibility. Therefore the County needs to be a primary participant in those discussions. In our conversations with the property owner and Dike District No. 5, a recurring theme constantly expressed is the vital importance of County participation in this process. The recently announced Climate-Ready Coasts initiative grant to Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve specifically references "increased climate resilience by reducing flood risk for the only road and utility corridor that services the Samish Island community" as part of the overall effort to restore the tidal marsh. We recognize that a strong stakeholder coalition with a unified message is critical in order to fully take advantage of grant funding opportunities the Climate-Ready Coasts initiative presents. We hope that Skagit County will be a full and active member of that coalition.

We are glad to hear you state that this issue is a priority for you. This was reinforced recently as some of us observed that Skagit County Public Works staff were gathering elevation data along the road and the dike on the presumed County easements. If you are willing, we would appreciate it if that elevation data could be shared with us. Having elevation data would be helpful to us in evaluating the threat posed by future tidal storm surge events.

We remain supportive of your efforts to find cost effective solutions for the County road and the emergency alert system in regards to tidal storm surge events. We would appreciate any updates and would be glad to be supportive in any way we can as you work on solutions to this difficult problem. Please keep us informed of future Board of County Commissioners meetings and discussions relating to this topic.

Respectfully,

Samish Island Resilient Access Committee

Steve Hopley, Chair
Eileen Andersen
Mike Collins
Bill Dewey
Martha Frankel
Chuck Howell
Dan McShane