



FEMA

Acquisitions and Elevations Letting the River Flow Freely in WA

Mason County, WA - The Skokomish River valley experiences widespread flooding several times each year as heavy rains and mountain snow runoff swell the river outside of its banks.

“The Skoke,” as it is commonly called, drains nearly 250 square miles of the mountainous Olympic Peninsula into the Hood Canal region of South Puget Sound. County officials were aware of several areas in particular that suffered frequent and severe flooding, but 12 homes along East Bourgault Road incurred the most significant flood losses. Damages to homes along East Bourgault Road alone had exceeded \$300,000 in recent years.

Residents whose homes flooded at least once a year, and who often were forced to evacuate their homes 3 to 4 times each flood season, desired relief. Ten of the 12 homeowners had expressed an interest in participating in an acquisition project. So in 1991, the County applied for and was awarded Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding to begin buying out some of the homes.

In December 1996, the County adopted a Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan that outlined several recommendations for mitigating flood losses in the Skokomish River Valley. The success of the initial round of acquisitions along East Bourgault Road, which included six homes, created public support for more buyouts. The County applied for additional HMGP funds, and was twice awarded additional funds to acquire, and perhaps elevate where appropriate, more homes along East Bourgault Road as well as Skokomish Valley Road, the second priority area for mitigation.

Mason County was awarded a total of \$1,510,077 in HMGP (Federal share) for its non-structural mitigation effort. The remaining \$754,772 was funded by the State of Washington and through local government and private resources.

To date, the County has completed the purchase of 13 homes and approximately 75 acres of floodplain. Officials expect to fund the acquisition or elevation of at least seven more properties in 1999.

Site visits since the project was implemented have proven that it has been hugely successful. The Skoke now flows across East Bourgault Road without causing damage where homes once stood. The project as a whole is expected to save approximately \$1.50 in avoided damages for each \$1 spent.



**Mason County,
Washington**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$2,264,849.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)