

Pierce County Rivers Flood Hazard Management Plan Draft Policies (Group B Discussion)

Policies provide a framework for making decisions about river and floodplain management. They guide the specific actions and recommendations included in the plan, including capital projects, programs and other recommendations. Proposed draft policies for inclusion in the flood plan follow:

Floodplain Land Use Regulations

Actions in one jurisdiction have the potential to adversely affect the frequency, duration, or magnitude of flood hazards in downstream or adjacent jurisdictions. The following policies promote greater consistency of regulations across floodplain jurisdictions.

1. Consistent Regulatory Standards – Pierce County supports consistency in flood hazard regulations across jurisdictions. Cities and towns should adopt policies and regulations that are consistent with unincorporated Pierce County critical area regulations for flood hazard areas, and regulate according to the best available data, such as updated flood studies.
2. National Flood Insurance Program – Pierce County and floodplain cities and towns should participate and maintain good standing in the National Flood Insurance Program and its Community Rating System in order to better protect public safety, reduce the risk of flooding and channel migration hazards to existing public and private property, and achieve flood insurance premium discounts.
3. Urban Growth Area Expansion – Prohibit expansion of urban growth areas into 100-year floodplains of any river or river segment within the geographic scope of this flood plan.
4. Development in the Floodway – Prohibit new residential and non-residential structures within the FEMA floodway, severe channel migration zone (CMZ) floodway, and deep and fast flowing (DFF) water floodway. Definitions for these floodways should be consistent across jurisdictions.
5. Zero-Rise – The placement of structures or fill are allowed in the floodplain only if they would not cause an increase in elevation of the 100-year flood by more than 0.001 foot.
6. Compensatory Storage – Preserve the existing flood storage volume of the floodplain by replacing floodplain storage volume that is eliminated by structures or fill by excavating to provide live storage volume equal to or greater than that which is displaced. Options to achieve this could include removal or relocation of existing structures and associated fill, or by setting back levees. Provide the live storage volume between corresponding one foot-contour intervals that are hydraulically connected to the floodplain through their entire depth.
7. Critical Facilities – Locate critical facilities outside of the 500-year floodplain unless no feasible alternative exists. If no feasible alternative exists, elevate critical facilities to or above the higher of the 500-year flood elevation or 3 feet above the 100-year base flood elevation and locate as to allow for planned future levee setbacks.

Flood Warning and Emergency Response Policies

1. Pierce County should provide regional flood information and notification services during flood events.
2. Pierce County will coordinate regional flood emergency response and recovery services during and after flood emergencies through the Emergency Operations Center and Pierce County Emergency Management Department.
3. Before and during expected flood events Pierce County may provide sand bags and sand when available to Pierce County fire districts and city and town public works departments. Citizens may request them from the individual fire district or city/town public works departments. Property owners are responsible for placing sandbags and cleaning up sandbags after the flood event, and meeting any regulations relating to sandbagging activity.
4. Pierce County will coordinate with the National Weather Service, cities, police and fire departments, and other entities as needed (e.g., Army Corps of Engineers, Mt. Rainier National Park, Tacoma Public Utilities, and the military) to improve flood warning and emergency evacuation procedures.

Funding

1. Regional Funding – New or expanded regional funding sources should be identified and secured to meet the need for enhanced or expanded flood and channel migration hazard management projects, maintenance, and programs.
2. Fiscal Management – Pierce County and partner jurisdictions and agencies should ensure that adequate funds for annual maintenance and operations, capital projects, and contingency funds are budgeted to meet program needs.
3. Grant Funding – Pierce County, cities/towns in Pierce County, and other local government agencies should identify, evaluate, and coordinate grant fund sources to determine their suitability and assess consistency with the goals and objectives of this plan, and apply for grants to leverage local sources of funding for flood management projects.

Additional Project Policy

1. Levee Certification – Pierce County should seek accreditation and certification of new 100- and 200-year levees, or re-certification of existing levees through FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers.