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Levee Improvement Increases Flood Protection and Restores Floodplain Function

Bellingham, WA, October 24, 2017—Whatcom County Public Works River and Flood Division completed the Deming Levee Upstream Improvement Project this September. This project replaced an old, substandard berm that overtopped during floods with a 10- to 15-year recurrence interval with a new, engineered levee designed for a 100-year flood event. The new levee is set back from the Nooksack River allowing the reconnection of a tributary stream, restoring floodplain function, and improving tributary habitat.

Prior to project completion, the Deming community was prone to flooding during relatively frequent flood events. An engineered levee on the north side of the Nooksack River tied into a low berm at its upstream end. Floodwaters would overtop the low berm, threatening important Mt. Baker School District and Nooksack Tribe facilities including a sewage lagoon and drain field. In addition, the BNSF Railway runs through the area.

This project extends the existing levee for approximately 850 feet at its upstream end to tie into the railroad grade near the intersection of Highway 542 and Marshall Hill Road. The extension is designed to contain 100-year flood events, and its location away from the active river channel allows floodwaters to access five-acres of floodplain. In addition, a tributary stream from Marshall Hill is now rerouted into a new channel providing fish habitat and improving floodplain connectivity.

In addition to local funds, this project received grant funding from the State Department of Ecology's Floodplains by Design Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Construction occurred from June through September with final planting scheduled for spring 2018. The new levee performed well during the storms and high flows last week.

More information on this project is available at <http://whatcomcounty.us/2643/Deming-Levee-Improvement>

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