Subject: Swift Creek Sediment Management Action Plan (SCSMAP): Plan Adoption and Phase 1 Project Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement

To: Distribution List

Whatcom County Planning and Development Services is pleased to issue to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Swift Creek Sediment Management Action Plan (SCSMAP) the SCSMAP Phase 1 Project Plan in compliance with the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) under Chapter 43.21C RCW and Chapter 197-11 WAC. Whatcom County Public Works Department is the project proponent on behalf of the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department is the lead agency.

Swift Creek originates on the west side of Sumas Mountain and flows to the Sumas River, which flows northeasterly into British Columbia, Canada. Swift Creek sediment, a result of a landslide in the upper Swift Creek watershed, accumulates at a rapid rate in the lower reaches of Swift Creek, necessitating coordinated sediment management planning. Whatcom County Public Works Department prepared the Swift Creek Sediment Management Action Plan (SCSMAP) and the SCSMAP Phase 1 Project Plan to address sedimentation and flooding that result in damage to agricultural, residential, and public assets and has the potential to affect public health.

The proposed actions examined in the Draft EIS included adoption of the Swift Creek Sediment Management Action Plan (SCSMAP) by the Whatcom County Council for implementing sediment management strategies and, subsequent to Plan adoption, development of projects identified as necessary under Phase 1 of the Plan.

Adoption of the SCSMAP is a non-project action under the SEPA rules (WAC 197-11). Two alternatives were presented and discussed in the nonproject portion of this Draft EIS:

- **SCSMAP Adoption**: Adoption and implementation of the SCSMAP, including active and passive sediment management strategies and associated recommendations identified in the Plan; and
- **No Action**: the SCSMAP would not be adopted and sediment management maintenance projects would continue in the absence of a plan as Whatcom County resources are available.

SCSMAP Phase 1 project development was examined at the preliminary project level in the Draft EIS. Two alternatives were presented as part of the project-level review:

- **SCSMAP Phase 1 Projects**: development of four primary and one alternate sediment management projects under Phase 1 of the SCSMAP. Primary proposed projects include one setback levee, one
debris deflection levee, in-stream sediment traps, and sediment basins. A setback levee was proposed as an alternate to sediment basin development.

- **No Action:** the SCSMAP is adopted, but the projects (four primary and one alternate) identified for Phase 1 Plan implementation are not pursued. This alternative assumed that other active and passive management strategies of the SCSMAP would be considered in place of strategies identified for immediate implementation in the SCSMAP Phase 1 Plan.

Copies of the Final EIS are available for review at the offices of Whatcom County Planning (5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226) or Whatcom County Public Works (322 N. Commercial Street, Bellingham, WA 98225), and the Everson Library (104 Kirsch Drive, Everson, Washington, 98247). The Final EIS, the Draft EIS, the Swift Creek Sediment Management Action Plan (SCSMAP), the SCSMAP Phase 1 Project Plan, and associated documents and reports are available via the internet at: [http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/plan/sepa/swiftcreek.jsp](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/plan/sepa/swiftcreek.jsp).

The next step in the process is Whatcom County Council review of the SCSMAP and SCSMAP Phase 1 Project Plan. The Draft and Final EIS will help to inform this process. A preliminary review will occur in the Surface Water Work Session held by the Council on Tuesday, June 25, 2013 at 10:30 a.m. in the Civic Center Garden Room, located at 322 N. Commercial Street, Bellingham, WA 98225.

The Whatcom County Council is not ultimately required to choose one of the nonproject alternatives: SCSMAP adoption or No Action. However, adopted plans and regulations must be within the range of alternatives that were reviewed in the Final EIS unless additional analysis is completed. Unless the nonproject proposed action alternative of SCSMAP adoption is chosen, the project level alternatives included in the SCSMAP Phase 1 Project Plan cannot be considered; projects based on SCSMAP strategies require that the SCSMAP be adopted first.

We invite you to read the Final EIS and attend the June 25, 2013 Surface Water Work Session for discussion of the SCSMAP and the SCSMAP Phase 1 Project Plan.

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