FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Mount Vernon awarded $800,000 grant for Downtown Flood Protection and Skagit Riverwalk Project

MOUNT VERNON – The City of Mount Vernon has been awarded $800,000 from the Washington State Public Works Board - Small Communities in Rural Counties (SCRC) Grant Program for the first phase of the Mount Vernon Downtown Flood Protection and Skagit Riverwalk Project.

This funding, coupled with the Skagit County Distressed Counties Economic Development Grant award of $500,000 and grant awards from both the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) will be used to proceed with the first segment of the project to provide flood protection for the City. The overall project will protect the downtown area from Skagit River flooding and eliminate the need for the City to mobilize massive flood fight efforts every three to five years (up to 150,000 sandbags and 2000 volunteers). Mayor Bud Norris indicated that "This represents a milestone in accomplishing our goal of adequate flood protection for downtown Mount Vernon."

More specifically, the $800,000 grant completes the City's funding for phase one of the project, which will allow the City to proceed with construction of a flood protection system from the Division Street Bridge north to Lions Club Park and across Freeway Drive to the BNSF rail line.

In addition to the flood protection measure, a 16-24 foot wide public river trail will be constructed along the alignment. The $872,884 ALEA grant awarded by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) will be used to build a .2 mile, multi-purpose riverfront trail that links to the city's trails and Lions Club Park. The North Trail will serve as the backbone for further regional shoreline trails and provide a critical link between the city's largest urban trail and the future downtown promenade. City, county and state public officials, including Skagit County Dike District #3, have contributed financial support. Mount Vernon will contribute $87,289. Funding for the ALEA comes from leases on state owned waterfront sites and sale of harvest rights for geoduck clams. The City has received full funding for the trail portion of this project from RCO and ALEA grants.

By protecting the downtown area from flooding the City expects significant economic gain from increased development in the protected area to the averted cost of disasters. This is the first complete stand alone phase of a three phase flood protection project designed to meet FEMA requirements to remove the downtown from the 100-year FEMA flood map. This project will provide immediate flood protection to the downtown from potential flooding that could result from a breach in the existing levee at the north end of the City. Special thanks are in order to Senator Kevin Ranker and Representatives Jeff Morris and Dave Quall, our legislative representation of the 40th district.

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