

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 20, 2009

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Re: Weather and River Monitoring Resources for Washington State

Dear Secretaries Locke and Salazar:

We are writing to request additional weather forecasting and river monitoring resources from the National Weather Service and the U.S. Geological Survey to address a serious threat of flooding in Washington State resulting from structural damage to the Howard Hanson Dam, a major federal flood protection facility operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It has come to our attention that these resources may improve the accuracy of weather models, providing better data to local officials and the Corps as they work to minimize the threat of flooding that could potentially cause billions of dollars in damage to the region.

As you are aware, the damage to the Howard Hanson Dam could potentially require the Corps to release significantly more water into the Green River, resulting in an increased risk of flooding in the Green River Valley. With the diminished capacity of the Howard Hanson Dam, it is critical that the Corps has the best possible information on which to base its operational decisions at the Dam. Ensuring that the Corps has accurate and comprehensive information to make decisions about releasing water into the Valley could mean the difference between massive downstream flooding or no flooding at all.

The first flood season with impaired flood protection from the Howard Hanson Dam is fast approaching. We also understand from the Corps that a permanent fix to the damage at the Howard Hanson Dam is likely to take years to accomplish. That means that from October through April, the residents and businesses in the entire Green River Valley – from south of Auburn all the way to south Seattle – are at risk. Even with the efforts of the Corps to fix the problems at the Dam, it appears the danger will persist for many years.

Given the magnitude of the threat, we must ensure that the most technologically advanced infrastructure is in place to ensure that the Corps has accurate information on

flows into the dam as well as complete weather modeling data. Personnel at the National Weather Service's local and regional offices have identified several additional resources that may assist in improving the accuracy of the weather models that are used by local officials and the Corps. In addition, King County and the Governor of Washington have agreed that additional resources may be beneficial to local operations. Specifically, we are writing in support of the identified resources and are requesting the following of your agencies:

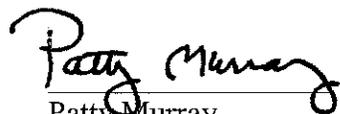
Additional Gauges With Telemetry – We are formally requesting that the U.S. Geological Survey install additional precipitation gauges and gauges to measure flows into the Howard Hanson Dam. This will assist the Corps in deciding when and how much water to release.

Relocations of Weather Radar Systems – We are requesting that the National Weather Service relocate Experimental Atmospheric River System (ARO) stations to Washington State this fall to enhance weather forecasting capabilities that inform Corps decisions about operations at the Howard Hanson Dam.

Modeling and Computer Programming Staff and Technology – We also understand that additional staffing resources and technology at regional National Weather Service (NWS) and Northwest River Forecasting Center (NWRFC) could be beneficial in the event of a storm to update and fine tune forecasting models for the Green River Basin. We are requesting that these agencies shift additional resources to the Northwest this fall. These resources will also assist the Corps in making critical operational decisions related to the dam.

We would like to request a meeting with the respective agencies within your departments to discuss these requests and any additional resources that may be available. Our offices stand ready to provide any assistance or additional information you may need. We eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,



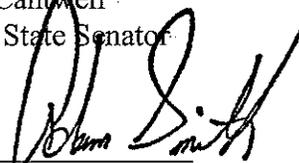
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United State Senator



Dave Reichert
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress