

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Russell T. Vought  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite  
Chief of Engineers  
United States Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20314

Dear Acting Director Vought and Lieutenant General Semonite,

We write to express our deep disappointment that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) did not include funding for sediment monitoring for the Lower Cowlitz River in Cowlitz County, Washington state in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 work plan.

As you are aware, funding was authorized by Congress in the Mount St. Helens Construction Account for Mount St. Helens Sediment Control in 1985. Proper river management requires yearly monitoring to ensure that river levels do not reach dangerous levels. Unfortunately, funding for sediment monitoring has been inconsistent, creating uncertainty for local communities most at risk from the impacts of flooding.

The Long-Term Sediment Management Plan was developed following the eruption of Mount St. Helens. Congress authorized USACE to construct, operate and maintain a sediment retention structure and provide the associated downstream actions necessary to ensure flood risk reduction for the communities of Longview, Kelso, Castle Rock, and Lexington. As sediment flows into the lower river, it reduces the flood-carrying capacity and puts these communities at unacceptable risk during winter storms.

The local county government, along with several partners, were forced to commit \$110,000 last year to partially complete some of this work after the federal government failed to provide the funding. The results of their study found that flood protection levels decreased below federally authorized levels in the city of Lexington. Local communities should not be forced to divert funds from other local priorities to make up for the lack of consistent monitoring in what was a commitment by the federal government.

Failing to address the risk to impacted communities not only threatens them with the uncertainty of flooding but fails to give them the peace of mind that the monitoring can provide. We request a detailed explanation behind the decision to not fund sediment monitoring and ask that you work with our offices to identify options to fund this important work as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

*Jaime Herrera Beutler*

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Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress

*Maria Cantwell*

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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

*Patty Murray*

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Patty Murray  
United States Senator