

Flood maps: 90-day appeal period will begin after open house

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will be presenting at the open house along with other experts.

Reductions

Gearhart will see a roughly 8 percent reduction in the mapped 100-year flood plain, where the flood risk in any given year is 1 in 100, according to statistics from the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries. Seaside's decrease is less than

8 percent. Meanwhile, Cannon Beach will see an overall decrease of about 27 percent.

In addition, FEMA has lowered the estimated flood elevation level of Warrenton Levee System No. 1. Recently, the agency provisionally deemed the levees large enough to protect properties behind it, a decision that Collin Stelzig, a city engineer, called a "huge win for the city of Warrenton."

The county said it has mailed letters and draft maps

to people in unincorporated areas who will see some of their land added to the flood hazard area.

These preliminary maps are separate from the flood plain maps under dispute by the cities of Astoria and Warrenton, Clatsop County, Port of Astoria and Diking District No. 9.

The five parties are currently splitting the cost of an outside analysis and technical review of FEMA's draft maps, which they believe overstate the flood risk

and would lock locals into paying thousands of extra dollars in flood insurance every year. The results of the review may affect the provisional accreditation status of Warrenton Levee System No. 1.

Timeline

After the open house, a 90-day appeal period will soon begin, most likely in late September or early October, Ratté said. From there, the time frame for adopting the maps will

depend on how many appeals and comments are submitted.

"If there are significant comments we need to address, or an appeal, that could add some time to our processing," Ratté said. Once that stage is completed, FEMA will issue a letter of final determination to the communities, which will happen early next year at the earliest.

From there, communities will have six months to update their flood plain management

ordinances. The maps will then go into effect.

Ratté encourages locals to bring their comments and concerns to the open house so that they leave better educated about the maps that will shape the lives and livelihoods of many coastal residents.

"Hopefully, what's occurring is, as people learn about the changes, they're reaching out to their cities and counties and asking questions, gathering information," he said.

Fisheries: State, tribes will work together on setting salmon seasons for next year

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job of catering to the hunters and fishermen ... We seem to be getting less and less every year," Jay Van Putten, a fisherman from Bow, said.

Effects still felt

Sen. Kirk Pearson, R-Monroe, who chairs the state Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee, said he heard from many fishermen and fisheries-related businesses while negotiations for the salmon seasons dragged on.

"There was a lot of concern from those on the business side," he said. "To have

that fishery (opened) was vital for our economy."

Brett Rosson, who owns a fishing charter company in Anacortes, said while the marine fishing seasons opened as usual, the uncertainty surrounding the fisheries meant about a third fewer fishermen than usual booked trips for July.

Another concern are the restrictions that came with the fisheries agreement, including that wild coho salmon caught in marine areas can't be kept because coho returning to Puget Sound streams this year came back undersized and in low numbers.

The state and tribes will

again work together on setting salmon seasons for next year.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Chair Lorraine Loomis said the co-managers are discussing how to make the process smoother.

Steelhead in the Puget Sound have been protected under the federal Endangered Species Act since 2007.

In 2008, the state put the Washington Statewide Steelhead Management Plan into action. Under this plan, steelhead fisheries went from various levels of catch and release to entirely closed in 2010.

Fish & Wildlife Regional Fish Program Manager Annette Hoffman said spring

catch-and-release steelhead seasons remain closed because the fish is protected under the Endangered Species Act.

That means before opening any steelhead fisheries, including catch and release, approval is needed from NOAA.

"We still don't have a permit that allows (fishing for steelhead). That's the bottom line," Hoffman said.

Fish & Wildlife has plans to ask for NOAA approval based on the good escapement numbers in recent years.

"We do feel that there are enough fish there to be able to provide some opportu-

nity and we're working with the co-managers to figure out how much, and then we'll be asking to NOAA to see if they agree with that," Hoffman said.

NOAA Fisheries spokesman Michael Milstein said if the state and tribes submit a proposal for reopening the fishery, the request will go through a public review process.

Potential complications

The hatchery side of fisheries management has its own complications, with the potential for the Skagit River to become one of three rivers in the Puget Sound region selected

as a wild steelhead gene bank.

Gene banks are intended to allow wild fish species to recover without interference from hatchery fish. If a river is a designated a steelhead gene bank, no steelhead hatchery operations will be allowed.

Fish & Wildlife had been expected to pick the rivers in March, but the selection has been delayed.

"There were quite a few folks really wanting to see a gene bank in the Skagit and a lot of folks who really wanted to preserve (fishing) opportunities in the Skagit ... that polar opposite input kind of slowed us down," Fish and Wildlife's Hoffman said.

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