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December 18, 2001
**USACE
REGULATORY BRANCH**

Colonel Ralph H. Graves
Ms. Muffy Walker
Ms. Gail Terzi
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Seattle District
P. O. Box 3755
Seattle, WA 98124-3755

Dear Colonel Graves, Ms. Walker and Ms. Terzi:

Re: Corps Ref. No. 1996-4-02325; Port of Seattle Document Inconsistencies

As you know, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants has been retained on behalf of the Airport Communities Coalition (ACC) to provide a technical review of stormwater facilities and streamflow impacts from development activities at SeaTac airport. The purpose of this letter is to identify inconsistencies in the Port's proposals for site development and stormwater management. It supplements our prior letters and declarations in this matter, the latest of which is our November 26, 2001, letter to you.

Since our last letter, numerous additional documents relating to the airport development activities have been obtained by ACC public disclosure requests. This letter focuses on the two documents identified below.

- Port of Seattle - Commission Agenda Item No. 8a for Meeting on November 13, 2001. Memorandum dated October 16, 2001 regarding Resolution No. 3469, agreements between the Port of Seattle and the City of SeaTac for use and redevelopment of borrow areas 3 and 4 on Port property within the City. A copy of that memorandum is enclosed for reference.
- "Natural Resource Mitigation Plan, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Master Plan Update Improvements," November 2001, prepared by Parametrix, Inc. for Port of Seattle.

Please note that this letter does not reflect a detailed review of the project Natural Resource Mitigation Plan (NRMP). In particular, the November 2001 version of the NRMP does not adequately address or resolve our previously-expressed concerns over the water-holding capability of the relocated Miller Creek channel, or the uncertain performance of relocated

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drainage channels. This letter is instead limited to two comments which highlight inconsistencies between newly-disclosed information and core assumptions in the Port's Stormwater Management Plan (SMP) for SeaTac Airport Master Plan Update Improvements.

Comment 1. Currently-proposed future land use development at the borrow pit areas is inconsistent with the Port's justification for ignoring such future conditions in the SMP.

- Information from the Port of Seattle Commission Agenda memorandum dated October 16, 2001, which was Item No. 8a for a meeting on November 13, 2001, supports the position that the SMP Master Plan Update hydrologic modeling of the borrow pit areas should consider the future developed condition of these areas.
- The Port's prior justification for NOT doing this was, from the Port's April 30, 2001 response to 401/404 comments by NHC:

"The potential hydrologic impacts of the borrow areas were not evaluated in the Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan because the Port believes that modifications are considered temporary and reversible, as opposed to the construction of permanent new impervious areas and airport facilities."

- Now, the Commission Agenda memorandum provides conflicting information:

The October 16, 2001 memo anticipates commercial development of the borrow areas sites within five years. Borrow Areas 3 and 4 are zoned as Aviation Commercial and/or Aviation Operations. Memo background information includes "Although there are no current plans for redevelopment, the areas will be graded to leave flat or gently sloping pads that can be redeveloped to future uses." Other statements give actions from date of agreement which we infer is probably November or December 2001. The agreement proposed by the Port specifies that "The Port will prepare and initiate within 6 months of the agreement a marketing plan to promote future redevelopment of the borrow areas after excavation." The agreement also "Provides a Port commitment to in good faith pursue having the redevelopment of the borrow areas completed within 5 years after the date the agreement is signed. . ."

- The November 2001 NRMP (Figure 1.3-1 and elsewhere) shows that Borrow Areas 1, 3, and 4 are Master Plan Update Improvement Projects. If the agreement described in the Port's October 2001 memorandum is (was) executed and the Port in good faith pursues and accomplishes site redevelopment as described, then Borrow Areas 3 and 4 will be fully redeveloped as aviation commercial and operation properties as of year 2006. That is the same year adopted in the SMP to represent future conditions for the other Master Plan Update projects.

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- The Port's October 2001 memorandum pertains to agreements with the City of SeaTac and does not address Borrow Area 1, which is located in the City of Des Moines. We have been informed verbally by City of Des Moines staff that Borrow Area 1 is zoned for Business Park development.
- The on-site borrow areas (1, 3, and 4), which are proposed to be mined as a source of about 6.7 million cubic yards of fill material, are shown by NRMP Figures 1.3-1 and 4.1-2 to have a combined excavation and future development footprint of about 155 acres. Borrow Areas 3 and 4 alone have an excavation and development footprint of about 60 acres. NRMP Figure 2.1-1 shows that the combined footprint of the borrow areas is comparable in size to the footprint of the third runway embankment, for which detailed hydrologic impact assessments have been performed.
- In light of the above discrepancies, the current SMP and Low Flow Impact analyses are unable to assess and mitigate the full impacts of airport Master Plan Update Improvement projects at year 2006 build-out because they ignore the proposed year 2006 developed condition of the borrow site areas.

Comment 2. The current NRMP reverts to an old stormwater management development proposal which is not examined in the current SMP.

- One of the problems with the November 1999 version of the project SMP is that it relied largely on flow control benefits to result from Regional Detention Facilities (RDFs) to be constructed by others. The problem with this approach is that the SMP was unable to provide any certainty whether or when the proposed RDF facilities would be constructed. Furthermore, the SMP failed to provide any analyses or designs for contingency scenarios in which regional facilities failed to materialize. Subsequent versions of the SMP proposed and fine-tuned refined a single proposal which does not require construction of regional facilities by others. The most recent SMP (December 2000, amended July 2001) furthermore does not provide any contingency analyses or designs to describe the airport stormwater facilities which would be required under a scenario in which RDF projects are constructed by others.
- Currently-proposed Master Plan Update Projects are summarized by NRMP Table 1.3-1, Pages 1-6 through 1-10. Stormwater facilities are listed on Page 1-8 and appear consistent with the facilities for which analyses and designs are presented in the SMP. However, the NRMP summary of stormwater facilities includes a footnote which states that the Port is now anticipating construction of a RDF by others, and does not anticipate constructing the stormwater facilities identified in the SMP. The footnote from NRMP Page 1-10 reads, with emphasis added:

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"Des Moines Creek Basin Plan Committee will construct an RDF on the Tye Golf Course to provide regional flow control. This project will eliminate the need for STIA retrofit facilities described above. As this is a cumulative action subject to future federal action, it is not a Master Plan Update improvement."

- There are two significant problems with this approach to stormwater management. First, there is no certainty that the proposed RDF will be constructed or on what schedule. Second, RDF construction does not eliminate the need for on-site stormwater control facilities, and the SMP does not provide any analyses or designs for airport stormwater facilities which would be required under an RDF scenario.

In summary, the Port's recent documents disclose that the future land use development and stormwater management facilities anticipated by the Port are inconsistent with the land use development and stormwater management facilities described in the project SMP. The current SMP and Low Flow Impact analyses are unable to assess and mitigate the full impacts of airport Master Plan Update Improvement projects at year 2006 build-out because they ignore the proposed year 2006 developed condition of the borrow site areas, and because they fail to address the other significant technical issues and uncertainties we have identified previously. Finally, the Port appears to be proposing development of an RDF-based system of stormwater controls for which no analyses or designs are presented in the project SMP.

On behalf of the ACC, we thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

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William A. Rozeboom, P.E.
Senior Engineer

Enclosure

cc: Peter Eglick, Helsell Fetterman LLP
Kimberly Lockard, Airport Communities Coalition

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