

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2014

The Honorable Harold Rodgers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
and Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Moran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Calvert and Ranking Members Lowey and Moran,

We write to respectfully request that you provide increased funding for landslide mitigation programs, including the Landslide Hazards Program within the Natural Hazards Program, as well as funding for Light Distance and Ranging (LiDAR) technology administered by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), in the FY 2015 Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

As you may know, on Saturday, March 22, 2014, a massive landslide near Oso, Washington, in Snohomish County, destroyed homes, damaged public infrastructure, and blocked the Stillaguamish River. The scope of the tragedy has been unimaginable; 41 people have lost their lives, many were injured, and 2 are still unaccounted for and presumed to be in the disaster area. Within a matter of seconds, 1.3 square miles of earthen material rushed down the mountainside, burying people in their homes under 40 feet of mud, turning cars into scrap metal, depositing hazardous material and other debris in the trees, river, and soil, and forever affecting the lives of thousands of our constituents. In small rural towns such as Oso, Arlington, and Darrington, where this landslide occurred, the impact of a disaster reaches far beyond the number of individuals who lost a family member or whose property was destroyed.

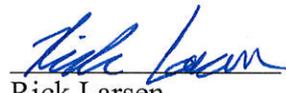
As you know, the Natural Hazards Program provides the best available scientific information and tools to reduce the threat of injuries, fatalities, and economic loss from a variety of natural disasters. This program also provides the ability to assess coastal and marine changes and potential vulnerabilities. In particular, the Landslide Hazards Program provides crucial information that leads to the reduction of losses from landslides and increases public safety through improved education and hazards mitigation strategies. USGS frequently provides hazard assessments, investigates and predicts landslides, and provides technical assistance during a response. Unfortunately, this program receives far less funding than other hazards programs, such as volcanoes and earthquakes. We ask that you provide \$10 million for this critical program in FY15, an increase over the FY14 enacted level.

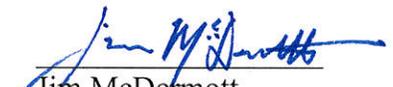
In addition, LiDAR is a remote sensing technology that can target potentially vulnerable areas with a laser and analyze the reflected light with billions of data points. This advanced technology should be utilized to a far greater extent to map potential landslide areas. The 3D Elevation Program's (3DEP) goal is to provide LiDAR for the entire nation and to make this information available through a national map. The contract that the National Geospatial Program oversees, the Geospatial Products and Services Contract (GPSC), is the vehicle used to purchase LiDAR and is carefully quality controlled. While USGS is authorized to spend up to \$300 million annually to purchase LiDAR, often only about 10% of this funding authority is realized. To date, just 22% of our home state of Washington has been mapped using this technology. We ask that you utilize your existing funding authority to allocate robust funding for this program and apply this technology to the greatest extent possible.

After having spent a great deal of time with those in the affected communities, we are committed to doing everything we can to prevent a similar tragedy in the future - not only for our constituents - but for those similarly threatened across the country. Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress


Rick Larsen
Member of Congress


Jim McDermott
Member of Congress