

INTERVIEW 1

October 2025

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INTERVIEWER: Before I hit record, do you consent to that, and do you have any questions about it?

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INTERVIEWEE: No, no, I'm good.

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INTERVIEWER: Cool. Oh, and I was actually gonna say, we could both shut our videos off if you don't want to have, like, a video recording, or if you like the video, you can leave it on, whatever you want.

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INTERVIEWEE: I don't know if I know. I don't care.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay, we can leave them on, because I also realized the automated software in Zoom for transcription is really good, so it won't have to leave anywhere, but I'll send you a copy of our video when we're done.

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INTERVIEWEE: I mean, it's just. Okay.

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INTERVIEWER: Cool, so you can see the questions, right?

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INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

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INTERVIEWER: Wonderful. So...As I mentioned, the point of this interview project, or the part of the project that's interviews, is to document some pieces of the story of glacial outdoor sledding that are not easily communicated in numbers or basic categories. Really, I'm hoping you can think of this as a space to communicate things

that are really about the toll this is taking on households like yours. It can be money, and it can be other things that are not money. I've attempted to work with the survey respondents that are people who have been most affected in a number of different ways. So, as someone who has been affected in multiple years, you guys were a no-brainer.

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INTERVIEWEE: Mm-hmm.

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INTERVIEWER: But overall, the goal is to understand how you feel about continuing to live in the Valley and in Juneau, and how you move forward in your

daily and long-term life. So it's kind of like thinking about making a public comment, even though your name won't be attached, but it's a way for you to have a little bit of a larger platform to tell your story of how flood is affecting you.

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INTERVIEWER: And so, I know the answer to the first one, but for the first two questions, I was hoping you could talk a little bit about if you've been impacted in the past and if so, before 2024, and then talk about your personal experience in 2024. Now, since you've been impacted every year that we have, and I think maybe you mentioned even. Before that, in your garage in years past.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, 2000.

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INTERVIEWER: Feel free to go ahead and smoosh these together and just explain, kind of, what your experiences have been with glacial lake outburst floods.

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INTERVIEWEE: Mhm. Okay. Yeah, for a lot of years it was just getting in our yard, and our kids thought it was a lot of fun. And, uh, but in 2016. It came up into our garage, about 2 to 3 inches. And, the problem... there were a number of problems we had anticipating floods, we did keep things on crates and in our garage. We kind of kept things up, just... just in case it should ever get in there. But the problem that year was we were out of town, and our... I think she was our child was the only one at home. And so... Yeah, that... that was scary, because [the water] was coming into the garage, and they were on the phone with us, and we were... and they were pretty frantic, like... you know, what do I do, and... So, we were just talking through what they could move from

the garage, and...And not knowing how deep it was gonna get, we just kept in touch with them. Turned out okay. But, uh, and then we had a break, it seemed like it...For many years, it just got up into our driveway. Higher than... than other years, but not close... so close to the garage, so...

But then in 2023, when they were predicting a certain height, we thought, oh, this year it'll...It'll probably be, again, a couple inches in our garage. And so...We prepared for that. In fact, we prepared for. Gosh, it could be a foot in our garage. And that year actually came in 40 inches. So... a lot of...Things were damaged, and uh... because with that much water, that meant the things we had up high on shelves, the shelves flipped over, the freezer, you know, floated and turned upside down, and... oh, it was just... it was horrid. It was the most horrible, horrible mess. I can't...Water is... oh, the power of water with 40 inches.

We were really super happy that our Christmas was saved. I remember filming that for the kids. We're walking through this horrible devastation of the garage. And way up there on the shelves, it's like, we still have Christmas! But I think we lost about \$40,000 of contents that year. Let me see... and then we thought our house had been spared, but, as it turned out, the crawl space filled up, and...It bubbled up and under the

floor, and so as we were walking around downstairs, we started to notice more and more water. It was crazy. So, then we found out that all of the downstairs was destroyed. Because of the floor, and joists and everything had to be dried out, so...The entire downstairs became a skeleton, and everything removed as quickly as possible.

Which is another harrowing experience, because, you know, storage and all of that in Juneau. To try to find places, and then to try to find workers. Because they fill up with their summer work. No one was prepared for that.

2024, we had a lot of mitigation. To... keep our crawl space from filling so much. We had super powerful pumps put down there that would push the water. And a lot of pipes and stuff that would push the flood water back out into the flood, and it was a non-return valves, so...that served us well. We raised our boiler. We did have to replace the boiler also in 2023.

Thankfully, we had flood insurance. Oh, I won't get to that stuff yet. Uh, let's see, so 2024, we...Had a lot in our garage and we were quite prepared for it. And our, um...We kept the water level in the crawl space just to the cement blocks. And it actually did not come higher than that, because of the pumps were able to keep up. We did have pumps in the garage, they couldn't keep up, but...We were... we were prepared, knowing it probably wouldn't...Um... so that felt really good, and...oil tank was tied down with cement and cables, just so many things that we paid for ourselves. Knowing,

and people saying, it's gonna get worse. So then, let's see, that... yeah, that's up to 2024.

Do you want me to say anything about 25?

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah, because I only... Only, uh, our street is gonna be... answering for 2025 for the most part, right? Or some people will talk a little bit about the HESCO, but I think go ahead and describe this year.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWER: Uh, experience, since you definitely had.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it was horrid. I just... I just... we just couldn't believe it, because... The water just kept coming. So... All the things were running, pumps, generator, oh yeah, we also had to purchase a generator because they turn our power off. generator to keep the pumps running. Well... For... up until the last hour. Everything was doing well, and our sandbags and plastic. on all the doors, I... we're keeping the water out. at 6... like, right around 6 o'clock, I was just so... relieved, because I could see out the sliding glass door. The water, but it wasn't coming in, and the plastic and everything holding it back. But within... after another hour. And it finally crested at 7.15. That last hour. It came in our house and was... 10 inches. 8 to 10 inches, and so... You know, it's, like, all ruined

again, the flooring, and... Everything has to go. The garage received 52 inches.

We didn't have things quite high enough, so we... We did lose, um... About \$12,000 in contents. And everything had to be taken out of the house again. And all of the floors... All ripped up again.

So now we put down cement. And... and we put walls that treated lumber and stuff that can just get wet and dry out. And the... I don't know what we're gonna do in the garage. You can't store anything when your water comes in that high. So, we'll... we gotta rethink all that. We had tied down our freezer, and that worked, I hate to say, about learning new things for each flood. But that's how it goes.

So, our... Oh, but our siding and insulation that we had replaced in 2023, all the exterior of the house was okay, because we put metal at the bottom of our house. And different kind of insulation, so... At least this year, we didn't have to... Remove all the exterior.

I think the... it was a \$84,000...House damage plus \$12,000 contents. The insurance has been good this year, and we had a much better adjuster. <deleted name of adjustor> In the first year, we had these people called, <deleted name of adjustor> and they were really bad.

Our first year. We didn't even get an insurance check until, like, late November.

INTERVIEWER: I think we were the same. We actually... then it made us miss the cutoff to get...Um, did you guys get the, uh, deductible assistance from the state?

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INTERVIEWEE: No, we didn't get that either. We got it this year.

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INTERVIEWER: You should... yeah, we got it this year because... but yeah, if the... because the adjusters took too long in 2023, then they flipped it into, like, okay, if you want help, get an SBA loan.

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INTERVIEWEE: Oh yeah, we got the loan, and we're still paying that off.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWEE: That was for lots of the contents. yeah, we stood at 30...\$30,000 loan at a lower interest rate, but yeah, it's like, oh, great, we're still paying for that.

Yeah, it was a real... it was a real surprise this year, because we were...We felt really optimistic because of 2024. And that they weren't expecting,

you know, any deeper, but somehow. Around our area. Oh, yeah, we had...Our area just had way more. Definitely came in a foot higher. And then our driveway up the upper part of our driveway. That's not even... that wasn't even underwater; was destroyed because of a new channel of humongous water that came across. And we just put in gravel and paid for that, but...Yeah, we don't have any financial help to get it... to do anything else to it so... I don't know what's gonna happen with that next year.

I would say this year just makes us realize we're in for hell each year. And that you held that you cannot even...And you can't...plan enough. You cannot anticipate enough. Because there's no way to...To guess it, or...

Yeah, that's... those are the three... these three years that have... And to think this is... yeah. This isn't like a hurricane that'll hit now and then. I know those are horrid, too, but... Oh, well.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah, and I feel really bad for the folks in northwestern Alaska.

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INTERVIEWEE: That is horrible.

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INTERVIEWER: Knowing what we know about how awful it is. To get the water inundation. the extreme danger to life. The one thing that's not in these questions, but I am curious about, especially for, kind of, repeat flood-affected households. What has been your decision point in your household for intentionally being there during the flood? versus evacuating, or do you have some members of your household who intentionally evacuate? Just curious if you feel comfortable.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. Yeah, uh, my mom...

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INTERVIEWER: that decision.

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INTERVIEWEE: We intentionally evacuate her. Our child's house is... is in a high area, so...they go there, and we take them out... Quite early, because there's no...you know, there's no way to predict how soon...How the road will flood, and we just have to... even though we know our house isn't gonna flood. You know, many hours later, the roads are affected pretty quickly. pretty soon. So she goes, but we...Do not go, because...our only...Hope is with our generator and our pumps. But... we can't just...I mean, like...I don't know, the generator runs on gas, I guess maybe...It's hard... yeah, it's really hard to leave the house, because it comes in slowly, and we see things. That we didn't anticipate, and then we...Save them.

And we do have, a boat ready for us to make an evacuation if we need to. We, uh, tied onto...Like, a long rope up the driveway, so that we could just pull ourselves along it, I...I mean, that would be really... that would

be scary to do it, except that we have...you know, we have suits and life jackets. I'm not afraid for our lives, but just, like, oh... just...Just the cold water and just getting us out of there.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: You know, just the experience of it, even though...I feel safe. It'd be a very... it'd be a short while to...To get up the driveway. But anyway, we do always have that in place.

I feel like if we left...then...I don't know, then we're just saying really goodbye to our house, but we have to deal with it! That's the thing. We have to come back and deal with it. We can't just say. Oh, okay, we're leaving the house, uh, so, so much damage, and so...So that's why I feel like we need to be here to...

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INTERVIEWER: Yep.

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INTERVIEWEE: Prevent, and to... yeah. Stay on top of it if we can.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I appreciate your speaking to that. I think it is a challenge for a city emergency management to consider, and it's really not their. You know, their liability or their prerogative is to tell everybody that they have to evacuate, but there seems to be a, uh...common reality for folks who are on the front lines of this, whether it's on <my street> or directly behind HESCO, that there is no functional way for full evacuation if there is any hope to tend. And try to mitigate against disastrous amount of flooding, which poses a real danger, I think, especially to the folks behind HESCO with the way the Army Corps and the city have talked about the concern of, like, flash flood type conditions if there is a breach, which we don't really know what that would look like. But yeah, it's just, I think it's an important thing in some way to capture...people's reality <deleted personal information> it's just interesting, all the different strategies, and it has a lot to do with the quality and the positioning of a structure as well.

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INTERVIEWEE: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWER: So thank you for adding a little extra question. And you've reviewed all these, so if you want to dance around a little bit, feel free, but I did want to kind of shift into the financial dollars and cents part of this. There's four questions here, and they don't have to be answered exactly in order, but it's...When you think about the actual financial cost of this now, so many years in for you and your household: Can you explain a bit about how the costs of it and money costs relate to your overall household's financial security? Like, and Malachi was like, you should add in examples, like, is it affecting your job, your retirement plans,

your savings, or other stuff? You've already mentioned a bunch of things that you have paid for that are above and beyond your insurance, for example. And then, like, the rest of the as well.

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INTERVIEWEE: We've... 30 years, we've...Lived here, and put a lot into the house, a lot of remodeling, and...and it's worth nothing now. And so that's, just easily 600,000 lost. And we always have the deductible to pay, and I'm glad that the state this year, covered that for us, that was nice. I like to have...I wish that we could always have about \$50,000 before the flood. Because the things that come up, are immediate fixes. We could not get in and out of our house without immediately fixing our driveway. And that's not covered by insurance. All the external stuff. insurance has nothing to do with that, and yet you have to be able. To... you have to get in and out of your house, and other people, and workers, and...So, fix up and, and, clean up, is humongous right at the beginning. Then.

We get workers, and we have to hire different kinds of people. So, we have to pay them. And then, the workers...We'll say they're accepting us with our insurance, but there comes a time when they can't buy any more materials. And... it's like, do we just go on hold? Until the insurance money comes, or...And then we have things, like, right in the middle of projects, and then all...The materials that we have around.

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INTERVIEWEE: just, you know, covered with tarps and stuff. So, no, we want to keep them working, and keep them going, and we want to get it done, and get back living as fast as we can. So, it's really good to have... this year, we pulled out of savings, \$40,000 to...to our...a contractor.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: So that he could proceed with materials and work, um...They gave us... they gave us an advance, but...What was it? Uh, I think it was about \$25,000. And then... yeah, but it's...It really ends up being... when you're...Actually, I said our house was \$83,000, but I forgot. No, it was over \$100,000, because they had already given us the \$25,000. So yeah, if they could just hand us the money immediately...That... that would be helpful, but we have a mortgage, and so we have to...Also clear it with the bank, and we have to...INTERVIEWEE: You know, show that we're doing all the work, and...Anyway, it takes a long time.

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INTERVIEWER: <deleted content for privacy> how has your experience been in general with your mortgage holder? If you feel comfortable mentioning, like, who it is, I'm just curious of different companies.

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INTERVIEWEE: I know, I was thinking maybe...that I was thinking maybe we had Wells Fargo. I'm gonna look at this, uh, paper, because we were... we just received it.

<deleted personal information from interviewer>

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, our... our mortgage gives us no...chance to do that. I mean, we have to document that we have already done 75% of the work before we are even issued a check.

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INTERVIEWER: And then do they charge you a fee for getting it?

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INTERVIEWEE: I don't remember that, or I haven't known... I can't find the...

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I mean, no pressure, it's not a critical part of the interviews, since you're such a veteran of this.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, but you're right, the...You're right, the different mortgage companies, and...Yeah, and some of them are just, like, you know. okay, we got the money from FEMA, here it is, whatever you're gonna do with it.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I mean, and it totally makes sense, of course, that they don't just want people to pocket the money and maybe leave the house to rot. It's just a... it's how different each company behaves.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWER: and it's another added hurdle for, like, especially when you're trying to do everything you've just described.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Yeah. I was looking here to see... yeah, I already talked about the loan. That we're still paying for. Paying off. Um...the driveway. As far as financial planning. Um... yeah, it's really tricky to... To feel like, oh my gosh, like, we're never gonna sell our house, and the... it's like the last thing. That we would want our kids to worry about is that they're going to inherit it.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: I mean, that used to be... Such a good feeling, as we've put so much into this house, and now...you know, they... I mean, I didn't expect any of them to live in it. They maybe wouldn't, although we do still have a family here in Juneau, and, I mean, they would love it if they stayed in Juneau. Anyway, yeah, it's just like... We have to be sure to hurry up and figure something out so that... If we die in the house.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: Our family doesn't have to inherit this... This month, this... ugh, this horrible stuff! So... that's... that's really... it's really an awful thing. It's like, we... we can't walk away with it. And then... I walk away from it. And then if... then if we die, like... Oh, it just sounds horrible. That... for... I hope... I don't know. I don't know what would happen. I guess it really wouldn't be... It really wouldn't have to affect the family. I mean, they don't have to... inherit it, right?

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INTERVIEWER: I mean, there's a lot of dynamics to that question, right? Because, like, inheritance is always really complicated, first and foremost of, like, are multiple people trying to inherit and then agree on what to do with it, that kind of thing.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWER: So hopefully, we don't know, right? In 25 years, maybe it won't exist anymore, but who knows? Yeah, our future financial planning is just similar. It feels like you're making decisions in a black box.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWER: but yeah, were you guys planning to be retired in that property and have it be your forever home, or had you been planning to relocate? Yeah, we had. We... we'd planned to... we'd planned to be here forever, until...Uh, we were, like, too old to...to be able to keep up with it. I mean, just the regular snow and everything that Juno entails, then we thought.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, we better... we better sell it to some young people. But yeah, we have... as long as we're capable. We certainly have wanted to be here. After this flood. Just thinking of how much older... how soon we're going to get older. is... that's really a scary thought, is how could we...How can we keep up with this? And we're in our mid-60s. And I see people... I even notice that. I look at people, what...They're capable of in their 70s and 80s. And that's when I really worry about, this situation with floods in the house. It's like...I can't... I can't see us being able to...Um, go through this renovation. Every year for...Like, 10 more years? Gosh...We will be old. And there's people... I know there's some people older than we are in the neighborhood.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: I just really, yeah, feel for them. let's see, but financially... Yes, the... I think because it's very expensive. Beyond the insurance. the... the things that insurance doesn't... cover our, um... That, you know, that's a problem. And dealing with the outside, the debris, and... all of the physical stuff. And then we get volunteers, we get friends to help us. Are we really gonna be... Counting on them every year.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

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INTERVIEWEE: Oh, that just... it just feels awful. It's like, oh, another flood. They... people would be thinking, why haven't you moved away?

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: And it's like... and we can't move away, and then... You know, everyone's... a lot of our friends have been so nice. And... Uh, it was interesting, though. We did have... a few different... Helpers each year. Um... And I'm... I mean, I'm kind of grateful for that, to not burn out the same group of friends and family. And, I mean, there's just things that have to be done immediately, and I... I just can't imagine just <Name> and me doing it ourselves. And big things have to be moved, and moved out of the way, and... Anyway, that... That's really tiring.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: Oh, yeah, and I... I slightly mentioned that piece about even though you have insurance it doesn't mean you're gonna be able to find the workers and a contractor who can come immediately, and, oh, we just happen to have time that we can fit you in our schedule. Almost everybody at the... in August of the workers are overbooked. And they're trying to get... Through what they planned for the summer, and they can't even see that they're gonna make it. They're gonna get everything done. And then... then the flood comes, and... We were lucky this year to find a contractor that's pretty new in town. And... he was absolutely wonderful. And, um... But then, a lot of the things did end up being... More costly even than he was expecting.

And the adjuster, and...I think they're figuring that out, but just the amount of time... He thought that they were going to be here weeks, and they would really...get through this quickly for us. Well, they just finished this past week. So, it was still months.

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INTERVIEWER: Oh.

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INTERVIEWEE: they started right away, mid-August, and so...September, October, it took them 2 months, and they were hoping it would just be a few weeks.

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INTERVIEWER: That's a lot.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, and we have...Um, in the downstairs, they got our bedroom and bathroom up and running first. And they did have to take out the bathroom cabinets, although...They were able to put them back. We... we just treated them and washed them up, and...they... that was really good. We didn't... because when will you have to order things?

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

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INTERVIEWEE: In Juneau? Ugh, so we got our... that...Back pretty quickly. That really helped our life. That didn't happen in 23. We were out of our bedroom. Uh, I don't know, like, almost 6 months.

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INTERVIEWER: Oh, boy.

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INTERVIEWEE: We were upstairs in the living room. I think we put a lot of pressure on them that they got us a room downstairs before Christmas, and the other room so that we could have our family for Christmas, and...Let people come home. Um...Yeah, and then they, uh, also were really good with my mom. So, mom did not have to move out, and...She only had to be upstairs for about a week. And then she... that's...this company, Timeless Builders, was just so wonderful, and he's...His, history is from out east, so he. Was very used to working with hurricanes.

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INTERVIEWER: Oh, cool.

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INTERVIEWEE: So, that was great for Juneau.

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INTERVIEWER: Well, that's one... one positive ray in the dark clouds.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

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INTERVIEWER: if you have to choose, like, which of the costs do you feel like were most unexpected over the multiple years that you have gone through this?

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INTERVIEWEE: Cost that was most unexpected. Um...storage...I... I just think there's... there's always labor and materials. It's so huge, and it's always bigger than we expect. And...just getting things up and running again.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: Like, in 2023, we... it was, like the boiler...getting everything...inspected, and...some things changed out, like outlets and stuff. So that you can use the place again.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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INTERVIEWEE: I guess that I... it's just things...That really add up.

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INTERVIEWER: Yep. And then this last number 6 in this section, if you're thinking about, like, what do you want other people to know? I know you've already listed a huge amount of stuff, but is there anything. Anything else that you haven't mentioned that,

like, if you were speaking directly to some local leaders or to the public, that you'd want them to know about the financial pieces of this repeat flooding for your household?

00:48:52.000 --> 00:48:58.000

INTERVIEWEE: Let's see, I might have already covered it. what I wrote down, immediate repairs...always...Are different with every flow. They're... unexpected and...have to be repaired immediately, like I said. We try to fix some things ourselves and get help from friends and volunteers. But, that's...That's still limited. What we can do, and what people have time for. And the workers already being so fully summer booked.

00:49:37.000 --> 00:49:39.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

00:49:38.000 --> 00:49:41.000

INTERVIEWEE: So it's like, you have all of this stuff to deal with. And... and the, um...Oh, I can't think of the word. Anyway, what's...what's available? Certainly, the... they set up the tents, and they say, come and tell us what you need. And...Some people need the...You know, the insulation pulled out of their crawl spaces. Oh, the crawl space. That's, like, for everybody, and it's horrible work.

00:50:17.000 --> 00:50:19.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

00:50:18.000 --> 00:50:20.000

INTERVIEWEE: Ugh, it's just horrible work. and yeah, yeah, I went to the tents, and I was saying I... I needed some people to help us. Shop, vac, and mop. And then... I didn't hear from him, and...And I thought, well, maybe they'll send some people over. And then I was blessed with some friends...some other people that were able to come and help, and so then I... I just told them. You know, told the...Was that CBJ? I... it was set up there...

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INTERVIEWER: I think it was United Way.

00:50:57.000 --> 00:50:59.000

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, United Way. And I thought, yeah, just let them use their volunteers other places that... that I finally was... was getting enough help coming through now and then.

00:51:13.000 --> 00:51:15.000

INTERVIEWER: How was it for you guys this year with the lack of phones and Wi-Fi.

00:51:19.000 --> 00:51:20.000

INTERVIEWEE: Oh my gosh... Well, that was very... I forgot about that piece. That went on for days. And so we couldn't connect with... People that wanted to come help us. I got all these really old texts that said: I can stop by at 4, I can... and some people would stop by, and then I wasn't there.

00:51:38.000 --> 00:51:40.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

00:51:42.000 --> 00:51:47.000

INTERVIEWEE: Because they couldn't get ahold of us, so... oh, yeah, that was really bad. trying... And then I was afraid for my mom. If we have an emergency. And... what if I can't... can't make a phone call? It was such hit and miss. We kept going up to the driveway to... to try to get some cell coverage. And typically if I needed to talk with my spouse, I'd drive to McDonald's and... get Wi-Fi or even just dry... even define some cell service. Out in the, you know, somewhere else in the city and pull over and try to make all my phone calls that I could think of. Oh my gosh, that was horrible. That was because of something out at the bridge, wasn't it?

00:52:38.000 --> 00:52:50.000

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, they had to cut the two or three fiber optics that were going across, and apparently it was both ACS and GCI, and apparently it was the fiber optics for even, like, going all the way up to Haines. But yeah, it actually cut anybody who had, like, an old-school landline, and it cut Wi-Fi, and it cut ATT and, it cut GCI, ACS, like, all the main carriers, and then we tried to go buy a Starlink at Home Depot, and they were out. Somebody else had, you know, already bought it, so... Yeah, I don't know, that was, to me, one of those, like, it wasn't a financial cost, but it was something that really threw me for a psychological loop this year.

00:53:17.000 --> 00:53:19.000

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I think I blocked it, it was so, so awful. Yeah.

00:53:30.000 --> 00:53:47.000

INTERVIEWER: Well, and on to that note of it not being financial, yeah, the last section of these questions, and I don't want to... I'm happy to stay as long as you want to talk, but I don't want to keep you much more than an hour if you are only planning on an hour. but yeah, I'm curious, you've already touched on a lot of this, but going through this over and over again, and like I know you talked about in your survey responses,

you don't plan to move from Juneau, you don't want to move from your house if you don't have to. As this is evolving, and we've had another flood, and

all these things, curious how you're feeling about the ideas of moving, about how these floods are impacting your feelings of physical safety, satisfaction, mental ideas about living in this community, and then all of these five questions are kind of similar, so feel free to dance around it. Again, I added a few more prompts in there...do you have confidence in the long-term solution? And, I know you're not, you know, behind HESCOs, but that whole...the city's response and those things. Like, how is this impacting you and your household? In a non-financial way.

00:54:45.000 --> 00:54:50.000

INTERVIEWEE: Well, we are affected basically July to December. And... it's devastating and overwhelming each year. With 2024, even though we didn't. We didn't have to do repairs to the house that was a very debris-filled time, all...I don't know what the flood did, but it... it brought so many things that we couldn't drive on our driveway, and...It was just a humongous mess. Of course, the garage was flooded, it always is, so it takes... that takes a long time, and when we're looking ahead at coming. And... start having bad dreams, and start just feeling the weight of, we are gonna have to go through this again, and it's going to be overwhelming. And then, I think, yeah, we live in a countdown. And talk about it all the time.

00:56:02.000 --> 00:56:04.000

INTERVIEWEE: And, we don't plan any trips now from, like, you know, mid-July until mid-September. And then when I'm, uh, teaching, which is usually well, it didn't affect the teaching so much, but I have...I do a lot of youth work, and we have our camps, and we have our...I direct <name of employment>, and...we do just a lot of things with the youth, and I feel like every time we plan it then I have to say, of course I'm on call for the flood, and so I try to make sure I have backup. In... in case I have to pull out of this or that. I hate that. And then <spouse's name>, with <their> work, <they have> the same thing, where <they> lets patients know, especially those that <they> travel to, and the... and the contract work, you know, <they> let them know the flood's coming, I'm gonna do as much as I can. I may have to Zoom. So <they> just deal with that. And then, um...Let's see, what else was I thinking about? I... we make sure the family does not plan any big events in August, like, no one...get married, or any family reunion. It's like, we just have to be in Juneau. And it's also, you know, it's a horrible feeling when you can't think of everything. And you spend the whole year thinking and planning, preparing. And that drives us crazy. And then...When the flood comes, it's something brand new we couldn't even have thought of.

00:58:19.000 --> 00:58:21.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

00:58:19.000 --> 00:58:21.000

INTERVIEWEE: And... oh, that just...makes me feel so crazy. We'll be taking walks. And... we take... we take walks daily. And then my...Oh, gosh, all through June and July, it's so beautiful. And then my spouse is thinking of new things about, well, if it floods this, we'll do that. If... and...If this, if this, if this, and sometimes I'll say to him, wait a minute. Tonight, or today, let's just have a walk and not mention the flood. Because sometimes I just can't I just can't deal with it, even though I feel like daily we deal with it. And so, uh, we continuously make lists. Think up ideas, read...I... and I read things, all kinds of different things, and do searches for how to protect a house. And I read a lot about hurricanes and what people do. Um... and we have a big list, a countdown, you know, as we prepare for the event, what needs to get done in June and July.

00:59:35.000 --> 00:59:37.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

00:59:38.000 --> 00:59:41.000

INTERVIEWEE: and in August, and then, of course, there's...When we... the day of the flood, and we have that list. And we're always adding to it, and making sure we don't forget something. Because there's, yeah, there's a lot that has to be done the last minute. They, you know, we have 12 to 18 hours, which is good. But yeah, you just can't think of everything. Yeah, and I already said needing a lot of help every year is tiring. For everyone. Living in the River Valley is beautiful and terrifying. And, when I... when I dream of doing something like retiring to Arizona. Where some of our family lives.

01:00:34.000 --> 01:00:36.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:00:34.000 --> 01:00:36.000

INTERVIEWEE: I feel like that would be the biggest respite. It... it would...I just... gosh, when they mention that buyout, I feel like that's what this land needs. It needs to just flood!

01:00:56.000 --> 01:00:58.000

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

01:00:56.000 --> 01:00:59.000

INTERVIEWEE: We need to get out of its way! And let it do its thing without...Without horrifying people. But you can't just get away.

01:01:10.000 --> 01:01:12.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:01:12.000 --> 01:01:15.000

INTERVIEWEE: So yeah, when I think about being retired. I don't think of...like, not working and just staying in this house. Now I think of the only...Kind of real retirement would be to really be able to walk away from all this and sit in a dry place.

01:01:32.000 --> 01:01:34.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:01:34.000 --> 01:01:38.000

INTERVIEWEE: And I know other disasters can happen. Earthquakes can happen anywhere, but you don't know it. You know, we know it is coming. So I have a countdown on my...In my kitchen, on my window. I just asked Siri, how many days until August 5th? And then it tells me, and then I write the number up. I haven't asked it in about... in a week or so, but I... but I ask every now and then.

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INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:02:08.000 --> 01:02:10.000

INTERVIEWEE: And yeah, there was a question, how...How often do I think about it? It is day-to-day, a day... it's...

01:02:18.000 --> 01:02:20.000

INTERVIEWER: And that's year-round, yeah?

01:02:19.000 --> 01:02:23.000

INTERVIEWEE: It's our life now, yeah. I mean, even...as I'm going to...Okay, our house was finished. But the downstairs is pretty empty, and we still have most things out in storage in that big...Pod that we rented.

01:02:37.000 --> 01:02:39.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:02:37.000 --> 01:02:40.000

INTERVIEWEE: Um... so...In the next couple months, I'm gonna be...purging. I really want the downstairs to be so empty now. Except for maybe a, you know, a bed with the bed covers on it. But, um...So I've got to do all that. That's gonna take me another couple months to...move back in and reorganize, but I... everything that I move in is, like. Okay, is this worth carrying out for the next flood? What will I do with this? during the next flood, where's it gonna go? What am I gonna store it in? Everything is...It's just a continuous, very continuous thought. I live flood now.

01:03:27.000 --> 01:03:32.000

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's almost like describing a state of hypervigilance that never...And, um...So, if you're thinking about things as someone who is really in quite a unique position, you know...going through this. And with your perspective of having fully engaged in the remodel and the...flood fighting aspect of this, what are the big messages that you want local leaders or other folks in Juneau to know about. How the floods impact these non-financial pieces of what it's like to live in Juneau, and I noticed you kind of already said part of that is when you think of a retiree... a retirement that feels...positive, it's not even in Juno, so I was wondering if you can talk a little bit about, kind of, that. If you have any kind of summary statement of that question.

01:04:33.000 --> 01:04:35.000

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know what to say.

01:04:35.000 --> 01:04:39.000

INTERVIEWER: You've definitely already answered it throughout, I just wanted to give you time.

01:04:38.000 --> 01:04:40.000

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, how do I...This is...Emotionally, this does not feel sustainable. It's one thing when we work out the finances. And when we mitigate as much as we can, and make decisions for the next flood. But emotionally. I...I remind myself it's just a house, but...It's our security, we're in it.

And I... I don't do many...I kind of don't do so many normal things, like projects, and things that used to be fun, set it all up, and...I don't know, work on my family pictures, or work sewing, or...Boy, just all of those things feel like just way too...I don't feel like the places can be settled enough for that, or... or the safety to...yeah, to... to... to do a big project. I feel like I'm just always...Or at least...Yeah, I'm either finishing up from the last flood, or preparing for the next one.

01:06:21.000 --> 01:06:23.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:06:21.000 --> 01:06:25.000

INTERVIEWEE: So I... I don't ever have this feeling like I can just be so relaxed in my house to start a big project and work on it. That's...That's really sad. I can pick up a book and read it because it doesn't involve any things.

01:06:42.000 --> 01:06:43.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:06:43.000 --> 01:06:45.000

INTERVIEWEE: But it...And I really used to love my projects. Sewing and creating and...Um...I don't know how long it's gonna be till...I... I could feel like doing that again.

01:07:02.000 --> 01:07:04.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:07:06.000 --> 01:07:10.000

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, that's... and a lot of it is... is...That I have to just do it myself. All of, like, once we get everything moved out, and then moving it back in. And, trying to set up life, especially because Christmas are...A lot of our family is coming home.

01:07:28.000 --> 01:07:30.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:07:29.000 --> 01:07:33.000

INTERVIEWEE: And I'm thinking, I wanna wrap presents, I wanna...I want to just do regular, normal things, but...But then, I'm gonna be spending weeks just getting the house. Moved back into...It's like to...It's like a big move. A really big... it's like a really big move every year.

01:07:52.000 --> 01:07:54.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:07:56.000 --> 01:08:02.000

INTERVIEWEE: Because our... yeah, we do use a lot of our downstairs, the laundry room. mom's room and our room, and then our grandchildren come and spend the night, so...I really gotta have... I really want those bedrooms. Yeah, they've been asking, are the bedrooms ready yet, Grandma? Oh... yes, I'm gonna get the bedrooms ready. I think this week I can... Because they put the beds back in. I should, but I have to go in the pot and dig through and get...

01:08:31.000 --> 01:08:33.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:08:32.000 --> 01:08:38.000

INTERVIEWEE: So that I can find where we put the bedding, you know? It's just, like, everything is overwhelming, just to...Just, like, to make the bed so the grandkids could come spend the night again. It affects them, too. Like, the little ones...They need to... they need to ask. how long is it gonna be before a flood, so that they feel safe over here? And, I mean, that's, like, the 6-year-old...And he had it. He's been that way for the past couple years. With the floods, he's gotta ask a lot of questions to... you know, to feel safe over at Grandma's house.

01:09:15.000 --> 01:09:16.000

INTERVIEWER: That was really upsetting.

01:09:15.000 --> 01:09:20.000

INTERVIEWEE: So we just... we just reassure him a lot. Oh, it's only August.

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INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

01:09:21.000 --> 01:09:23.000

INTERVIEWEE: And then the months after that the...You know, they see everything.

01:09:26.000 --> 01:09:31.000

INTERVIEWER: And then when emergency management comes to tell you to evacuate in October or in September.

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, yeah.

01:09:37.000 --> 01:09:50.000

INTERVIEWER: ...and this is kind of circling back, but...it's been amazing to see the spectrum of what people are able to, what some people are able to just sort of cash buy to, say, do bank armoring...So we just have this huge spectrum of, like.

01:10:36.000 --> 01:10:38.000

INTERVIEWEE: Hmm...

01:10:39.000 --> 01:10:44.000

INTERVIEWER: Ability and willingness... both ability and willingness to do flood fighting and mitigation, and then... or just absolutely not able to. And I was just curious if you could speak a little to that, like, with... you've mentioned that each year you are pulling from your own savings. How are you guys conceptualizing that, and then, like how did you guys think about home raising? Did you guys ever consider that seriously? And was that a price point, or was it more of, like, a...

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INTERVIEWEE: Oh.

01:11:07.000 --> 01:11:09.000

INTERVIEWER: project decision.

01:11:09.000 --> 01:11:13.000

INTERVIEWEE: it was a price point. Yeah, it... Yeah, the expense to raise this house, we could... Like, that kind of money to come up with, or to get... A huge loan for... Just... it just didn't appeal to us, because... I mean, our... our garage... it's just... it's just too high!

01:11:32.000 --> 01:11:34.000

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

01:11:35.000 --> 01:11:38.000

INTERVIEWEE: I mean, like, the garage has to be raised. It, uh, you know, it hit 52 inches. So, if it's gonna be raised, so what's 5 feet? 6 feet? Then that means the house? Is... is also going to be raised? 6 feet from the... Yeah, it... anyway, the... the cost of it was... Was just, like, not... That we could consider it.

01:12:10.000 --> 01:12:19.000

INTERVIEWER: ...And then what's the... what's the exit strategy? Which I think you talked about, right? Can you sell the house? Maybe not. Can you retire somewhere else?

01:12:28.000 --> 01:12:30.000

INTERVIEWEE: Mm-hmm.

01:12:29.000 --> 01:12:32.000

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I was just curious if you had any comments on that. before we finish.

01:12:33.000 --> 01:12:35.000

INTERVIEWEE: Mhm. Yeah. And also that the...I mean, wasn't it the hydrologist, or, uh...the... with the Emergency Watershed Program. I mean, that was listed as one of the things to consider, and it was...It was deemed not feasible. And... I think...it's not like were these just all the same kind of houses on the same kind of land that, you know, that they could just raise them all and, and it would be easy to do. In fact, our...And our... many of our houses... I mean, our houses are built on glacial rock, and they...Um...It just would be really complicated for each house.

01:13:24.000 --> 01:13:26.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep. Well, thank you. I just was curious, because I've just personally been thinking about that. There's, like, a lot of... there's a pretty broad spectrum of how people are reacting across the community.

01:13:38.000 --> 01:13:43.000

INTERVIEWEE: I remember when the people down the road first raised their house. And I couldn't... I was just amazed how high they raised it. And I thought, whoa...They are... they are set.

01:13:52.000 --> 01:13:54.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:13:53.000 --> 01:13:57.000

INTERVIEWEE: And now, they've raised it again, and now they want to raise it again! Oh, my goodness. How high do we go?

01:14:03.000 --> 01:14:05.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:14:04.000 --> 01:14:07.000

INTERVIEWEE: Well, you know what I really hope? Even if we're not getting any kind of help or solution for <my street>, I really hope, as they...Uh, see any of this information, that it will really push them to do some kind of a permanent fix, and just within a couple years. Some kind of relief. because the HESCO barriers don't last.

01:14:40.000 --> 01:14:42.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:14:41.000 --> 01:14:44.000

INTERVIEWEE: I mean, they've got that up. That's a very temporary kind of thing, and then like the...Corps of Engineers. They... it... it just ha... it just can't be 10 years. I mean, maybe the glacier and everything will be done with all this in 10 years.

01:15:08.000 --> 01:15:10.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:15:09.000 --> 01:15:17.000

INTERVIEWEE: Um... but I really hope as we give all this information, they will... they will see it as...Something much more dire than...Then, uh...Taking their time with so much research and investigation. It's like, just do something. I mean...Yeah, I mean, they put all that money in the HESCO barriers, which...you know, great, and I'm really... I'm happy for the Valley. But...There's... this has to be something else. So, I hope we...Push them really...well. It's kind of interesting, though, because I think of places where rivers have flooded, and there's a lot of capital. A lot of economy to be gained for fixing those areas. And keeping the river, you know, transportable. And here, it's really nothing like that.

01:16:23.000 --> 01:16:25.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:16:25.000 --> 01:16:30.000

INTERVIEWEE: And I... I mean, that... that feels sad, that we don't have...We have... we make no money on the river. The river doesn't do anything financially. So, there's much less pressure to, jump on this. There's much less to be gained, except for...Just letting people keep their houses.

01:16:51.000 --> 01:16:53.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:16:54.000 --> 01:16:56.000

INTERVIEWEE: That's a bummer.

01:16:58.000 --> 01:17:04.000

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and it's a relatively short river, you know, just a couple miles long. It's a pretty unique situation. well, is there anything I haven't asked you about? That are, kind of, impacts, or just sharing your story that you want to mention? to be included?

01:17:14.000 --> 01:17:16.000

INTERVIEWEE: No, I was looking over my notes, but...I think I've hit it. Losing sleep is not... a good thing. And it... it's going for all of us, everybody... everybody in the...Even down the... downriver, too. Oh, that's just all the emotional toll. It's really interesting that we can't just walk away. You'd think...a situation, like, something like this would happen, we'd say, ah, yeah, I'm not gonna live anymore along the river. And I didn't know, you can't just walk away! Or leave your house.

01:17:58.000 --> 01:18:04.000

INTERVIEWER: Well, and like, for you guys, when you say walk away, do you mean, like, literally just walk away from the mortgage?

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INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, yeah, like, just pack up and...And so he's like, okay, you can have the house now, or...Yeah, I don't...

01:18:14.000 --> 01:18:18.000

INTERVIEWER: I mean, yeah, not without foreclosure and bankruptcy or something, right?

01:18:17.000 --> 01:18:19.000

INTERVIEWEE: Right, right. And we... and wouldn't we still... probably still have to cover the property tax of our houses.

01:19:44.000 --> 01:19:48.000

INTERVIEWEE: I do want people to realize a one-day flood devastates for months! Overwhelms us for months! It's...Going into it and coming out of it. It's really...Crazy how much...How much of life it takes. That's really crazy. A one-day flood. The men are down working, they've been... they were working, working so many hours, and...And I said, can you believe it? For 4 hours!

01:20:25.000 --> 01:20:27.000

INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

01:20:26.000 --> 01:20:33.000

INTERVIEWEE: For 4 hours, if even that, the water got to our house and then left. And here we are with this...So many hours of work! Oh my gosh! Sometimes they work 6 days a week on this house. Sometimes they work 7 days a week in the beginning. He had them over here on...They were over here on Sundays. Oh my gosh...It's crazy. And, you know, the mortgage and the insurance, they just...And they... they just want us to...Fix it!

01:21:08.000 --> 01:21:10.000

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

01:21:09.000 --> 01:21:12.000

INTERVIEWEE: But a cement floor. I'm very happy about that. They... and they just... it was so quick! They just poured it over the subfloor. And they only had

to level out a little bit of stuff, but...Not much, because they just poured it until it was level. Maybe a little deeper, little deeper, little thicker somewhere else, other, other places, but...I'm just amazed. It really doesn't... it doesn't feel like... like a cold tile floor. It feels like warm cement, just from the subfloor.

01:22:14.000 --> 01:22:16.000

INTERVIEWER: Nice.

01:22:15.000 --> 01:22:19.000

INTERVIEWEE: So, yeah, it's real nice. It's gonna be so easy to shop vac. I can't stand the thought of when we have to shop vac again. Over it and over it and over it, it's a very messy flood. Yeah. Oh, well. Don't think of it. Don't think of it.

01:22:40.000 --> 01:22:42.000

INTERVIEWER: Alright, well, I think...

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INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

01:22:43.000 --> 01:22:47.000

INTERVIEWER: We are nearing the end of the questions.

01:25:44.000 --> 01:25:47.000

INTERVIEWER: okay, well, I'm gonna stop the recording.

INTERVIEW 2

October 2025

00:00:03.340 --> 00:00:16.590

INTERVIEWER: Great! So, thank you for being here today. We are here on October 15th, doing an interview for the JEDC Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Project. I expect this will take you somewhere between 30 and 60 minutes. It could be faster, take as much time as you want. This is really a space for you to communicate things that the public or the city might not know about financial and other costs of glacial lake floods. Really thinking about, like, what toll is this taking on households like yours? And I'm trying to contact people who responded to the survey who are most affected in a variety of ways. the goal is to understand things like how do you feel about continuing to live in the Valley and in Juneau, and how you move forward in your daily and long-term life in the face of these floods. And one way to think of it is this is like a glorified platform for you to make a public comment. Of course, your name won't be attached, but thinking about how to put your story in the record of how flooding is impacting Juneau households like yours... I have a couple introductory questions before rolling into the two main categories. The first is, were you impacted by a flood before 2024? And if so, share that experience. And then the second is just, can you give us just kind of a brief summary of what your household's personal experience was in that 2024 flood?

00:02:13.480 --> 00:02:23.680

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so where we live, we were, like, our street was disrupted by the flood in 2023. So it did come into our street, and we lost power, of course. And it came up into our yard, but, did not have too much of leaking into our crawl space or anything. So, 2023 was our only other experience where it impacted us, but it wasn't bad. And then, in 2024, we went into 2024 thinking that it would be a similar flow and a similar flood pattern to 2023, and so we did some planning.

But, obviously, 2024 was so different, and so our, the impact that we got for 2024 was it filled our crawl space and our garage and our laundry room, but not the main house. So that was good. We did attempt an evacuate...an evacuation, and the water was too deep where we, had parked our vehicle. So we couldn't really functionally evacuate, but because our main house didn't get flooded, we didn't have to find, like, a long-term solution for, for the cleanup. Like, we were still able to go back to our house once the floodwaters retreated enough that it was safe to walk back. And yeah, and I think that's, that's that experience in a shell.

00:04:12.820 --> 00:04:19.130

INTERVIEWER: Great. Well, not great, but thank you. What was it like when you guys tried to evacuate? What was your process?

00:04:21.250 --> 00:04:22.480

INTERVIEWEE: So where we, where we are, we thought if we parked our car down one of the side streets that runs away from the river, we would be, we would be okay to, just walk over to our car. And then we had set up, we had arranged to meet up with, at a friend's house, where they had, space that could accommodate us and our <child>. And, so that was our, our evacuation plan, and again, with the mindset that it would be a similar pattern to 2023, we thought that where we parked our car was far enough away from the river that it would be safe and okay. And we had our waders set so that we could, you know, wade in the water if it was deep by our house. But what we didn't expect was where we had parked our car, the water was still way deep, and we couldn't safely get in our car, our truck, actually, to drive away. So, but we were able to end up staying at that house while we waited for the water to retreat.

00:05:38.910 --> 00:05:40.719

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay, so you walked over to it?

00:05:40.940 --> 00:05:44.019

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, we walked over to it in our waders, and one pet carrier case with the cats.

00:05:59.470 --> 00:06:07.610

INTERVIEWEE: ... decisions that we had to make, split-second decisions when we realized that we only had one pet carrier and four pets...at first, this started out as an adventure for my child and then it started to feel real for him.

00:06:30.950 --> 00:06:31.620

INTERVIEWER: Yep. Thank you. So the main point, as I said, of the two sides of the interview questions are to look both at your financial future, or your financial situation right now, and also look at non-financial costs, right? So things like stress, or the way you change your lifestyle, and things like that. So the first half, as I said in the draft. Of these questions really looks at money, you know, the cost in dollars and cents of this, whether it's home equity, financial projections, money spent, things that alter how you approach your job, things like that. So, you can actually answer these four questions in any order that you want, but the first one is, can you just explain a little bit about the dollars and cents cost of this relating to your overall financial security, thinking about, you know, how did your did anything change between 23, 24, and now? Is it affecting

how you feel as a household financially? Is it affecting your job, your retirement plans, your savings, etc?

00:07:58.050 --> 00:08:08.630

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so, thankfully, With the 2023 flood, we got flood insurance, and so then we were we were insured for the 2024 impact. And so, that was really, really helpful in the immediate recovery. But it's one of those things when you think about overall financial security and looking forward. And planning if this is gonna be something that you can deal with every single year moving forward. Potentially. So, one of the other things that changed, we were so thankful for FEMA and their assistance. And then one of the things that changed, however, from our confidence in our financial planning between the 2024 flood and now is the, current administration and seemingly You know, not knowing how stable and how secure FEMA and those types of federal response programs are going to be able to continue helping and serving the community. So, Looking forward, that, was something that impacts our future financial planning. So, what costs were most unexpected or most challenging to deal with for you? I think, some of the costs that were unexpected are just some of these more long-term things that we're still kind of dealing with and recovering from. To put our laundry room back together again. We haven't even really Addressed our garage, although the garage, for the most part, it's fine, but I mean, there was some water damage on the walls in there. And then, we were able to take care of the crawl space pretty quickly. One of the surprising things that we didn't expect was damage underneath the, Oh, what's that called? The, the You know, the structural of the wall that the is, like, the foundation of the house, and that the house is sitting on, and...

00:10:43.660 --> 00:10:44.470

INTERVIEWER: Stem wall?

00:10:45.110 --> 00:10:50.689

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, yeah. And so, that was a surprise to have to pay to fix all of that, and we were able to do that, though, with the with the insurance, which was great, but again, that was just unexpected. And a surprise. But we were able to take care of that pretty quickly. So I'd say like, For the response to 2024, we are fine, and it wasn't it didn't hamper us, but now future planning, there is this concern of how much are we going to have to continue dealing with this? We, we're not supportive of the HESCO plan, and I still in future planning, I am concerned about the damage to the HESCOs as we experience more floods. And what the costs will be to repair those. And what the costs will be just to our community to have to do their own flood repair as we move forward. Because what we saw in 2025 was that there were still some homes that had

damage, and it felt like the response, the response just didn't seem as robust for 2025, because there was so much of a focus on how the HESCOs performed.

But I think for our local leaders, they should know that, that is still a financial piece that we're thinking about. In our household, like, how to plan for HESCO barrier failure. And, and then, again, also, how to, prepare, just in case some of these federal funding sources are, are wiped out. I think that's my answer.

00:13:08.460 --> 00:13:28.290

INTERVIEWER: thank you. Those are great answers to challenging questions and challenging situations. I noticed I did open up your survey responses, and I noticed that you clicked not going to move out of Valley, not going to move out of Juneau, and I was wondering, from the financial perspective, can you talk a little bit about that decision, and then I will also ask you from the non-financial perspective, and you can answer both of those in one answer right now if you want, but I'm just curious, as you think about, you know, stay or go, or change neighborhoods, how has your household been making that decision.

00:13:43.320 --> 00:13:44.880

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so at first, again, with the 2024 response, we, we were feeling pretty well taken care of, and we were feeling like what we were dealing with was something that we could deal with. But then, so, we

were not thinking of moving. We really love our neighborhood. I love my child's school. I like the community that we have here. Frankly, I like my yard. But, but then going through, kind of, the buildup and the stress behind the 2025 flood, and monitoring for that, and planning for that, and preparing for that.

And going through some of the more antagonizing city meetings, the stress with that just emotional, not financial...that really did start to make us wonder Is this worth it? But, do we want to have to deal with this stress every, every year of setting up...We, at our own personal cost, we bought barriers for our house. And then we also got, we took advantage of the city's offer with the free sandbags. But then just taking the time off to be able to set all of those up around our house, and then having to, you know, clean all of those up. We're wondering, is this gonna be worth it to do every single year? But going, And that's, you know, emotional and financial, and but then going back to, like, the big picture, though, honestly, if we try to sell our home in this neighborhood, we don't think that we're going to be able to...

We don't think that it's gonna financially make sense for us to sell the home and be able to buy a home of similar, like not financial value, but just a similar home that we're gonna love as much, and a neighborhood that we're gonna love as much. We think that

when we've talked to realtors, we would take a hit. And we're not sure if that's a hit that we can take, or that we're willing to take. To move into a place that is less than. But again, Even though these floods are only a one-day, two-day event. There's all that stress emotional stress leading up to it, that I think we're not actively pursuing moving, but it's not necessarily something that's completely off the table.

00:16:52.600 --> 00:16:53.780

INTERVIEWER: That makes sense. Yeah, and I'm not sure if it's the technical economic term or whatever, but the way I conceptualize it is the lack of ability to make a lateral move. In the current economy in Alaska and nationwide with interest rates, that's something I've been thinking about a lot.

The floods have also made me look at, kind of different people's financial abilities, different households' apparent financial abilities to throw money at the issue or not, and I'm curious if you've sort of observed that as well across the spectrum, and I'm thinking of the most extreme examples being people who have obviously spent over \$200,000 out-of-pocket cash to either armor a bank, or protect their house, or repair without insurance, versus people who have the ability to spend \$0. Just curious how you guys think in your household about where you are on that, and if that affects your kind of feeling of financial planning or security in the future.

00:18:15.590 --> 00:18:22.080

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so we, we are not a, we are comfortable. We both have good paying jobs. But we did look into some of those big financial costs to really protect our home, like raising the home. And we, we are not in a bracket where we could do that. We just that was financially not feasible for us. So I think that we're in a comfortable spot to be able to have access to, like I said, you know, FEMA and, you know, pay for, or get that insurance and everything like that, and have that help us out. We wouldn't be able to do some of those bigger things, but we're also in the financial position where we were able to buy those additional barriers just on our own, for our own property.

And I don't remember what the cost of those were, but it was something that, like, we didn't have to really weigh out the costs of that, like, that was just something that was seemed worth it to us, and we had the, either the insurance money or the savings in order to be able to cover that. But I certainly see that in just walking around the neighborhood, Ahead of the 2025 flood. You'd see some houses really prepping and doing everything that they could. And some houses doing nothing, and just trusting the HESCOs. And I think that part of that from just my observation, part of that well, part of that was, frankly, a physical ability. Like, some folks just don't have the physical ability to do all the things, right? But I think part of it also was some folks were like, you know what, if the flood gets in my house, I'll just I'll just have to remove the floors again, or

something like that. They're like they're like, yeah, if it happens, it happens. We'll deal with it when it happens. I have, I have insurance, I'll be fine, you know, and other people are like. I can't go through that again.

00:20:48.300 --> 00:20:49.010

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and I'm not sure that's a picture that anyone in public leadership has a good understanding of, simply because there aren't any other interviews or public information gathering projects that I know of going on for that decision-making component of it, so I appreciate your willingness to speak a little to that. And if you're comfortable moving on, I was curious to start thinking more, and you've touched on this a little bit, about the non-financial costs of this, stress, uncertainty, changes to your lifestyle, any mental components. I think you mentioned earlier that there was this component for your child where things kind of felt like an adventure, and then it shifted during evac. So, I think channeling some of that kind of perspective is what the point of these questions are, and there are 5 of them on the screen. The first one being: how are the Glacial Lake Outburst floods impacting your sense of physical safety, satisfaction, or mental health of living in your home or in Juneau? And again, I think you also touched on this in talking about your decision to say, not gonna move versus putting it on or off the table, but yeah, feel free to bounce around in these questions, but just curious, more specifically, how you think these floods are impacting these non-financial components for your household.

00:22:15.820 --> 00:22:27.160

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so I think, again, this is a, an event that only happens So far, once a year. I think one of the things that has impacted my sense of physical safety or satisfaction or mental health aspects about living here in Juneau was really the the HESCO barriers and how those were implemented. And what the impacts are gonna be for having these in my neighbors' backyards now for, you know, the foreseeable future, as a short-term solution.

And just I've I don't I, we evacuated this year. My child and the pets, long before we needed to, because we didn't want to make the mistake of having to wade in the water like we did in 2024. And so I didn't get to see things on the ground, but my spouse stayed back, and so they were able to relay to me, you know, where the HESCOs were failing, where the flood was, waters were coming into the street, coming into people's yards, and crawl spaces. And they were able to share with me things that were happening, like sand boils, and things that were actually happening on the ground here during the flood. And also just how close some of the some of the, spots were to getting over- overflowing anyway. So I think, I think that, overall, that sense of physical safety with these barriers is it's non-existent for me, and I'm thankful that they worked as well as they did this year, certainly. But I am worried that there's gonna be this false sense of

security with them for other folks, similar to when I was walking around the neighborhood beforehand, and people were just like, well, we put in the HESCOs, thank goodness for the HESCOs. So I think that that is really affecting those more emotional components of this. Yeah.

And I don't know I've been to the meetings, and I've heard lots of other people offering solutions. And, I hear the people offering the solutions, and it doesn't feel often like our city leadership is hearing those other solutions. So that's one of those things that's affecting how I feel living in Juneau, because of the of that component to it as well. Yeah, I'm looking, like, day-to-day life schedule, they don't affect too much. They did, planning for 2025's, kind of, flood we, we did just block off the first half of August, just in case, and so we didn't do, any cabin camping, even, because we wanted to be close to home to be able to respond if needed. But otherwise, again, like, it's only this one-year once a year event, more or less, and so we don't really think about it too much. I'll I maybe will think about it if I'm going for a run in the neighborhood and I'm just running by all the HESCOs, but one thing yeah, so that's the flooding themselves the flood itself doesn't impact day-to-day. But I would say kind of I feel like this was a question somewhere, maybe, about, like, how often did you check on it ahead of the flood? Once we started getting into June and July, really, I feel like my spouse and I were probably checking the Suicide Basin website at least once a day, if not more.

00:27:15.030 --> 00:27:17.019

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so is that kind of question 10, where it's like, you don't have a typical week necessarily, but it's more of a crescendo and then a waning, depending on how close you are to the expected flood date?

00:27:17.670 --> 00:27:30.559

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and one thing that I have to say is that I really appreciated the graph that they had with the flood projection, like, if there was a basin release right now, what is the kind of level of the river that we can expect to see. Like, I really appreciated that. I liked having that kind of tracking to be able to look at, but that was something that definitely ramped up ahead of the event. And, and it has waned now, because I know that there was that second outburst that ended up being, pretty minor, which was nice, and so we tracked that a little bit, but we didn't track that as much as we had the August one, because we knew the August one was projected to be so much more higher.

00:28:17.890 --> 00:28:18.540

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

00:28:20.940 --> 00:28:31.919

INTERVIEWEE: So yeah, so, like, how often are outdoor floods on my mind in a typical week? Like, probably not very often, except for, yeah, like, when we're heading into the season.

What would I like other people to know, especially local leaders? Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, and again, I think, with our local leaders. And I don't mind saying this, because I think I've said this in public testimony, too. I feel like there, there needs to be...there needs to be more engagement in the...if people are coming in and talking, and willing to give public testimony. And you are a public servant, and so you're serving the public. I think that people need to, in those positions, need to prioritize not only listening to what the community is saying, but actually, like, absorbing it, like don't just listen to public testimony because it's something that you have to check off your box of things to do. That's something that I get frustrated with in aspects of my day-to-day job. When there's decisions being made, for what the sector that I work in. And people give public testimony, and then before public testimony is even done, one of the decision makers already has their motion for their decision typed up and, you know, printed out and handed out. So it's like you didn't you didn't even pretend to take into consideration what the public testimony was offering. And so that's something that I see often kind of mirrored in assembly meetings where it seems, it seems at times to be very dismissive, and very, like, this is just what we have to do now in this allotted time before we can move forward with what we were already planning on doing. And I think that that that perception of not being listened to, that affects stress and mental components of life in Juneau. For those of us that are being affected by these floods.

I [have] had people come up to me, and they'd be like: I wasn't like, I don't think about this at all, like, I like, this is so like, foreign from me because I live downtown, or I live on Douglas. Like, they like, this does not this yearly event does not impact them at all, and so they, they don't think about those stresses. And so you know they're also not engaging, then, in the public discourse, and they're not trying to advocate for anything, but I want the local leaders to know that just because it's our small group in the Valley that's affected by it doesn't mean that it's not important to us. Yeah.

00:32:02.410 --> 00:32:03.260

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Before we get to my wrap-up questions, I wanted to just touch circle back on two things you mentioned, just to make sure in the interview that it's clear. Could you describe a little bit more you mentioned that HESCO implementation is actually, if not the main non-financial stressor for you. It's, like, right up there in the top of it all. Can you explain just a little more about how that HESCO implementation I know that earlier in the interview you mentioned the process and the buildup of it being antagonizing and stuff, but if you could just give me a couple sentences to make sure that I don't misinterpret that when I'm writing it up, that would be helpful.

00:32:48.920 --> 00:32:54.980

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. Yeah, I feel like so the rush to find a solution in part, was appreciated, but the way that they did it was was, was not well received by me, I guess. The way that they rushed to have this short-term But decade-long solution. It seemed like the process for the assembly meetings and being able to go and review what they were thinking of, or maybe go and share what some of our ideas were...Like, it was like, this has already been the decision that's been made. And then there was a vote, and then all of a sudden, everything was just the ball was rolling in it, and it felt like instead of them making a decision to, you know, have this, this fast turnaround, it just it felt like we were being steamrolled with this decision.

And not everybody shares that sentiment, and I recognize that, and I'm glad for my neighbors who were so supportive of the HESCOs, and they are not stressed at all. So that is helpful for them, so it's not necessarily a shared experience, even within my neighborhood. But from my perspective, it felt like We were being steamrolled a little bit with this with this decision to do this short-term expensive long-lived, solution. And now you know, I and I accepted the, the way that they allowed for the voting, where, like, if you disagreed, you would put it in, and then if people just weren't paying attention, they weren't engaged. They were counted as a yes vote. And, you know, like that the results were the results, and I did not try to fight that in any way. But now that we have the HESCOs. Again, I've just I'm worried that first of all, the cost of continuing maintenance and repair on the HESCOs is going to be burdensome for the city. And I also worry that it will make some of my neighbors more complacent than they should be when it comes to the next flooding event, because I just worry I want people to be safe, and I worry that people are gonna put all of their faith in the HESCOs, and not not plan accordingly otherwise. And so that also gives stress, and I think that when I've raised those concerns, it gets again, it just gets dismissed.

00:36:04.280 --> 00:36:05.070

INTERVIEWER: Yep. Well, thank you. I just want to make sure that when we write the stuff up, it's clear what the nuance of the responses are. The last thing I wanted you to speak a little bit more to you mentioned your spouse stayed, and you evacuated with your child in 2025 during the August flood. Can you speak a little to that decision for him to stay? And I'm thinking in the context of the city has been very clear that they are recommending residents especially directly behind the HESCO, but everywhere that they think could get flooded. They're recommending residents evacuate, and then they have been on the record multiple times as specifically talking about, like, people who live close to the HESCO, like your family really recommending to evacuate for personal safety in case there is a breach or something. Can you speak a little bit to that decision in your household?

00:36:53.850 --> 00:37:00.379

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, yeah, so it was important, as much as I wanted to stay behind and monitor everything, it was important that we got out, like I said, with my child and my pets, to a place to be safe, and make it a fun sleepover adventure for my <child>. It was less fun for the cats. But, because we had also bought our own barriers for our home, my spouse really wanted to stay back and monitor, and then potentially adjust as possible, like, if needed. Because of the possibility of failure. And so, a HESCO failure. And so, I think there was, there was that that idea of, we've invested in these barriers to try and protect our home in case of a failure, but we want to be able to make sure that they are working, and if they don't work. You know, why, and then be able to respond quickly. So, we moved our vehicles. We're thankful that we had the option to park a vehicle at the parking lot in the church across from Fred Meyers. That was really helpful. And we moved our vehicles so that in the event that the HESCOs didn't work, they would be safe from flooding. And get not get flooded out.

And <my spouse> built a network with the rest of the neighbors who did stay back. To do basically similar things, just, like, make sure that the plans that they had in place for their homes worked, just in case. But that was that was it. So, it wasn't that there was faith in the HESCOs, and we were hearing the warnings about evacuation, but because we had the other barriers, you know, <my spouse> wanted to at least stay behind and monitor that. And I think it's good that some people did stay behind, honestly, because there was like, a community group that had to go out and were actively sump pumping water from the neighborhood side back over the HESCOs into the river, and that was able to reduce some of the impacts to the homes in that part of the street. So you know, I hear the safety concerns, especially with people just walking on the HESCOs, I think that that's a terrible idea.

00:40:01.350 --> 00:40:01.830

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

00:40:01.830 --> 00:40:10.450

INTERVIEWEE: But, but for where we are in our neighborhood, and with the setup that we have, I think that it was it made sense for, for him to stay back while my child and I evacuated.

00:40:22.380 --> 00:40:23.420

INTERVIEWER: Thank you for that. Some of the extra questions I've added in, it's just because I don't expect that everybody will have that same experience, so I appreciate you willing to answer a couple extra ones. The last two final questions I have are, first of all, is there anything I haven't asked you about that you just really want leadership or

residents or other folks to know about flood impacts? And that might include people who live on Douglas or downtown, as you said. And then the last one is, do you know anybody else who may want to participate that I don't know about? Because it could even be somebody who hasn't taken the survey.

00:41:01.390 --> 00:41:16.050

INTERVIEWEE: I think one thing that we're experiencing right now, with the flood damage to certain locations, like the bridges? That was

something that I think we weren't expecting that the damage to some of the bridges was gonna be as extensive as it was, which is a silly thing, but, like, you know, you're worried about mitigating impacts over here, you're not necessarily looking at the impacts that are going to be over there. But that's something that I think people need to keep into consideration moving forward with planning, especially, you know, there's a cable on that back loop bridge that impacted, internet connection for some parts of Juneau. There's the footbridge that, is supposed to connect the Diamond Park area to Brotherhood Bridge Trail, and that's been closed and blocked off by the temporary Hescos. But moving forward, if you know, like, it would just be nice to still have access to some of these things, or have, like, a response plan in place for some of these things, so that we're not cutting cut off from different parts of our community for the rest of the year. You know. Yeah, and I'm not sure, well, so I'm not sure who you've talked to, so I'm not sure, if anybody is missing.

00:42:54.410 --> 00:43:05.630

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I'm mostly thinking if you happen to interact with another floody who says, oh yeah, I didn't take that JEDC survey because or JEDC survey because I didn't want to.

00:43:05.850 --> 00:43:06.590

INTERVIEWEE: Oh.

00:43:06.590 --> 00:43:14.279

INTERVIEWER: But if you also think they might have an important story to share for this portion of it, they would still be welcome to participate. And frankly, I'm happy to also do one of these just if somebody wants to have the recording and transcript for their own family records, just because sometimes that's kind of cool. But yeah, if you think of anybody in the coming weeks, just let me know. I do know that there were some people who said they kind of boycotted the actual written survey component.

00:43:32.810 --> 00:43:33.450

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

00:43:33.450 --> 00:43:38.559

INTERVIEWER: But the goal here is just to be able to actually capture people's stories in a way that is thorough, and hopefully not too uncomfortable for the participant, so

00:43:44.070 --> 00:43:51.049

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, I wonder if, like, have you I wonder there's the family on <street name> who got hit really hard, and they have little boys that are close to my child's age. And, I would wonder what their experience is, because they their recovery and having to repair all of the flood damage in that first floor of their house has been a long road as well. And I know Just from talking to the kids, the they still, like get nervous around rushing water and stuff like that, and so there's that, like, emotional part of it for them, too.

00:44:35.370 --> 00:44:35.990

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Cool. Well, I think do you have anything else you want to add while we're still recording?

00:46:05.970 --> 00:46:08.589

INTERVIEWEE: No, I think that's it.

INTERVIEW 3

November 2025

INTERVIEWER(00:01):

So going back, I think when I looked at your responses, you said 2024 was the first time that you had ever been flooded? Okay. Yeah. So just however brief or lengthy you want to go, describe what your experience was in that event, understanding that you've also read the short story, but what was your personal experience in the 2024 flood?

INTERVIEWEE(00:37):

Well, when I saw the, "Oh no, everybody needs to evacuate, blah, blah, blah." I just kind of scoffed and laughed about it. I was like, "Whatever." It had never even touched <my street>. The entirety of my street, it had never touched my street before. So I just kind of chuckled, whatever. And then it was, yeah, the way the story described us just kept getting louder and louder. All the electricity of the valley was shut off in that area except for my street because somebody forgot to turn <my street> off. Thank you. And so I'm just awake, all alone in this desolate neighborhood and just listening. And I kept going up on the roof so I could hear better. I could hear the river moving. I could hear it shifting in the directions. And yeah, I could hear it towards Riverside when the river was supposed to be the opposite direction.

INTERVIEWEE(01:39):

And it was just like, "What the [redacted] is going on here?" It was pretty freaky. I just kept getting louder, louder, louder, nothing, no water anywhere. It started to piss me off because it was getting so deafeningly loud. It sounded like there was this wall of water coming straight at me forever. Ever flowing, never moving

INTERVIEWEE(02:06):

Wall of water that just wasn't getting to me. Yeah, it was really crazy. And eventually I saw water start trickling towards Riverside. It was pooling a little bit in the street and it's like, "What the hell?" Still nothing towards the river. And then there was that oh shit moment when Coda [dog] and I, he was pretty small still. The ditch on the side of the road across the street, it looked like 3D glass. It was really weird looking. I was like, "What the hell?" It looked so weird. I grabbed the stick and I reached down into the ditch and as soon, this is the ditch cross section. As soon as my stick touched right here, it went and rippled across. I was like, "Oh shit." Koda? Or no, I didn't even say anything out. I said it was, "Oh shit. Oh, [redacted]." And right then, this bore tide of water came

across, came through the woods across the street from my house. And it was probably about like that deep at first, but it looked just like a bore tide.

INTERVIEWEE(03:25):

It just rushed across the street. I was like, "Ah, [redacted]. I think it's time to go inside now." It was rushing into my neighbor's yard and then it starts flowing into my driveway and around the house and blah, blah, blah. And look, just got deeper and deeper. At the deepest point, I literally could have dove off of my back deck. Because I was a diver. I know how to dive in shallow water, but it was easily got deep off my deck in the backyard and it never even touched my street. And I'm at apparently one of the highest points on my street too, so I was one of the last people to get hit. Everybody in both directions got hit before me. The only people that were drier than me was right across the street [names] who I called and woke up. I called and woke my neighbors up when it started rushing into the yards; just so they were awake in case something bad happened. I didn't want my neighbors to be sleeping if it came down to real emergency yard where that's not emergency

INTERVIEWER(04:32):

Not yet.

INTERVIEWEE(04:33):

Yeah, not yet. It's just water flowing through the yard. Emergency is water taking houses down because it got 12 feet deep instead of only three feet deep.

INTERVIEWER(04:45):

Yeah. And how deep did it get in your structures? Do you have garage?

INTERVIEWEE(04:51):

In the garage, it was a foot or more. And I just opened up the front door and opened up the back door to the garage and just let it flow through so it wouldn't build up.

INTERVIEWER(05:02):

And so was most of your damage then just in the garage and do you have a crawl

INTERVIEWEE(05:06):

Space? Yeah, that's where lots of stuff got ruined into the garage, but the insulation under the house, all of it.

INTERVIEWER(05:14):

So up to damaging the insulation, but not up into the first floor?

INTERVIEWEE(05:17):

Yeah, close to going in the house, three inches before it came up to the crawl space because it was able to come into the crawl space faster than it was able to leave the crawl space. So it actually got deeper in my crawl space than it was outside.

INTERVIEWER(05:33):

Oh, crazy.

INTERVIEWEE(05:33):

And it was the pressure almost came in the house. God, I'm so glad I didn't, but I had to get down there and pull out every bit of soggy insulation myself. And I was the one that put all that insulation in the first place. Needless to say, I have not put it back.

INTERVIEWER(05:49):

I was actually going to ask if you have replaced or not.

INTERVIEWEE(05:53):

That destroyed my already destroyed back. That sucks. That's why it took me so damn long because I did it slowly. I didn't bother with any of the volunteers because there's so many old people out there; they need it more than I do. I had a couple of friends come over at a couple of different points for an hour or two to help, but other than that, it was mostly me and the animals.

INTERVIEWER(06:20):

And so thinking about the dollars and cents of the damage, I know you did write a little bit about just total estimates or total actual costs, but as someone who did not have flood insurance and now does, was there a reasoning for not having the insurance or was it simply just that there was no reason to have it previously? And then what was that process like? I know you mentioned that you have not replaced it partly because of the physical labor part of it. Is that also kind of a cost assessment of not wanting to add more costs to recovery or ...

INTERVIEWEE(06:58):

No, just the main reason. I'm lazy. It's just putting insulation in the crawl space that's only this tall. Oh man. Took me and my ex- wife, 18 hours, 16 hours total, I think. Oh gosh. So 32 man hours.

INTERVIEWER(07:34):

Well, and so when you were estimating costs, is some of it like, this is what I lost since the value of that plus what it would be for a professional to put it in? Or when you estimated the damage costs, is that just stuff you actually replaced?

INTERVIEWEE(07:47):

Estimated. I mean, I am a professional. I was licensed and bonded contractor at the time of the floods. I was licensed, bonded and insured, just gave them my own estimate, my hours, however many hours it would take me. I already knew that. And then the cost of the installation, I already knew that. 25 bats, whatever the bat was at the time.

INTERVIEWER(08:11):

Yeah, we've done a lot of that too, my partner. And when flood insurance, if you, God forbid, ever have to have a flood insurance claim-

INTERVIEWEE(08:23):

He's estimating how many hours he would be working, right?

INTERVIEWER(08:25):

Well, I was just going to say, when flood insurance does a payout, they give you a low floor and then if you do it all yourself, that's all you get. And then if you pay a contractor and they charge more than that, then you ... So we base our damages on our just flood insurance estimates.

INTERVIEWEE(08:41): You're not just the willy nilly person on the street. You are a licensed contractor. You are the contractor that you're hiring.

INTERVIEWER(08:49):

But one thing is National Flood Insurance does not actually allow the homeowner to be the licensed contractor.

INTERVIEWEE(08:55):

Oh

INTERVIEWER(09:09):

But yeah, so when you were thinking back on that, the damages and the stuff and the structural damages, how do you feel like the dollars and cents of those costs from the 2024 flood relate to your overall financial security as far as ... I think you already mentioned your work here [at your business], you had to shut down for a week and a half, but has it affected things like your retirement plans or did it affect your savings to try to recover?

INTERVIEWEE(09:36):

Savings, what's that? [laughs]

INTERVIEWER(09:36):

Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE(09:38):

No. No. Just killed me at the shop, I was having zero income. And on top of that, tons of people wanted to cash their accounts out all at once [at interviewee's business]. So gee, that helps not. Yeah, mainly just the store is what hurt financially, not being able to be open.

INTERVIEWER(10:07):

And in terms of continuing to own a house in this area, and are you planning to keep that same property for the foreseeable?

INTERVIEWEE(10:16):

I've got one more year to figure out if I can get a loan in my name without her [ex-partner], or we need to put it on the market so [ex-partner] can get her half of the equity, because we still technically own it together.

INTERVIEWER(10:32):

And so how much of a ... I think one of your answers in the survey was kind of like, there's a lot more problems in Juneau, right? That the flood is maybe not ... So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that in terms of finance. Is the 2024 flood and the looming threat of damage, does that play in as much as other factors to your financial planning or are there other things that are really paramount for you?

INTERVIEWEE(10:56):

If I'm able to refinance the home in just my name without her on the loan so that she can get her half of the equity, then great. I have zero plans on moving or selling the house. If I can't figure out getting the house by myself and affording it, [redacted]. I don't want to think of it. No idea what I'm going to do because if I can't refinance that house by myself, I can't refinance another house by myself.

INTERVIEWER(11:34):

Yeah

INTERVIEWEE(11:35):

The [redacted]? And nobody's going to rent to me. And I've got two dogs, two cats, three snakes, over 10,000 books. [redacted].

INTERVIEWER(11:46):

Juneau's a tough market.

INTERVIEWEE(11:48):

Both my spare rooms are libraries.

Speaker 2: That's awesome.

Speaker 1:

It was always a dream of mine to have my own library, so I did a perfect [name] fashion and went overboard, and now I have two libraries. I stopped counting at 6,000 books years ago.

INTERVIEWER(12:08):

So what would you like other people, especially local leadership, but just other people in the community to know about the financial pieces of the glacial flooding for households in Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(12:22):

What do you mean?

INTERVIEWER(12:24):

If you were going to just talk openly to the assembly right now and just mention to them, "Hey, you should know this about the finances for homeowners and renters who live in these areas." This is something I just want you to understand, just like the public.

INTERVIEWEE(12:38):

Oh, like them bending us over for [redacted] half the cost of the stupid HESCO barriers? Yeah, that was neat. And then we're just going to go [redacted] people on Telephone Hill.

INTERVIEWER(12:48):

You have not received a bill yet, right?

INTERVIEWEE(12:52):

It gets tacked onto the mortgage.

INTERVIEWER(12:53):

Because I think what they decided at the last meeting was to kick it out a whole year to decide whether and how much to actually charge since the playing field has changed, seems like it may be the full amount or maybe almost nothing depending on how folks manipulate the situation [not sure if this is/was accurate]

INTERVIEWEE(13:10):

Now that he's out of there [referring to former assembly member], it'll probably be a lot less. But yeah, I thought that was pretty lame, but I didn't bother to speak up because whatever.

INTERVIEWER(13:20):

And what part of that did you think was the most negative?

INTERVIEWEE(13:24):

The fact that they charged us at all.

INTERVIEWER(13:25):

Because of charging the victims or charging residents at all?

INTERVIEWEE(13:29):

The victims.

INTERVIEWER(13:30):

Okay.

INTERVIEWEE(13:31):

Or any residents for that matter. That's, number one, their problem. I have direct evidence from one of the original homesteaders on Riverside that -- there was two homesteaders down Riverside that provided feed for the dairy farm that was right here where we're sitting back in the '60s, 50s, 60s. And they had a flood one year, just like this, one of the glacial outbursts. They had one, I don't know what it was from, Suicide Basin or not, I don't know. But it was the same thing where they had a glacial outburst flood and it destroyed their crops in entirety. So they had no feed for the damned dairy cows. They had to import it all. Very expensive. They said, "F* that. We are not having that shit happen again." They started straightening out the river. That's why there's some such straight sections in that river that aren't natural looking because they aren't. They were straightening it out themselves on their own dollar.

The city came in and stopped them, said, "You can't do that. " Okay, screw you. We'll just let it [redacted] us again in the future and screw you guys too, because that's your milk farm and blah, blah, blah, and this and that. But basically the city stopped them from straightening out the river and we wouldn't have this problem today had they not. So it's their fault in the first place that we're getting flooded because they tried to stop it; and they stopped them from stopping it.

INTERVIEWER(15:04):

Yep.

INTERVIEWEE(15:07):

That would be <name>. He owns <place name>.

INTERVIEWER(15:13):

Yeah, he's a cool guy.

INTERVIEWEE(15:14):

He'll tell you all about it. He was one of the homestead families.

INTERVIEWER(15:20):

I shouldgo interview him. I wish I had a lot more time.

INTERVIEWEE(15:24):

He would love it. He would love his story to be heard.

INTERVIEWER(15:28):

Yeah, that would be actually a really cool component. Cool. Well, then thinking about non-financial costs, and I'll keep kind of prodding you just to clarify for the recording so that it's really clear. But do you have anything to talk about with the flood as far as your sense of physical safety, your satisfaction, or any mental health aspects of living in your home, which some people have talked about publicly?

INTERVIEWEE(15:57):

I mean, not too much. I'm the type of person, I don't really ... I've got ADHD bad, and so I have a hard time thinking about things that aren't right in front of me. People, places, events, anything. If it's not at the moment happening or in front of me, it's not something that I'm thinking much about.

INTERVIEWER(16:26):

Yep. Now that these outburst floods are kind of our annual setup, are there ways that they're impacting either your day-to-day life or seasonally? Did you change your schedule this summer to kind of prep and plan and be ready? Are you thinking ...

INTERVIEWEE(16:47):

No, I spent a shit ton of money though. Spent several thousand dollars to do preventative measures.

INTERVIEWER(17:04):

Like a flood fighting barrier kind of thing at your own house? Yeah. What kind of structure did you settle on?

INTERVIEWEE(17:12):

Well, I ordered 14 mil visqueen, visqueen, thicker than any visqueen you've ever been able to get in Juneau. 10 mills is the thickest you can get here. Yeah, I ordered visqueen that was over a thousand dollars. Two dump truckloads of sand because [name] is really good at going overboard. I needed a half a dump truck over for all the sandbags I wanted to fill. So now I have a mountain of sand in my driveway. But it was cheaper to get to at once than it would've been to get one and then another one.

INTERVIEWER(17:53):

And was that because the city had said that there were specific limitations on how much they would give per household?

INTERVIEWEE(17:59):

No, it was because there was a specific day that somebody has to run a store every single Saturday and they only do it on Saturday. So it's like, well, sweet. I'll get my own damn sand and share with my neighbors.

INTERVIEWER(18:14):

So did prepping for the flood last year take you away from your work [at your business]?

INTERVIEWEE(18:18):

This year.

INTERVIEWER(18:19):

Yeah, this year, sorry.

INTERVIEWEE(18:23):

Yes, a little bit, especially as it got closer and my glorious put it off, put it off, put it off style, came down to the wire and I was way behind where I wanted to be. So yeah.

INTERVIEWER(18:43):

We made a gamble to leave town twice in the second half of July. We just had two short trips we really wanted to take, one for animal vet and one for personal. And we were like, "Well, we may feel real stupid," but also, I don't know, it's kind of almost like a coping mechanism. Like we can't let it run our lives, but- Well, and now that this has happened again, based on your responses, you've got flood insurance. How did that go? And is it affordable?

INTERVIEWEE(19:18):

Piece of Kake

Speaker 2:

Through your regular home insurance?

Speaker 1:

Yeah, I just called Budget and that's where I get all my insurance.

Speaker 2:

Was it like under \$500 a year?

INTERVIEWEE(19:22):

Yes, because I did it right quickly, whereas I think it doubled.

INTERVIEWER(19:27):

I don't know if it's gone up yet or not.

INTERVIEWEE(19:29):

I heard that it doubled because of the requirement and once the insurance company got word of the requirement, they doubled it.

INTERVIEWER(19:38):

Well, I think it's that only every so often can FEMA properly update the maps and then-

INTERVIEWEE(19:44):

That's what it was. Once the maps got updated, that's when the insurance went up. And I did it before they were updated. So yeah 387 for the year. Or something like that. It was 300 and something. Might even been like 335.

INTERVIEWER(20:00):

Yeah. We've been flooded three times and we're still under 500 a year for the house. For you, how often do you think about the flooding in a given week?

INTERVIEWEE(20:12):

Zero. I don't.

Speaker 2:

Yeah. I think you already kind of got to that answer.

INTERVIEWEE(20:18):

Unless somebody brings it up. If somebody asks about it or if somebody's talking about it or if I see something about it, it'll make me think about it, but I don't think much about it. So whatever.

INTERVIEWER(20:28):

So yeah, is there anything similar to the question about the finances? If you were going to stand in front of the Assembly right now, is there anything you want them to know when it comes to the flood and the mental component or the health, like stress, that kind of stuff that you want them to know either about you or what you've seen for others about the flood?

INTERVIEWEE(20:46):

Well, what I've seen and experienced in my life throughout my life is I kind of feel like ... Wow, what's the right words? Words, words, words... I am, like we were talking about up there. I'm not easily offended. I'm not easily scared or ... God damn it. Stressed ain't the right word because I'm definitely easily stressed, especially financially.

INTERVIEWER(21:32):

Anxiety?

INTERVIEWEE(21:33):

Anxiety. I get terrible anxiety, but not about the river. Give a [redacted] less about the river or whatever. It is what it is. It's going to do what it's going to do. I can't change it. Why the [redacted] am I going to stress about it? Who gives a shit. When it comes, it comes. I'll deal with it then. It doesn't bother me, but most people are much, much, more easily stressed out about stuff like that, or freaked out, or just ... I don't want to sound like I'm trying to bag on people and be like, "Oh, I'm such a champion because I'm just [me]. I just don't give a shit."

INTERVIEWER(22:14):

I mean, I think it gets to the idea of how we each cope as individuals.

INTERVIEWEE(22:20):

My house was completely surrounded by water. I still wasn't stressed. I was standing on my back deck, smoking, drinking a beer. "Hey, look, check it out. There's water. Woo-hoo. "Just like, " Whatever. It is what it is. Comes in the house. I guess we're going to get up on the couch. If it comes up to the couch. I guess we're going to get up on the bed. Bust out the old life raft and float around in the house. [redacted] let's make fun out of it. Like the puppy dog. That's kind of my attitude. It is what it is. There's nothing I can do about it. I can't stop it. I can't change it. All I can do is some preventative measures and cross my fingers and that's where it is.

INTERVIEWER(23:03):

You mentioned with the financial part that the whole Hesco LID thing was a big frustration at the very least or a critique. As far as concern for the future, do you have any thought about future LIDs or whenever they're going to tack it on to your house, like a lien on your house bill or whatever? Do you think about that much or are you not?

INTERVIEWEE(23:30):

Nope. Again, it's one of those is what it is. If I can speak up about it and I care enough to, then I will. If not, like the last time it's like, why the hell would I speak up about something? "No, I don't want you to do anything to try and prevent this from happening. [redacted] everyone, myself included." Like that one dip shit. There was one guy that actually did stand up and it's like, really dude? Sit down in the back.

INTERVIEWER(24:04):

They [the Assembly] didn't seem to have a very good [accurate] interpretation either [of some of the public comments they heard]

INTERVIEWEE(24:25):

They have their heads up their asses and people don't think beyond themselves very often. And it's like they think about what you said and how it made them feel and that's their take from it, not what you actually meant, what they feel you meant. It's like, just because you think something doesn't make it true.

INTERVIEWER(24:48):

Yeah. Well, thank you. Is there anything else that you want to just mention about the flood before I end the recording?

INTERVIEWEE(25:10):

I was surprised at how fairly well the city handled the fiasco after the fact, after it happened. It definitely took a minute for them to pull their heads out and realize, oh sh*t, something serious actually happened. And once they did that, it was pleasantly surprising at how smoothly things went and how much was actually done, like the free dump pickup for what, a month or more?

INTERVIEWER(25:59):

Yeah. They had a significant [negative] experience the prior year on my street where they could not figure out how to take our garbage away.

INTERVIEWEE(26:05):

[redacted] Waste Management. Waste management can just go p*ss up a frigging cliff. That did nothing. Did they even give the city a discount

INTERVIEWER(26:16):

No, they didn't. I think that's why AML donated containers to take garbage down south and circumvent because Waste Management would not...

INTERVIEWER(26:49):

We'll summarize this as a critique of the local waste management services. But yeah, well, thank you so much. I really appreciate you taking the time.

[END]

Additional story to include from this interviewee:

“MY FRIEND THE RIVER”

“This is a short story I wrote a couple of days after the flood to help me process: "My Friend The River" After hours of listening to the river in the darkness constantly changing its course, getting louder, closer, eventually surrounding me, alone, in the darkness. The sound was deafening, coming straight at me from all directions, louder and louder. Still, there is no water. Wtf is happening!!!!??? That was about 2:30 am. I was standing in the middle of the road with Koda at this time. Pitch black night, everyone's power was cut, everyone but me and my 2 neighbors I called to wake up. At about that time, the River shifted again, now coming straight at me from behind the house across the street (that's when I called to wake them!). Now I can barely hear myself talking to Koda. The River shifts abruptly yet again. Now it is directly between me and Riverside Dr.!!! The roar has become deafening, where's the [REDACTED] WATER!!!!???? WTF?!!! At this point I'm tripping out, what the hell is going on? It is about 2:40 now, I finally see water trickling on to <my street> from across the street

from <name> house, that's halfway to Riverside Drive! What the hell is the river doing over there...?! It made a big "puddle" going across the street, but other than that, nada. It's still so loud, where is it! I happen to glance down at the ditch beside me, and it looks odd, like 3D glass. I poked it with a stick, the glass rippled. The ditch had quietly filled up perfectly to the brim! That was all of 30 seconds. After I made the ripple and had my "Oh. [redacted]." moment, I turn my head towards a sound I hear in the direction of Riverside Dr, opposite of where the river should be, just in time to see the River burst on to the road from the little pond in the woods across the street (which I heard getting filled raging fast). Ankle deep rapids, like a bore tide, instantly burst from the dark woods onto the street in front of me! I was already scared before the water had come, now I was terrified! I call to wake Susanne now to tell her the River is coming into our yards! Koda and I mosey quickly back to the house before we get cut off. Now it's just a waiting game to see how high the water gets. There is nothing more to do. Back door open, Koda going batshit crazy, zooming all over the place! just the absolute most amazing thing he has ever seen! I've never seen him that crazy excited. To his dismay, I called a stop to it when it got up to his chest not far from the back door, it is swimming depth past the fire pit a little further out! I kept peeking out the front door from time to time watching the water rise. Eventually, it was time to be a welcoming neighbor to my friend, The River. My most honored guest had finally arrived for his visit! I opened the doors wide and said, "Welcome, my old friend, please come in and chat for a while! It is so good to see you, I'm sorry I don't make it by to visit much anymore. It just hurts my heart too much, the memories." My old friend was happy to come in and look around. He'd never been to my home before, only I to his. We hung out in the garage for a few hours, smoked some weed together, had a few beers, and chatted about old times. I showed him around under the house, too. He really liked it under there, Good hiding spot, he said. I do have to say, he's a LOT less messy in his own house, not sure why he was at mine. Oh well, he was a very gracious guest, and he's driven to keep moving so he doesn't stay too long. It was really good to see him again. I'm glad he came to visit me because he missed me. I've missed him too. <initials> 8/9/24"

INTERVIEW 4

November 2025

INTERVIEWER(00:01):

Thank you. Okay, so we are recording. And as you read through, the point of doing these follow-up interviews is to document pieces of the flood story in Juneau that are not really easily communicated in the basic categories of information from the survey. I say this is expected to take between 30 and 60 minutes, but now that we've done all the introductory discussion, probably shorter. There's two introductory questions and then some questions about finance and questions about other non-financial costs of the flood. And so the first thing, were you affected by any flooding prior to 2024 or was that the only year that your home was affected?

INTERVIEWEE(00:43):

Well, so that depends on what you consider to be an impact. First of all, we were aware of the previous floods and were aware in 2023 of how the water level rose in our surface water sewer system and how far it came up. And since it came up close to within a couple feet of our property and actually getting into our garage, then that impacted me in terms of doing research on insurance. And I put some energy into that and ultimately decided to purchase insurance before the 2024 probable flood time period was going to occur in time. So we would be covered with some of it before then. So yeah. So I mean, it made me aware that there was the possibility, although I thought it was a pretty low probability that something might happen to our property or-

INTERVIEWER(01:55):

But you did get inundation into the garage in '23?

INTERVIEWEE(01:58):

Not in 2023. No, it came up into the surface water sewers on the road that had been installed on the road. So we could actually see how high it came up and before it turned around. And it was high enough so that if it came up a couple feet more, we would be dealing with it in our property.

INTERVIEWER(02:18):

Okay. And had you really thought about it before '23 much?

INTERVIEWEE(02:24):

Not really. 2023 was really kind of the eye opener for me. I also had a friend that had purchased flood insurance and he mentioned it to me and I all of a sudden realized, "Oh, well, I could do that too." And I looked into it. So that wouldn't have happened if there was no flood risk in Juneau. That only happened because some people had previous experience and I gained enough of an understanding of it to start kind of doing the calculations of what would happen if we got flooded. And the national flood insurance was a very good investment and appeared to be at the time too, but not even after the fact, but before that.

INTERVIEWER(03:09):

Yeah. I think now-

INTERVIEWEE(03:10):

Seemed like a no-brainer to me, actually. I didn't understand why I was the only one on my street, except for maybe one other person down at the end of the street who invested in insurance, in the national flood insurance program. I had no idea why. I was shocked to find out how few people had purchased it.

INTERVIEWER(03:30):

Yeah, I was too. And I think now the prices are going up because I think the FEMA information has caught up. So I think you guys came in at the cheaper price. Yeah. So then if you feel comfortable describing what it was like during the 2024 flood, I'm just hoping to get a little bit more information on that because there really wasn't a question in the written survey, but what was that arc of the experience of the flooding impacting your house and kind of dealing with it?

INTERVIEWEE(04:02):

Sure. As I said, we purchased insurance because we had an increased expectation that it was possible that we might get flooded, but it was a low probability in my thinking. But I did a little bit of moving stuff around the house to get it up out of the garage because some things out of the garage that I thought were easy to move and that I didn't really want to get hit. And that was the sum total of my protection for the flood, except that I watched it. Again, we had a whole bunch of people on the street looking at how the water came up in the culvert that is the surface water connection with the river. And it did much the same that it did in the year that the previous year it came up and then it slowed down and then it sort of stopped.

INTERVIEWEE(05:02):

And I had no idea that when it stopped, it was starting to overtop at Killewich and there was a reason why it stopped downstream or slowed down coming up in elevation

downstream because it was most likely finding a relief somewhere else. So I went to bed after I and other members of my street thought that there was really no significant risk at that point. Had there been some kind of alarm or some kind of ... If I'd received a call or something like that, that it had just overtopped at Killewich, we would have been immediately reacting to it and trying to get ourselves to safety. But unfortunately, then I went to bed, my <child> woke up screaming that there was basically like a tidal wave coming into the back of our house and I looked out the back and there was a wave of water coming in; and it was moving very quickly.

INTERVIEWEE(06:09):

And so we just, my <child> and I grabbed the cat and grabbed the kitty litter and some other stuff. And for whatever reason, I had my waders ready and I grabbed that, but my <child> was in <their> pajamas and some shoes and we got into the car, opened the garage door. We were able to get the garage door open, but the power was out. So the power had gone out earlier.

INTERVIEWEE(06:43):

Again, there was no real identification of the purpose of that and any sort of notice that that was signaling the probability that we'd have a big amount of water coming through our neighborhood. And so we got in the car and in just a few minutes, probably three or four minutes that it took us to get into the car, the water was already about a foot deep on our street and we started driving away. There were other people driving away too and our car started to stall and it continued to stall and the clutch started slipping and we were in 32 degree water. It was dark. You could not see into it. And there were areas around us that could have been deeper than two feet. Our car could have easily floated in a foot of water and we just kept working our way through out of Northland Street onto Riverside.

INTERVIEWEE(07:53):

And then my <child> was just pretty frantic. <They> said, "Well, you need to turn left. You need to turn left." Well, that would've been towards the river, so I didn't do that. We got into a deeper area on G Street and then we got out of the water and we went to the shelter. And so that was sort of our immediate ... We basically, if the car had continued to stall, we would be forced to get out in the water; in 32 degree water,

INTERVIEWEE(08:25):

You cannot really do anything at 32. You can't really even walk through it. I had waders on. I threw my waders on and that would've kept me going, but my <child> is a big <kid>, I couldn't even have carried <them>. If you fell down in that water, you die. So it was absolutely terrifying. Fortunately, they were available at the shelter, I had heard

about the shelter. It had been publicized enough, so I knew where it was, and we had help there. We looked at possibly getting a hotel room. We couldn't find anything though, at all. So that's sort of the immediate thing that happened. I mean, there were other effects. We went through the cleanup afterwards. We had help from a lot of agencies. My <child> had pretty ... <They> became really withdrawn. <They were> just, closed <them>self up in <their> room.

INTERVIEWEE(09:38):

<They> just seemed to not function very well after that. And <they've> been not functioning very well ever since. So I think that's ... In fact, unless I'm supposed to extend this on into time, we then had to go through the whole cleanup, interact with the insurance, deal with a mortgage company.

INTERVIEWER(10:06):

How was your experience with the NFIP process and the insurance, mortgage company, et cetera?

INTERVIEWEE(10:14):

Well, there are two different things. So with respect to the National Flood Insurance Program, they called us within ... Actually, what I did is first I went to our insurance, our broker insurance, and I had purchased it through State Farm, and I think I called them within the first 24 hours. And they were and continued to be on and involved in the whole process from the beginning to the end. And they were extremely responsive and super helpful. And NFIP was really good to work with, too. They have ... Let's see. So they have sort of a group of insurers like country ... I forgot who they all are, but they have sort of these companies-

INTERVIEWER(11:14):

Adjustors

INTERVIEWEE(11:17):

And then they subcontract to the people who actually come out and estimate it and estimate the damages. And the guy that came out was fantastic. He actually put together, I think, a 20-page report on every room in our house, everything damaged. It was extremely professional and it actually was super helpful for me to have it and the cost estimates. So then I was able to use that to interact with contractors when I later had work done and I could say, "Well, this is what they say it's going to cost." And then the contractors could help if they needed to provide additional information to me to go back to NFIP, they did that. And I'd say the only difficult part about it that maybe was

imperfect, and you can't expect any big program like that to be perfect, is that you have to fix everything and submit the bills within, I think, 185 days or something like that.

INTERVIEWEE(12:21):

It's a much shorter window than I thought it would be. So we had things that we didn't want to do immediately because we were worried about being flooded again in the next year. So we held off on doing some things and even though we got an initial payout, which was very helpful, it was like, I don't know, \$75,000 or something like that. I feel like we had over \$100,000 of damage,

INTERVIEWEE(12:45):

And then we probably had another \$20,000 of prep for the next flood, which there was no real compensation for.

INTERVIEWEE(12:59):

Anyway, they really helped us a lot and NFIP was excellent. And then when the mortgage company said basically they were not going to sign the check that was jointly, that had both my name on it and the mortgage company's name on it, even though we only owed like \$15,000 on the loan, they said they didn't care if it was \$1, they were not going to sign off of it until they approved everything that we did. So I have some notes on that. Maybe I'll just give it to you, but I never really completely finished this thing. But in case you're interested,

INTERVIEWEE(13:43):

This is sort of an explanation of what I went through with the mortgage company. And I'm not going to read it all into there because it's quite a journey. But basically Wells Fargo was trying to expropriate the funds from the NFIP program by drawing out and complicating all the contract work for the house. So they would sort of take it over and have to approve of it. You could choose your own contractors, but they ultimately had to approve of everything. And so they could slow you down as much as they wanted and they never guaranteed to me that they weren't going to charge fees, administrative fees for any costs they had into it, even though they said, "Well, you don't have to pay for anything, but they can charge fees for anything." So I ended up paying off the mortgage to our house much earlier than I would ever have paid it off because we had a really favorable interest rate.

INTERVIEWEE(14:45):

So then they forced us, basically forced us to pay this off so then they could go spend ... They then would have funds to provide to other loans that were at a much higher interest rate.

INTERVIEWEE(15:01):

So it was a real scam. I thought it was an outrageous kind of mortgage company scam.

INTERVIEWER(15:08):

Yeah. I've also actually asked some other people about how their mortgage companies did or didn't deal with stuff just based on that experience that you had shared months ago.

INTERVIEWEE(15:17):

It's all over the place.

INTERVIEWER(15:18):

I'm almost a little bit worried about thanking Global [Credit Union] for how good they've been [to my household], because I don't want to draw attention to the fact [that other companies are not as good to deal with, and risk influencing Global to decrease their quality of service to their flood-affected homeowners].

INTERVIEWEE(16:03):

Well, you didn't get paid for the opportunity cost of your time.

INTERVIEWEE(16:34):

It's hard to know how they're going to game that out, especially-

INTERVIEWER(16:38):

But it's really disturbing what you've noted because of how big Wells Fargo is in Hurricane Alley on the East Coast and what they must be doing to people.

INTERVIEWEE(16:47):

Right. And we were lucky because we were able to deal with it reasonably without impacting us too much, but I can't imagine some of these young families with children and a lot of costs and owing a lot on their home. And then you can see some of them are, they're just stuck in their home. They know they can't get rid of it.

INTERVIEWER(17:09):

Well, and this gets into kind of some of the next questions like-

INTERVIEWEE(17:13):

Sorry.

INTERVIEWER(17:13):

No, you're fine. I was just realizing we might as well kind of segue because you're talking a little bit about how do these costs when you're saying you have this really good foresight to purchase the NFIP plan and then you're able to use it, but there are still flood prep, flood mitigation stuff and the little fine print of maybe what doesn't get covered or whatever if your contractor has a difference or did you end up going past 185 days on a bunch of stuff that then you could not ask for more so you had some amount?

INTERVIEWEE(17:49):

Yeah, I couldn't get it done in time. And not to mention that there aren't contractors available to supply everybody with the labor to complete 300 house's repairs in 185 days, so it's impossible.

INTERVIEWER(18:06):

Now, of all those costs, one of the questions here is like, what was the most unexpected or challenging of the financial costs of the flood?

INTERVIEWEE(18:17):

Well, I think it's really the anticipation of what's going to happen next because we are able to repair things, but to decide what sort of outlays are worth it for protecting our house from some future event, that's the most difficult thing to do. And I ended up getting an electrician in and having him put a whole new electrical system in a 240 panel out in our shed and carried it all the way across the house so that we could power big sump pumps in our crawl space, but there's a lot of trade-offs in doing that too. So getting the engineering help to put it together correctly and mitigating the uncertainty about whether the water gets high enough, whether you could have water pressure pushing in, damaging the house when you actually want it to flood and designing it so that it floods when it's supposed to and it doesn't flood when it isn't supposed to, involves costs that we still haven't fully figured out.

INTERVIEWEE(19:45):

So I think that's the hardest thing is to figure out what the cost of, figuring out how to protect the property. And then I feel like I lost over a year of my life working on this thing, so I didn't think it was going to take that much time to really deal with. And we still haven't repaired everything that should be repaired, but our house is completely livable and you wouldn't even know that we had a flood if you looked at it now, but that's the way most of these houses look, they look pretty

INTERVIEWEE(20:27):

recovered from the outside.

INTERVIEWER(20:28):

And did this affect, in the big picture, your financial security, when you think about, you're retired, right?

Speaker 2:

I am.

Speaker 1:

So your retirement plans, retirement savings, has this been a big deciding factor in some way related to the rest of your life financially?

INTERVIEWEE(20:47):

Well, it has. It has made me become stuck kind of with this property in a way that I didn't think ... I always thought we would have a very liquid asset. Our house would be a very liquid asset and we could sell the house at any time. One had just been sold down the street in May, identical to our house and I would have been perfectly happy to sell our house for anywhere near what they sold it for. So I ended up spending a lot of my time just taking care of both the repairs and preparation work and then just deciding how many more years I want to do this...?

INTERVIEWEE(21:39):

What's coming up each year in terms of the physical labor that's involved in doing it and finding ... I was able to leverage a lot of muscle that I paid to help us, but it's very difficult to do that. It's a tough labor economy here, especially for unskilled labor, it's very tough to get people. So I couldn't ... Since I know I can't do a lot of it myself because of my age, I don't want to use up the rest of my mobility and end up in a wheelchair working on this, my property to make it safe. It makes me want to get out more quickly, but the house has now got blemishes that make it less saleable. And so it introduced a whole ... It practically changed my whole world when it happened.

INTERVIEWER(22:45):

Okay. Yeah. And in your written survey, you mentioned something about 10% of net worth, but then you also kind of wrote that that's not the hugest thing, but it does seem like a significant amount of someone's net worth, although hard to estimate.

INTERVIEWEE(22:58):

It is hard to estimate. And it's a dynamic thing because I think at the time, I thought it might end up being more than maybe it will be because the markets are improving a little bit from where they were, but they kind of go up and they're kind of going up and down based on, to a great extent, how much help the city sounds like it's going to do for

us in the way of supporting the short term and long term solutions. But right now, I think that it seems like the city's committed to do some things that are ... Don't increase the probability of 2026 being any worse than 2025.

INTERVIEWER(23:45):

Yep. And in the picture of the future, how is this affecting future financial planning? I know you touched on that already a little bit.

INTERVIEWEE(23:54):

It's mostly when ... I have increasing reasons to leave the state that I didn't think that I would have, and this is one of the contributing factors, but it's made it much harder to do that. It has reduced my mobility to get out of the state.

INTERVIEWER(24:11):

Oh, okay. So you're both more interested than prior to the flood, but also feeling like it's more difficult to leave?

INTERVIEWEE(24:17):

It's more difficult to move because it's harder to prep a property that's been damaged and through a flood. And so yeah, it's complicated.

INTERVIEWER(24:29):

And were you already thinking about moving out of state before the '24 flood?

INTERVIEWEE(24:34):

Yeah. I mean, we knew that it was going to happen in the next half dozen years, but we're just more acutely interested in doing it now for a lot of reasons. Part of it is just physically I wore myself out fixing this, getting this house ready for the next flood and fixing it up, and I just can't do that. I just can't.

INTERVIEWER(25:01):

So to close out the financial discussion, is there anything you would like other people in Juneau or local leaders to know about the financial pieces of this for households in general in general?

INTERVIEWEE(25:14):

I think that ... And this applies to some of the other questions here. I think that the kind of testimony we've heard in front of the assembly through all these meetings has been pretty comprehensive. I can't think of any big categories for us. Like I said, we had some impacts to family members that I didn't anticipate, and it's not just a bunch of weak

people that are impacted by this flood after the fact of the flood. There are real impacts and there's no real system in place to help with the additional effects on people, on their mental health in particular of something like this. So I think that's ... I'd like that... it'd be nice if the Juneau population, the other taxpayers in the city, realized that when something like this happens, it has lasting effects that are not just pecuniary. There's a lot more to it.

INTERVIEWER(26:39):

Well, and you're getting into that next set of questions. So if you feel comfortable, could you talk a little bit about how the outbursts floods that you have been affected by and just the outburst floods as a whole are impacting your sense of physical safety, satisfaction, or mental health aspects of living in your home or in Juneau as a whole?

INTERVIEWEE(27:04):

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER(27:05):

That would be question seven on your sheet, so the second page

INTERVIEWEE(27:07):

Okay. Thanks. Some of these are similar.

INTERVIEWER(27:12):

Yeah, they're kind of a bunch of ways to ask just a few questions.

INTERVIEWEE(27:14):

I'll tell you anecdotally an example of it. My wife, who spends a lot of time taking care of her mother in [the Lower 48], came back after the flood to help me get things straightened up and actually get ready for the 2025 interval. So we did all this stuff to the house and she was back there and we picked up one of the NOAA radios and one day ... And I set the radio up and I had it on "statewide" [setting]. Well, one of the things that happened in the state is we had a tsunami that came from Kamchatka Peninsula, and my wife was ... She thought we were going to have a tidal wave, so she was so, I guess, freaked out by that alarm of that thing going off and herself traumatized by it that I could just see that here's a person who didn't even go through it and the fear of, even though it seems a little detached from exactly what was going on, it affected her in a pretty extreme way.

INTERVIEWEE(28:35):

She was really upset and she was running around the house looking for me, screaming my name because she thought we were having a tidal wave coming. So I think that there is something that once you've been through an event like this, it changes you and it changes how stressed out you are. And so that's ... Those are some thoughts.

INTERVIEWER(29:03):

I can relate.

INTERVIEWEE(29:05):

Yeah. I would think so.

INTERVIEWER(29:08):

When you think about your day-to-day life or season to season, whichever way you want to look at it, how are the floods affecting just the cadence of your life schedule?

INTERVIEWEE(29:24):

Well, for one thing, especially up until the 2025 flood anticipation period... we're thinking about it all the time. We're looking on the web, we're looking on the Facebook site and trying to become aware of any new developments. We're keeping track of the meetings that are going to be coming up. If I'm traveling, I look at those things to make sure that I'm aware of the time, amount of time I have available to do our prep work for it. And it's just something that doesn't even ... It really doesn't go away. I'd say I'm as relaxed right now about it as I can be, but it changes the distribution of the time you're thinking about it versus if we didn't have this at all.

INTERVIEWER(30:26):

And if you had to average it out, how often do you think you'd think about GLOFs in a typical week?

INTERVIEWEE(30:32):

Well, until the last couple months, I was thinking about it every ... I was looking at that site almost every day. And now in the last couple months, I haven't been looking at that as much, but that's other things going on in my life that are keeping me busy. And so now it's maybe I look at it once a week and I try to keep up with what are the meetings happening, what is the funding status looking like for the HESCO barrier improvements? Are they doing logical things that are ... And I'm looking at and interpreting that in terms of: what does that mean I have to do to protect our property? And so that's something I'm not doing as much as I was. But I think as we approach the flood period for 2026, I'll probably end up spending a fair amount of my time in the week just making sure I'm aware of what's going on and preparing for what sort of probabilities I think there...

INTERVIEWEE(31:46):

We can have another event.

INTERVIEWER(31:48):

I know you talked a little bit about ... Are you thinking of relocating prior to the next flood season?

INTERVIEWEE(32:06):

No, we just won't be able to do it by then. It's just, we can't pull it off.

INTERVIEWER(32:11):

And are you thinking you need to actually sell this house before you can ... So you're trying to figure out the timing on that?

INTERVIEWEE(32:17):

Yeah, we'll sell the house and then we'll look for where we're going to land, I guess. So we have family in [the Lower 48], but I don't especially want to live [there].

INTERVIEWER(32:29):

And how long have you guys lived in Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(32:32):

Since 1986.

INTERVIEWER(32:48):

After the flooding this August, how has that affected either your confidence or your stress or anxiety or people in your household? How has that changed from the 2024 and then now that we've passed the '25 flood?

INTERVIEWEE(33:06):

Well, I think, as I've said, we put our time into, some time into keeping track of all the risk factors for another event like this. And the aftermath of the event affected one of my family members, and it still is having an effect on him [from a mental health standpoint]. So I spend quite a bit of time, my time, maybe 30% or 40% of my time dealing with something that I'm not sure it would be anywhere as bad as it is if it wasn't for this event, this flood event.

INTERVIEWER(33:48):

One thing that is not on this list, but it's something I'm interested in because so far it seems fairly universal is like, how do people make a choice of evacuating or not?

INTERVIEWER(34:08):

For example, my household, we evacuated last year because we don't have a flood fighting plan. We just let the water come in and go out. So we decided, but we are in the vast minority, especially where we live in town. And it's something that the city has officially stated; they want everyone to evacuate. Are you able to evacuate and still do the flood fighting in your house that's planned? Or is it kind of a choice that you either have to be there and try to work pumps or leave and just let the water come in?

INTERVIEWEE(34:43):

Well, our location is such a... First of all, we have to make some guesses about what the worst case scenario would be in that particular area. And if what we've seen in 2024 is a worst case scenario, then we can't really ... If it's worse than that, our property's done. Our house is going to be so damaged. If we had another foot of water, the velocity of the water would have been four times as much probably. And it would have probably taken the house off the foundation. So I think if we had another event like we had this time, there's a lot of stuff that I can do that I have done already to try to deflect some of the water, the force of the water, and protect certain parts of the house that would be inundated. But there is no way I would be in that house again during the flood.

INTERVIEWEE(35:45):

There is no way. And I understand some people did that. I don't want to even label it as courageous. I think they did- I think that it's extremely dangerous to go working on trying to buttress up failures and barriers while the flood is going on. I think it's a formula for losing lives. And I just think that for me, once we're noticed the flood is happening, I'm getting out, I'm getting my family out, we're getting everyone out. And it's what I could do up until that point is the prep that we will have. And I would never try to stay there during the flood. We have a single story house, but like I said, even a two-story house could have been taken down by another ... The physics of water- water flow. I said if that was another foot deeper, we might have had four times as much forces against the house.

INTERVIEWEE(36:48):

It's the square of the surface area or something like that. It can do quite a bit of damage. The flowing water can just really tear things down quickly.

INTERVIEWER(37:01):

Well, and then did you guys have an evacuation plan this year?

INTERVIEWEE(37:06):

Essentially, yeah. We were ready to go. I mean, we had bags packed, we had all of our stuff together.

INTERVIEWER(37:12):

Okay. But you stayed in your house because there was no breach, but you were planning to leave if there was a breach?

INTERVIEWEE(37:18):

No, we left. As soon as we got to the point where we got our last bit done and our house enclosed enough and all of the ... We'd been working on this for months, honestly. We've been working on it since the last flood pretty much. I mean, we put in all kinds of barriers. We put in a skirting around the house of D1, compacted D1, so that the water would go flow away, so it wouldn't come next to the house and come next to the foundation. So in that two or- hour to two hours where we were maximally flooding, we would decrease the probability that we would have the house floating. And so we just did all kinds of stuff. We even put some concrete around the house to try to plug up some of the holes where it came underneath the house and went into the crawl space and then we did all kinds of groundwork and then we wrapped the house and then we put up barriers with sandbags for the places that had high turbulence and dug out holes through our house.

INTERVIEWEE(38:25):

So we did all that in advance.

INTERVIEWER(38:27):

And then you just left when the flood started?

INTERVIEWEE(38:29):

On our street, I think we had kind of more prep work than the average house, but we had a little more damage even though we were further upstream of the river than a lot of people.

INTERVIEWER(38:42):

But then this year when the flood was announced that it was starting, did you guys just leave for a night?

INTERVIEWEE(38:48):

Yeah, we did. Right. I mean, we just finished our stuff up and then once we determined, okay, it could happen in the next five or six or seven hours, we were out of there. And we went to the show. Well, we went to visit with- We stayed with friend- We stayed overnight at a friend's house.

INTERVIEWER(39:05):

Yeah, we did the same. Cool. Well, to close out this section, is there anything ... I know you spoke a little bit to this in the last open-ended question, but is there anything else you want people in Juneau, especially leadership to know specifically about physical health, stress, lifestyle, mental components of this all?

INTERVIEWER(39:31):

You kind of already spoke to that.

INTERVIEWEE(39:32):

I think I've got it covered. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER(39:34):

Cool. And is there anything else I've not asked about that you want to mention?

INTERVIEWEE(39:39):

No. I think if I look at what you've asked and then I reflect on the testimony that I've heard through all the public meetings and in front of the assembly, I think that the broader effects of this flood have been ... Somebody's thought about almost every part of it. I'll tell you, I'm certainly concerned about ... Actually, there is something. I'm very concerned about the future of FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program. And I think that- I hope that people who weren't affected directly by this flood in Juneau realized that this kind of thing can happen to anyone and that those programs, they provide a safety net that you can't replace privately or in a small-scale. And the idea that you can do it locally is a bad idea... You can do all kinds of things after the fact locally, but when it comes to major insurance programs and things like that, you're not going to find small-scale, local, or even state operated flood mitigation programs that are as effective as a national program.

INTERVIEWEE(41:22):

We just need a good, strong national program.

INTERVIEWER(41:27):

I agree.

INTERVIEWEE(41:28):

I figured you would. I know I was speaking to the-

INTERVIEWER(41:31):

To the choir. Well, thank you. And I do have a question here. If you think of somebody who you know to be heavily affected by flooding, who maybe isn't on our list already of people who have reached out, please do connect us.

INTERVIEWEE(41:47):

Okay. Yeah.

INTERVIEW 5

November 2025

[Recording begins as the interviewee is describing the answer to the first question, about experiences during the 2024 flood]...

INTERVIEWEE(00:00):

Sometime after 7:00 am, my child parked on a nearby street, waded over, and we looked at things. And about that time, the water started really moving out. It was draining out of the house and out of the garage onto the street. It went really fast. I don't know where it went, but it went. We had friends volunteer to help us move our stuff out. A neighbor told me about getting a pod. So I got a pod and they brought it out. We put our stuff that we could salvage in the pod and took everything out and washed it. I think the water came up through the sewage lines too, because it looked like that. I washed off the front drive as best I could because we had people coming over to help us and didn't think they should walk through that. But we washed everything that we could save. The rest all went to the landfill. We made a big mountain of stuff, all of us, because everybody lost most of their stuff. We just washed off the stuff we salvaged and put it in the pod.

We had a contractor come in who tore out all the drywall and insulation two weeks later. Then he waited a couple weeks for the studs to dry out. We dealt with contractors from then on out. That wasn't any fun either. But I was very depressed by this because I fully expected it to happen the following year as it's happened with you [the interviewer] and the year after that and the year after that. I didn't see any way out of it, didn't see that anybody was doing anything about it. I didn't really want to put a lot of expense into rebuilding because it was probably going to happen the next year. There were things I would rather do than deal with this.

But, when it didn't flood this year, I was really happy. I'm sorry that you were flooded this year. I hope you have some alternatives for getting out or I understand some people don't want to move, but I would move in a heartbeat. We really, I don't think, can sell the house. We own the house outright, but if we were to sell the house, I don't think we could afford much of anything. We were thinking about moving and downsizing anyway, but looking at what's available for condos, most of them are too small or they would cost more than what we could get for this house at this time because the value has gone. It's really tanked.

INTERVIEWER(02:58):

Yeah. And how high up did you say the water got inside your downstairs?

INTERVIEWEE(03:03):

Well, it was below the light switches, but it was at least three feet.

INTERVIEWER(03:09):

That's a lot.

INTERVIEWEE(03:10):

Yeah. And it's funny because the water poured out of the house, so it isn't like we're below the street level, but because we're below the ground. When they built this house, they piled soil up around the foundations. The lower level is considered a basement, but it all did pour out. After last year, if they keep building the Hesco barriers, I'm not too concerned until the flooding gets too bad, and then I guess we'll just have to deal with it. But given our ages, we'll just say year to year.

INTERVIEWER(03:54):

Yeah. I saw in your survey responses that you did not have national flood insurance program insurance before the 2024 flood. Do you have that now?

INTERVIEWEE(04:07):

Oh, yes, of course. We were under the impression that we could not have it because it was the first thing I asked about when we bought this house. I wanted flood insurance because of our previous experience. And they said, "Oh no, you don't want flood insurance. It's way too expensive," (which it wasn't), and you won't flood anyway. It's still not zoned for flooding because they only rezone every so many years.

INTERVIEWER(04:38):

Yeah. My understanding is that I'm not sure if it has already happened yet, but whenever they do the re-zoning, it [may] increase those premium costs. So that's one reason that it's good to get in now because then I guess they keep the premiums low, so it's good to maintain it. I don't know what we would do if we didn't have it, but yeah, that's also ... So the example is in my house, we had flood insurance before the first flood. So even if the dollars and cents costs are the same as yours or less actually, because we've not gotten three whole feet in our house yet, having the insurance changes the game. We've only been up to two feet in our house each year. But yeah, so everyone's experience really is different. And you don't need to apologize to me. It is nice to have a second story, I will say, as you know, as you mentioned. But I am curious, it's not on these questions. Did NFIP say anything about the difference in what's covered in your downstairs if it's below grade and classified as a basement?

INTERVIEWEE(05:49):

Yes. They will pay for replacing the drywall and I believe the insulation, but-

INTERVIEWER(05:56):

The structure, but not the contents?

INTERVIEWEE(05:59):

Yeah. No contents, I think, and no refinishing, no plastering, no taping. And that's a different story altogether, because it's basically considered a basement. I'm in it right now. I redid it completely. The contractor wanted plaster and I didn't want to go to that expense, so I got some textured wallpaper and just papered everything. It's worked. It's quick and easy. And it got the contractors out of the house, which they were taking forever.

INTERVIEWER(06:41):

It looks really nice.

INTERVIEWEE(06:43):

Well, thank you. I can't get my spouse to come downstairs anymore. They had just gotten out of the hospital when this happened and he's never quite recovered. There are a number of issues there, health issues, and I don't know how much of it is shock on his part or how much their health is affecting how they think. And I know they are having trouble walking and well, we're going ... The reason why I have these obligations at four o'clock is I have to take my pet to the sitter because we're going at five in the morning to <hospital in Seattle tomorrow for their checkup. They have heart problems and other problems, and that's another thing we have to do tomorrow. We'll be down there for a week and then come back. I think I'm getting off the topic though. I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWER(07:45):

Actually, you're just a few questions ahead, so it's perfectly fine, but maybe we can circle back just to finish up the discussion about question three, four, and five, and then six. Just thinking about all these grouped questions together, just wondering, you had to spend this money out of pocket. Now you've got the NFIP, but you also know that it won't necessarily cover everything. How does that relate to any work you might do? Your retirement? You mentioned you wanted to downsize, and so I was just wondering if there's anything else that you want to mention about that besides the lack of feeling like you can downsize?

INTERVIEWEE(08:34):

Well, I found that my spouse wouldn't give up anything: even though there's no way they are going to ski again, they won't give up their skis. There's no way they will going to ice skate again, but they won't give up his ice skates and all these things, sports items--I don't know how many sleeping bags, camping gear and stuff like that. There's really no downsizing unless we put it in storage. My child and I are going to go in together for a storage unit, and maybe we'll clear some of this stuff out, but any place we moved would be smaller and we have to deal with stuff that ... I mean, there are just issues here. There's no point in moving because we own the house outright. If we were to move, we would have to pay about \$3,000 a month mortgage, which would be a big chunk of our income because we're a fixed retired income, and we would still have to maintain this house, at least keep the heat on and electricity.

INTERVIEWEE(09:32):

And there was no point in it because we don't have to pay anything except the electricity and heat and taxes and stuff now. I just figured we may as well stay here.

INTERVIEWER(09:45):

So then thinking back to the costs of the flood in 2024, what did you feel like were the most either unexpected or the most challenging of the financial costs?

INTERVIEWEE(10:00):

Most challenging. Having to rebuild and having to deal with contractors that I didn't communicate very well with, who wanted to do something else than what I wanted done, and probably didn't put it together back in any way that can be taken it apart without doing more damage than was done on the first flood, so I'm hoping it doesn't flood again. They put up backer board walls and then they plastered over the screws. And then the second contractor, I said, "You're not going to be able to get those screws out very readily," which is what I told the first contractor, "How the hell are we going to get these out? " "Oh, they're every 50 inches or so." Well, they're not. But any rate, that was challenging because all that work was, I figured it was for naught, but yeah, that was really depressing-- having all this work done that's just probably going to be torn up again if there's another flood.

INTERVIEWEE(11:02):

And I suppose in seven years' time, they'll have a 20-foot flood, and I don't think the Hesco barriers are going to do 20 feet. I think they can only go to 20 feet, but I was really pleased they're going to raise them and thicken them. I was really delighted with that, but who knows what budgets are going to get cut where, if that's really going to happen.

INTERVIEWER(11:33):

Yeah, I was thinking it'd be nice if they did just a separate Hesco wall around <a low street>, like two Hesco's high right before the flood, close it in so that if it breaks outside, it doesn't flood...but I don't know if that will ever happen. No,

INTERVIEWEE(11:48):

It just came down Riverside. I understand.

INTERVIEWER(11:51):

Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE(11:51):

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER(11:53):

So to close out the financial part of our conversation, is there anything else that you want local leaders or other community members to understand about the financial pieces of this for households in Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(12:06):

Well, it's just tough on everybody. The gal who's going to take care of my cat. Her sister lives down the street and they didn't have a concrete floor like we have. So, I understand they haven't even rebuilt the flooring in their place because they don't see the point in it. And I guess the money they got from FEMA, wasn't enough to cover their expenses. FEMA did come through with around \$35,000 for us. That helped a lot it cost us about \$60,000 out of pocket. My spouse had been saving money, so we could squeak by. But a lot of these people are living from paycheck to paycheck, and how did they deal with it? It could be so much worse. I am grateful to everybody who helped us, and I'm grateful to FEMA, and I feel really bad for people like my pet sitter's sister who are just living on the second floor, and the first floor is just stripped out, just studs. Although, that's pretty much what we're doing even with the downstairs repairs.

INTERVIEWEE(13:30):

That's it.

INTERVIEWER(13:33):

I know that feeling.

INTERVIEWEE(13:35):

Yeah, you've probably been there too.

INTERVIEWER(13:39):

Yeah, but I'm thinking your wallpaper idea maybe could be a way to close some things up that looks nicer without it being that extra investment and work.

INTERVIEWEE(13:48):

Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER(13:50):

So maybe we'll do that this winter. But yeah, well, so for the rest of the questions are circling back around, you already started talking a little bit about lifestyle stuff, how your spouse's reacting, how this is taking a physical health toll, a stress toll, this mental component of the uncertainty. And I just wanted to make some space for you to share a little bit more about that. And the first question is just as a whole, how do you feel about your sense of physical safety and mental health and satisfaction of living in Juneau? You kind of touched on that you didn't want to move to the house you're in 25 years ago. Was that more about not wanting to move to Juneau or not wanting to move to this area of Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(14:41):

Well, I didn't want to live in the Valley. I don't know where my head was at. I know I don't really remember, but in the end we had a house that we really liked over on Vanderbilt Hill, but then the seller decided he was going to raise the price since we were going to buy it. And we just didn't want to play that game. We had 10 days to find a house. My spouse's employer at the time paid for us to come over here and find a place to live. So, we had seen this house and it was doable and I didn't like the fact that part of it was below grade because water is always a problem in Southeast, but we moved here and it was fine for 25 years. I would live elsewhere in Juneau, but I don't think we could afford to move. I don't think there's much available unless they privatize public land because I think half the population lives in Mendenhall Valley.

INTERVIEWEE(15:57):

And where are you going to put all those people? There isn't even land to build new on it.

INTERVIEWER(16:07):

Well, and you already also talked a little bit about the sort of stress or frustration or mental health aspects of being in your house, waiting to see if it floods again. Do you have anything else you wanted to add about that, that sense of just living in your home now?

INTERVIEWEE(16:26):

Well, I was hoping for a couple more years here, and I think we may get a couple more years here. After that, we'd probably leave and move to the Pioneer home or something. Well, who knows? We're older. We get a little more adapted every day, so who knows?

INTERVIEWER(16:47):

But you're planning to stay in Juneau for the long haul?

INTERVIEWEE(16:52):

I would like to. I'm not sure that's possible. I seriously doubt it's possible because there just isn't that much, there isn't any place to go. There isn't that much private land. And we are on fixed income and as prices keep going up, getting a house like the one we have becomes out of reach. So who knows? We could move to Eastern Washington or Eastern Oregon or someplace like that? where things are a lot more economical.

INTERVIEWER(17:39):

Now, how are the glacial floods impacting your day-to-day life? Are you changing how you leave town or you mentioned that you're going out of town for medical appointments. Are those being scheduled more at certain times of year because of the glofs or is it not really affecting much of your day-to-day?

INTERVIEWEE(17:59):

It's not affecting much of our day-to-day.

INTERVIEWER(18:03):

Do you think about them in a typical week? Is there certain thoughts that run through your mind about either preparing or wondering for the following year?

INTERVIEWEE(18:27):

When you're 80 years old, you don't know what's going to happen the next day either. So I just kind of put it out of my head. I really don't think about it. I was thinking about it until this past summer because I was expecting the same thing again and I didn't want to go through it, but now it looks like, wow, we might get two or three more years out of this.

INTERVIEWEE(18:51):

Then I guess if it all washes away, I just think we'd maybe find assisted living somewhere or the Pioneer home or something like that. Who knows what condition we'll be in at that point? I feel really sorry for my neighbors, especially the people who own the house next to us. Well, everybody in this small street really, those are the ones that I know. I don't know if they have it any worse than us or any better, but it's group misery

and you just don't think about it that much. I'm sure you do because you had to deal with it year after year, but we only had one year of it.

INTERVIEWER(19:39):

Yeah. I'm actually kind of glad that we didn't schedule these interviews until after August, because I think it gives a better description of that crescendo of the kind of stress and expectation. And then now it's like, okay, now that the HESCO's held for one year, how does that change how we all feel about possibilities for the future? Anyway, that part is kind of interesting.

INTERVIEWEE(20:05):

Yeah. I just don't think that much about it. I'm more concerned about ... I've got other things that are more concern to me, like my spouse's health, how long that's ... There are just other things that are more productive to worry about than things I can't do anything about. I did fill out the form for the Corps of my feelings about the various alternatives. I do things like that, but that's about all I can do. So, it's like when we saw that we were surrounded by water, well, there's nothing we could do about it, so we went back to bed. Well, it's not like we could get out at that point either. It was a poor decision on our part and it was a poor decision on our part to live in the valley, but we did that. One's life is formed by decisions that one makes, and they're not always good.

INTERVIEWER(21:21):

Yep. Well, and then thinking about your household and your neighbors, is there anything that you want leaders in Juneau and other folks in the public to know about how the type of flooding that you experienced in 2024 affects physical health, stress, lifestyle, or mental components of living in Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(21:47):

Well, I think it has a negative effect, but some of the alternatives they have for dealing with this will affect everybody in Juneau. If they relocate everybody from the valley-- they can't really--but if they decide that nobody in the valley should live here anymore, I think that would really negatively affect Juneau. It might not even be the capital anymore. It would just kind of wither away to maybe the size of Skagway. I don't know, maybe a little bigger, but ...

INTERVIEWER(22:45):

Well, thanks for making the comment for Army Corps's first comment period, and thanks for sharing about all that stuff. Is there anything else that you just would like folks to know about flooding that I have not asked about?

INTERVIEWEE(23:05):

Well, I can't think of anything except it's just an experience I wouldn't wish it on anybody. But, in the grander scheme of things, we've done quite well. Everybody has been really helpful. We got aid from FEMA and we were able to pull ourselves back on our feet. Other people, maybe, maybe not. I don't know. I'm probably not the most representative person that you are going to interview because we are retired and don't have a daily job. I work in a co-op ... I do arts and crafts, and I work in the <redacted> as scheduled. They helped me in that I didn't have to work for the whole month of August, which took off some pressure. My studio was pretty much washed out. I haven't been able to do much of anything for the past year, and it's a really pleasure when I get to do something, throw a silly pot or something.

INTERVIEWER(24:34):

What's been the primary thing keeping you from being able to do your art? Well,

INTERVIEWEE(24:40):

The studio had to be totally stripped down to the studs. All my equipment, my kiln was a soggy mess and I had to be very careful moving it because a firebrick is just very fragile when it's wet. And I had to dry both kilns out. It took months. My printing press--I couldn't get that into the pod. I really couldn't get any of my stuff into the pod. It all went in the backyard under tarps, and a lot of stuff rusted. It's just not in the shape it was, but there also wasn't any place I could use it either. And the time that I had, I didn't have any leisure time really, but I think I spent a lot of time playing solitaire because it's something you can do five minutes here, five minutes there, or word games or stuff like that on my phone, but really didn't have the time to sit down and do projects.

INTERVIEWER(25:45):

It may not surprise you, but you're not the first person who's talked about losing that aspect of life, just especially for folks like you who have large either art or craft or just whatever type of home projects, if it takes up larger amounts of space, that's been a thing other folks have mentioned too.

INTERVIEWEE(26:10):

Yeah. If you work at home, it kind of stops that. But I'm starting to recover now and starting to do things again, but it's better than never. So I just have to say I'm feeling a lot better now and maybe next year I won't feel so positive about it, but I just take things day at a time and don't worry that much about it.

INTERVIEWER(26:46):

Not to ask an uncomfortable question, but you mentioned earlier on that you were feeling pretty depressed leading up to the 2025 flood. Was that something that was

interfering every day and kind of building as the potential flood date got sooner? Or was it more of just sort of like a latent in the back of your mind feeling bad, expecting that the house was going to flood again?

INTERVIEWEE(27:14):

Well, we made plans to get our vehicles out because we lost our vehicles in the 2024 flood, get our vehicles out, get our pet to his pet sitter, go stay in a motel, move stuff upstairs. We did that. When we came back, I was really pleased not to have a drop of flood water. And I had friends. One gal who lives on River Road, she couldn't take it. They had built a great embankment of rock because they lost half their yard in the 2023 flood. She said the noise was so terrible. She just got out and she drove over to <my street> and she said it was so quiet. She just loved it. And another friend who didn't get flooded, and they were out of town during the 2024 flood, they just walked around everywhere to see what was happening. It was counterintuitive because they were never really trapped by water, but I certainly wasn't going to stay at home if there was a chance it was going to flood again.

INTERVIEWEE(28:30):

We were lucky in 2024, the water just came in like a tide.. It wasn't with a great force. It didn't rip out much. We had stuff from down the street in our front yard and things floated around, but it can be really a lot of force and pressure, and you really can't even expect your house to be standing if it's very bad.

INTERVIEWER(28:57):

Yeah. And you're touching on something that also is kind of a risky danger, but also I'm not sure what could be done about it. There's a number of people who have plans for flood fighting and dewatering their house in the event that water starts to come. And most of those systems require at least one person staying behind to man pumps or move different barriers around, but so you guys are just planning to evacuate each year. Will you evacuate next year too?

INTERVIEWEE(29:38):

Yes

INTERVIEWER(29:40):

We have done the same strategy. I think we are the only ones on our street who evacuated last year because we do not have a plan to pump water out. We just let it come in and then let it go out. But after we were gone the first year, we were out of town in 2023, and so we lost our vehicles, whatever, but we didn't really see the current in real time. And then when we stayed in the house in 2024, it was freaky enough that I

just decided I don't want to be around it because even between 24 and 25, the water crossed our peninsula view drive in different locations than it had before. So you can't even anticipate exactly from one year to the next. And if we don't leave early, then the whole street becomes blocked off because there's a low spot before the road.

INTERVIEWER(30:42):

So you basically have to decide, stay or go. But yeah, this is something that I hope city leaders can get a little bit of the message on, which I think they already know, but I don't know what can be done about it. But it's a real danger risk that in order for people to try to protect their property, they can't leave. And then I guess if the Hesco's burst, it could be really, really bad because it could be a really forceful single wall of water angled at certain, wherever it breaches. So I'm glad to hear you guys evacuate. That's good.

INTERVIEWEE(31:20):

Oh yeah. Are you planning on taking ... I understand they were talking about buying you out. Are you planning to do that?

INTERVIEWER(31:29):

I'm actually the person who found the program...it's not that I want to be bought out, but I thought it was important to have that as the kind of last-ditch option because managed retreat might be the only safe way out. So our household will consider it as long ... It just depends on whether the ... If the assembly says yes, and then if the assessments come back, they have to do like a third party value assessment and then it just depends like, is this enough for us to be able to go buy a different property or move on? And much like you, when my partner bought this property in 2017, they actually asked USGS and the city, various people about flood risk and was told that there was none.

INTERVIEWER(32:39):

And we started out by having flood insurance and then got rid of it. But then the mortgage company actually reached out after a new zoning in like 2021 saying, "Hey, we want you to consider getting your NFIP again because it looks more like your risk has increased." And then they said, "It's not a requirement, but we just think it would be good." And so like end of 2022, we got it again, luckily. Otherwise, as you know, we did not get a federal disaster declaration in 23 or this year. So it was lucky for us that we had the flood insurance the first year...our mortgage company has been really helpful, Global...they've just been like really supportive and they don't charge any fees or anything for distributing the flood insurance checks because that's also a whole nother world. Some mortgage companies will force you to pay them fees for getting your flood insurance payout.

INTERVIEWEE(34:33):

Oh no.

INTERVIEWER(34:36):

So we're just kind of constantly thinking...what if the house were to completely be lost next year? And then there's that \$250,000 payout that is the max of the coverage for the structure. So we just are trying to make sure we maintain the ability to pay off our mortgage if everything really were to fall apart. But yeah, it's a weird balancing act, both for the finance and the kind of psychology of it, because I don't want to be engaged in large scale remodeling constantly...

INTERVIEWEE(35:36):

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER(35:36):

But now you've got me thinking I should find some wallpaper options that make it look prettier.

INTERVIEWEE(35:43):

Well, what I've discovered is that if you're going to do that, the pre-pasted stuff will work on your exterior walls, but the self-stick stuff, that doesn't seem to ... If you're below grade at all, it won't stick that well. I put some up in one room and I'm taking it down now because it peels off in places, but the prepasted stuff, that's great. It's great. I would highly recommend it if you feel up to it.

INTERVIEWER(36:33):

Yeah. Well, and I might reach out to you. You're the first person who I've been able to hook up with for an interview on <your street>...three feet is really high. Even those on <my street>, most are talking about one to two feet in houses and then like three feet in the garage. But some of you guys might have only been hit once so far, but it was a huge hit. Just every five or 10 inches it goes up, as you know, it's so much more of everything and the fact that a lot of people did not have flood insurance, it just is almost insurmountable to even think about.

INTERVIEW 6

December 2025

INTERVIEWER(00:00:00):

Thank you for being here. We went over the questions already, but also feel free to kind of pause and read through again since I did not give them to you at the beginning or before we met. But yeah. Were you impacted by any glacial lake outburst flooding before 2024?

INTERVIEWEE(00:00:35):

Personally, no. I had some awareness of the flooding in 2022 and '23, but I wouldn't say I was impacted by it. Let me give a little bit of background.

INTERVIEWEE(00:01:00):

I was born in Alaska in the early 1970s. I've lived in this community for a significant portion of my life. I'd been looking for a home for a while, and a few years ago I bought this house. I've been around, I'd like to think I know a thing or two, and I was really happy to find my house in a spot I thought was fairly low risk. It's not in an avalanche zone. It's not in a landslide zone. It's a thousand feet away from the river; I thought that's a pretty respectful distance. I kind of went out on a limb financially to buy this house. It was a bit of a stretch with the Juneau market. It was more than I wanted to pay, but it seemed like the right thing to do.

INTERVIEWEE(00:02:11):

I have a teenage child who spends half of their time with me. I wanted them to have a good home and I thought I could carry that risk at least until <they> left home. And then if necessary, if it was too much financial risk, I could get out of it after that time period. And we'd have a nice home for basically the remainder of his childhood. So that was kind of my approach. Getting into the house, I've been around Alaska and the environment enough to know I didn't want to be in a risky place, and I thought I was making a decent decision in that regard. When I was a kid growing up in Alaska, my dad often said, expect the unexpected. I failed with this one to expect the unexpected – that's on me – but I didn't see this exact circumstance coming. So the 2024 flood, in hindsight, I should have been better prepared for it. I've been telling people my imagination failed me; I didn't see the severity of flood coming. And I guess I'm not alone. I guess

INTERVIEWEE(00:04:01):

a lot of us didn't see that coming. So before 2024, no personal impacts. The '23 flood. My child was with me then, and we were riding our bikes around and looking at things and going, oh gosh, the low lying houses are getting flooded. And some of the bank erosion that was tipping houses into the river was just stunning. But what I took away from that 2023 flood was, man, it's risky to be in a low-lying spot and it's risky to be right next to the river where you've got to worry about that erosion. And I started thinking like, geez, if it's eroding 50 or a hundred feet a year, maybe a thousand feet wasn't far enough

INTERVIEWEE(00:04:52):

in terms of erosion. But I also thought the flood level would have to come up a tremendous amount to get me. And even after watching those flood level rises over the years, I still didn't imagine major flooding in my neighborhood. They talked about the flood level of 12 or 15 feet, and it was like, well, there's not any water in sight of my neighborhood, so it'd have to come up a lot more to get me. We can move on to question number two. So in 2024, I don't remember too much about the beginning of the flood. I remember an awareness that the basin was releasing,

INTERVIEWEE(00:06:10):

the river level was coming up. Those of us in the neighborhood had some concern about it just because it's this big natural event happening. I remember at the end of the workday, I was really glad to get home and again, went around the neighborhoods nearest the river monitoring the situation. I remember the forecast was for the flood to be nine inches higher than the previous year. And I thought we should be fine. Didn't have any water anywhere near us in '23; 9 inches higher... they'd have to be way off on their estimate for it to get us. It would have to come up at least several feet, even to show up in the ditches; it would have to come up half a dozen feet to get the house wet. I thought worst case scenario, maybe the yard might get wet, maybe the garage floor might get wet. But that's significantly more water height than they're predicting. They're predicting nine inches. And I thought, Eh, I should be fine. I remember I was picking up stuff in the yard and just kind of tidying up and making sure nothing important would wash away or get damaged from being out in the yard and having the water not only appear in the ditches, which it hadn't the previous year, but come up out of the ditches and come across the yard. I thought I'd better take that precaution.

INTERVIEWEE(00:08:16):

Something I'd done the previous year was roam around a little bit periodically and check on the neighborhoods and just see what's going on, trying to calculate the impact and the risk and whatnot. And so the evening of the 2024 flood, I guess that would've been

August 5th, I was kind of doing the same thing, hopping on the bike now and again, riding around, and the river was ripping, but I still failed to imagine how it ultimately acted. I was worried about the timing. They were predicting the peak to be something like three or four in the morning, and then they changed it to 1:00 or 1:30. And that evening my child was staying at their other parent's home, which is very close by in the same neighborhood. And I was trying to remain alert and check on things and wasn't super concerned about anything.

INTERVIEWER(00:09:46):

Were they closer to the river or further from

INTERVIEWEE(00:09:48):

Further from the river, thankfully. I was watching the river gauge too, the National Weather Service Mendenhall River Gauge, and it got to be about 1:00-ish. I thought maybe it was about to peak.

INTERVIEWER(00:10:21):

We went to bed whenever they forecasted that and then woke up to it way higher.

INTERVIEWEE(00:10:26):

In '23, I didn't go to sleep until after the flood crested and the river gauge started to go down. And I had that on my mind again in '24. And probably somewhere around one o'clock I put on an aviation video and started dozing, catnapping. And I'd wake up and the video would be a couple minutes further along or whatever, and I'd check the flood gauge online, and I'd fall asleep again, and then I'd wake up and the video would be a couple minutes further along. And then suddenly I woke up and I thought I heard a tremendous amount of rain and water running off the roof. And I thought back to the '23 flood where, a day after the flood, we had this impressive rainfall, this sudden downpour, a day after the flood. I thought, God, that's a coincidence: We're having another downpour

INTERVIEWEE(00:11:32):

right close to the flood. And then I thought, what if that's not rainfall? And I got up and walked to the dining room where there's a big sliding glass window, and I looked out on the porch expecting to see hard rainfall on the porch, and instead the backyard was full of water. And it was just, that just shocked me. I would guess it was at least a foot deep in the backyard. I grabbed my cell phone and called my kid's mom, woke her up, and I told them, Hey, it is flooding. Do what you need to do to get out of here and stay safe. [That was at 2:07 am.] I'd had a go-bag ready. I didn't think I was going to need it, but I'd

had a go-bag ready and I had kind of this mental list of things to throw in the car if I started getting concerned about flooding;

INTERVIEWEE(00:12:50):

I had thought I'd have a half hour or maybe an hour to get out of the neighborhood. I'm going to go off on a tangent. Earlier that evening we'd, we'd been walking around Killewich and there were city crews out passing out flyers about flood danger. And it was interesting because, looking at the streets on that flyer, I was like, oh, that's odd, my street isn't listed, but these other streets nearby are. So in the middle of the night, I was kind of just in shock that suddenly I went from thinking, the water level is going to have to come up half a dozen feet to have a big negative impact on me, to suddenly, Oh, it's happening. Tried to throw a few more things in my go-bag. It was like, this is happening. Took a minute or two to put some valuable stuff up high. I looked out the front door at the car, and water was up to the top of the tires, so driving away wasn't an option. Neighborhood lights were all on. I could hear people screaming. I wasn't sure how much time I had in the house.

INTERVIEWEE(00:14:33):

I had my waders in the garage and I opened up the door and looked into the garage and water a foot deep was flowing through the garage. And I thought, well, probably not worth trying to get the waders. And I started thinking, well, what do I do here? One thought was to get in the skiff, which was on a trailer in the yard. But I didn't have the skiff ready to go. And one thought was, grab the go-bag, grab a sleeping bag, grab a ladder, go out and put the ladder against the outside of the house and climb up on the roof. I didn't know how high the water was going to come.

INTERVIEWEE(00:15:12):

Another thought was climb up on a countertop, but I thought, I don't want to get trapped in the house if the water's coming up. I was working through, okay, Plan A, let my family know they need to clear out Plan B; grab a little extra stuff; Plan C, can I hang out in the house or is that too risky? Plan D, do I climb up on the roof and hope the house doesn't wash away and I'm safe up there? And this is just in the space a couple minutes.

INTERVIEWEE(00:16:01):

And then something happened which just absolutely blew my mind and made me think for a moment that I was in a nightmare rather than in real life. Much of the house was carpeted and the carpeting started to lift up off the floor. There wasn't yet water coming into the house, but the carpeting started to just bubble up in big six- or eight-foot diameter bubbles. And so I was walking on carpet that was bubbling up around me, and when I'd walk on it, my foot would just go right down. There wasn't water pressure

underneath it or anything. I thought, I've never heard of anything like this; I thought, this has to be a nightmare because I can't even conceive of this.

INTERVIEWER(00:17:01):

Surreal, totally surreal.

INTERVIEWEE(00:17:03):

Looked outside again, the water was maybe two inches from the threshold of the door, just about at floor level. There were a couple of trucks trying to leave the neighborhood, and I thought, maybe I can catch a ride with one of them. And this wasn't the smartest decision I've ever made but I stepped into the water

INTERVIEWEE(00:17:36):

And wasn't able to catch the trucks leaving the neighborhood just then. So then I'm in the water and thinking, well, now what do I do? Do I go back into the house and through this same thought cycle of do I climb up on top of counter? Do I try to break up into the attic and then break out of the attic and get onto my roof? What are my options here? And I was in the water, it was shockingly cold, and I thought, well, I'm in the water, I'm wet already. I'm going to go over towards my kid's other house and I'll reconnect with family, and we'll figure things out from there. And started walking across the yard. I had a flashlight with me, but something I quickly discovered, a flashlight in your hand when you're wading through glacial and silty water doesn't show you what's underfoot. I probably didn't go 20 feet before I fell down.

INTERVIEWER(00:18:46):

Oh, that's scary.

INTERVIEWEE(00:18:47):

Tripped and fell down. I don't think I went completely underwater, but I went pretty close -- mouth and nose underwater kind of thing. Got back up, soaking wet and thought, Well, keep walking. I thought if the water keeps coming up, I can go to one of the nearby two-story houses, or I can climb a tree or something.

INTERVIEWER(00:19:11):

Did you have any kind of life jacket or anything on?

INTERVIEWEE(00:19:13):

No, those were in the garage. I didn't have them in the house. So I kept walking, walked down the street, kept tripping over things and falling down. I only had a thousand feet to go, but I tripped and fell three or four times.

INTERVIEWER(00:19:31):

Yeah, I've tried to walk around in glacial water. We used to have a little bridge that would go across our yard. In hindsight, we should have realized that the floods were getting worse. After we bought our house in 2017, there was this little bridge that would go across the swampy part to get over to the riverbank, and it started floating off of its foundations. The first year we got it, we thought it was just bad quality construction, which it was, but it also was, there was water coming in where it hadn't before. So there were a couple of seasons where I tried to use ratchet straps and stuff to secure

INTERVIEWEE(00:20:03):

It, to secure it down.

INTERVIEWER(00:20:04):

But you had to wait until it would float to then be able to get it into a position. And then I've never had such a lengthy time to rewarm my legs up as just 10 minutes in that

INTERVIEWEE(00:20:17):

Water. Yeah, it's

INTERVIEWER(00:20:20):

Crazy.

INTERVIEWEE(00:20:20):

It's crazy cold.

INTERVIEWER(00:20:22):

And it makes it really hard. You lose feeling in your feet and then you can't do normal walking and then when the water's moving. Yeah, so I have a little inkling of what you're talking about. It's really scary.

INTERVIEWEE(00:20:34):

There wasn't a tremendous amount of flow in the water. When I was looking out of the house debating that first step in the water, there were things moving.

INTERVIEWER(00:20:51):

Lack of clarity is also super disorienting.

INTERVIEWEE(00:20:56):

So I walked down the road and just had a couple of turns to make to try to get over to my kid's mom's house. Got onto Sharon Street, another truck went by me. I could see

up ahead to my family on Julep and saw their taillights driving away, which gave me mixed emotions because on one hand I was very glad that they were getting away from it. On the other hand, it was like, well, there went Plan F.

INTERVIEWEE(00:21:43):

And then one of my neighbors was driving by in a truck and he stopped and picked me up and asked me where I wanted to go. And I said, well, I guess Floyd Dryden shelter.

INTERVIEWEE(00:22:05):

And he drove me over there and dropped me off there. The Red Cross had the shelter set up. I remember looking through the glass doors as I was starting to walk inside, and I was so relieved to see my ex-wife and my child there just ahead of me. So at the shelter, they had a check-in, there were maybe three or four people ahead of me. And I was standing in line waiting to check in, and my ex and child checked in at the hotel register, so to speak, there in the hallway. And then I was able to check in and I don't even remember what basic questions they were asking me, but I was drenched and just super cold. And I remember there was a conversation about clothes. I might've asked them if they had any clothes. My go-bag in hindsight should have been a waterproof dry bag, but I wasn't anticipating wading through water and falling down in the water. Everything in my go-bag was soaked. And they didn't have any dry clothes at the shelter.

INTERVIEWER(00:23:45):

They didn't.

INTERVIEWEE(00:23:46):

They did not. Which I found somewhat disappointing in the moment.

INTERVIEWER(00:23:54):

And I suppose they frown on it if you're not wearing any,

INTERVIEWEE(00:23:58):

One of the guys there

INTERVIEWER(00:24:00):

Toga blankets?

INTERVIEWEE(00:24:02):

One of the guys there disappeared and then came back a minute later wearing gym clothes and handed me the clothes that he'd been wearing. And I will always remember that somebody literally gave me their clothes.

INTERVIEWER(00:24:16):

That's really nice.

INTERVIEWEE(00:24:18):

They gave us a couple of blankets, gave us cots in a room, and my family members and I went to our classroom and I went to the restroom and changed out of my sopping wet clothes into the stranger's clothes, and then I tried to get warm. I don't feel like I got warm until the next day.

INTERVIEWEE(00:24:48):

We were all, I think in mental shock and I was super cold. And that was a very long, long short night. It just seemed to kind of go by super slowly as we waited to hear what was next. I remember morning came, it was getting light outside and there was all this uncertainty about what was going to be next.

We started to get word that the flood water was receding and that we'd at some point get clearance to go back into the neighborhood.

INTERVIEWEE(00:26:11):

I don't know what time we left the shelter, maybe it was nine o'clock. Drove over to Fred Meyers and bought some footwear and some clothes that were dry. And then I think it was about 10 o'clock we got clearance to go back in the neighborhood. At the corner of Riverside and Sharon, there was an AEL&P truck and some guys that I knew, and they were starting the process of turning power back on. And I talked with them a little bit about when to go back in. The water seemed like it was low enough that I could start walking back in. They said they'd keep their eye out for me and I walked back down the roads to my house.

INTERVIEWER(00:27:28):

How deep was the water when you were walking out of your street relative to you?

INTERVIEWEE(00:27:38):

Mid thigh, crotch level? Lights were all on in the houses around me. It was really surreal and I was thinking, boy, I don't know if this is a good idea to be walking in the water, considering that there's still power to the neighborhood, but I was already in it at that point and I was like, well, I guess I just keep on going. When I came back into the neighborhood, the water was maybe like, eight inches deep or something like that. And

during the flood the night before, one of the first thoughts was to get in the car and drive away, I guess that was plan A, originally, load stuff up into the car and drive away, if there been time. I had assumed I would have a little bit of time,

INTERVIEWEE(00:28:33):

but that the first time I looked out the front side of the house at the car, the water was already up at the top of the wheels, so that hadn't been an option. So [on Wednesday morning] I'm walking back in to the house, it was, okay, well there's the car; water had come up about to the top of the hood. I walked back in the house, and opened up the front door, and the tile in the entryway was all covered with a layer of silt,

INTERVIEWEE(00:29:03):

maybe a 16th of an inch deep. And you could tell stuff had floated around and shifted positions. I'd just replaced the floor in the kitchen and dining room earlier that year, put down new flooring. I remember walking into the house and seeing what looked like the newest shiniest flooring in the dining room and kitchen, like the shiniest gray flooring you'll ever see, because it was silt just absolutely perfectly smooth, glistening, still wet. I didn't even know what to do at that point. Wandered around for a second, took a few pictures, and it seemed like it wasn't but a few minutes before friends started showing up, friends and coworkers, and we started making plans to salvage everything we could out of the house and get it into various garages and storage units around town.

INTERVIEWEE(00:30:15):

So we started packing things up. A group of people came over and we started packing things up and moving out, basically. And this is I think the most fantastic joyous part of this whole flood: the support of all the people who came and helped. Some of them were close friends, some were colleagues, some were acquaintances or friends of friends. Some were complete strangers. But we got almost everything moved out that first day. And a close colleague of mine and his wife came over and we ripped out all the carpet and carpet pad that evening,

INTERVIEWER(00:31:14):

And I didn't look, but did you have flood insurance before this flood?

INTERVIEWEE(00:31:20):

No, it was on my mind that if this keeps getting worse, I'll need to buy it. But I hadn't yet gone down that road. I remember when I bought the house, it wasn't in the floodplain and I didn't need flood insurance. And after the '23 flood I started thinking, maybe I should get that. And I thought, well, we'll see how this '24 flood goes.

INTERVIEWEE(00:32:03):

So I started deconstruction. And over the next couple of weeks, I tried to keep track of who came over and helped, but some people I never did get their names. I remember one day working on the house, during those first days after the flood, had a bunch of people in the house helping out. Somebody knocked at the door, one of the other friends went over to the front door and they came back me and said, Hey, there's two carpenters at the front door; they want to know what they can do to help.

INTERVIEWEE(00:32:44):

I went over and met them, said, I don't really know, but this is where we're at. And they said, "Do the cabinets need to come out?" I said, "Yep." "Okay, we're on it." And in the space of half an hour, they'd ripped out the cabinets in the house. And then they said, okay, we're moving on. And another group of people came in after them and did cleanup after them. And then they were on down the street, just going house to house, helping people out. People were bringing by water, plastic bags, food, sandwiches and meals. And it was overwhelming a little bit about how much traffic was on the street,

INTERVIEWEE(00:33:31):

how many cars were on the street, and how little parking there was. But it was wonderful how many people were trying to help out and coming through and handing out fans and dehumidifiers and trash bags and more trash bags. The press came through a bit. My neighbors and I talked a little bit about our different experiences. My neighbors and I, looking around, would be like, "Geez, it looks like a fricking disaster. Oh, it IS a disaster." It was amazing in those weeks after the flood, to literally have a hundred people come and help on the deconstruction and that first phase of recovery. Another mistake I'd made in the night of the flood, which I didn't realize until afterwards, but when I made the decision to step into the water, I often wear Carhartt carpenter pants and I have a habit of keeping my cell phone in my side tool pocket on my leg.

INTERVIEWER(00:34:43):

I was going to ask you if you lost your cell phone.

INTERVIEWEE(00:34:46):

So the cell phone died,

INTERVIEWER(00:34:47):

which makes everything a lot harder,

INTERVIEWEE(00:34:49):

which made the logistics terribly complicated. And then I was trying to use friends or other people's borrowed phones. One thing I really struggled with in those days after the

flood too, was the logistics -- when they started talking about disaster assistance, like state disaster assistance, a lot of that was electronic or you needed email and phone calls. And it was really hard having hand-me-down phones or a flip-phone for a while.

INTERVIEWER(00:35:23):

We were just full blackout this year after the flood because of the back loop bridge fiber optic, they cut. We didn't realize it was going to cut all landline cell phone and wifi access. And it was quite complicated to try to figure out how to do all this stuff.

INTERVIEWEE(00:35:41):

On one hand it's like: okay, the basics, that is what it is. But then to operate in this modern world

INTERVIEWER(00:35:56):

It adds this whole other layer, where you're like, oh, I thought I had three years in. For us. I thought I had anticipated what we were going to be experiencing, for the most part. That was a new one.

INTERVIEWEE(00:36:12):

So another aspect of this, in the first couple days after the flood, I remember we started hearing National Guard or DOT or somebody's going to be bringing a dump truck by and picking up trash. And so we were all setting our garbage out at the so-called curb. And that just kept stacking up. And I remember -- I think the flood happened on a Tuesday night, Wednesday morning -- and then towards the end of the week, the neighborhood was starting to stink, just from all the debris and all the stuff stacked out of the curbs. And I remember it was a great relief when the heavy equipment started coming in, a front-end loader and a dump truck. And they started at the far end of the street. It is not a very long street, maybe it's a thousand feet or something like that. And it took them, I think a day to go from the far end of the street to where I'm at.

INTERVIEWER(00:37:29):

So much stuff.

INTERVIEWEE(00:37:31):

And then they eventually brought in a second crew. They were really working. And it was so nice to see all the waste just being dealt with. That was another great relief to not have to deal with it ourselves because it was all just overwhelming. It was all we could do to get stuff out of the house.

INTERVIEWER(00:38:00):

How high up did the water go inside your main area?

INTERVIEWEE(00:38:05):

In the main area, something more than a foot;

INTERVIEWER(00:38:07):

And you have a single story house, or a two story?

INTERVIEWEE(00:38:09):

in the garage, it was about three feet deep. A funny little story, the Red Cross came through and they were doing inventory on damages, going from house to house. And on Friday, they got to me and I met them out in the yard. And they were asking me the usual questions about did the kitchen flood, did the bedrooms flood, and did this flood and that flood. And the gal just had her head down going through a questionnaire and she asked, did anything else in the house flood? And I was like, the whole house flooded, the entire house. And she looked up and I think it was just then that she realized it was a one story and it was the entire house. There was no second story of safety to move stuff into.

INTERVIEWEE(00:39:17):

What else was I going to say? Oh, the other discovery we made in those days after the flood, so this was an odd one. There was a big puddle not too far from the entryway of my door. The floodwater receded those last few inches, but the puddle remained. Walking past it all the time, I could tell that every now and again, a little bit more of the sidewall of the puddle would slough down. And at one point I stuck a shovel down in there and I couldn't hit bottom. I could put the shovel head in there far enough to reach resistance. The top was water, but down four feet or so, it was just like a slurry of water and sand, and I couldn't hit the bottom.

INTERVIEWER(00:40:42):

This was just in your yard?

INTERVIEWEE(00:40:44):

Just in the yard right near the entryway, basically where everybody's been walking. Right next to the house. So I was like, God, there's this weird sinkhole thing right here.

INTERVIEWER(00:40:58):

Right near your foundation.

INTERVIEWEE(00:41:01):

When we first walked in, the yard was squishy, the soil was saturated. Even walking down the road, it just felt like the whole area had kind of turned to almost like a solution. It's like everything was soggy. And the trucks, the heavy equipment driving down the road, you can tell the ground underneath the asphalt was squishing and they were breaking the asphalt up as they were driving around on the supersaturated Valley sand. But that hole became more and more exposed

INTERVIEWEE(00:41:56):

and then I was able to poke around there more with the shovel, and I could feel down the foundation and I could feel the footer and I could feel a hole underneath the footer. And then as that dried out over the next days, eventually I could see that water had flowed through the soil, and that's how it had flooded into the crawlspace. Basically, it went through the soil and underneath the footer and back up into the crawlspace. The crawlspace had been at some point spray-foamed with insulation to keep it warmer. And in hindsight, the best I could tell was that spray-foam had kind of waterproofed the entire crawl space from the inside.

INTERVIEWER(00:43:00):

Foam was on the concrete itself.

INTERVIEWEE(00:43:02):

Foam was on the inside, on the concrete and on the rim joist. And that's a recommended way to do things; make your crawl space a conditioned space and your pipes won't freeze.

INTERVIEWER(00:43:15):

We are thinking about spray foaming the concrete part because we're not putting any more insulation under the floor.

INTERVIEWEE(00:43:21):

Yeah. And this way you don't have to insulate under the floor because you are making a warm crawlspace.

INTERVIEWER(00:43:27):

So did you already not have insulation under the floor?

INTERVIEWEE(00:43:29):

I didn't have insulation under the floor. I had the insulated walls, insulated crawlspace walls.

INTERVIEWER(00:43:35):

Nice. Not to have to take it out.

INTERVIEWEE(00:43:36):

I didn't have to take that out. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER(00:43:39):

Does it seem like the stuff where the spray-foam is on joist? Is that wood doing okay?

INTERVIEWEE(00:43:46):

This is a long tangent.

INTERVIEWEE(00:43:50):

Okay, spray-foam insulated concrete foundation and rim joists, on the inside, that was all insulated. On top, a lot of the floor was tile or carpet. And the pad underneath the carpet was one of those pet-resistant type carpet pads where it's got a solid surface, and the seams of that were taped. As best I can tell, in hindsight, what happened was I had three feet of water outside the house and that pressure difference between the water outside the house and the crawl space – in that super-saturated Valley soil – the soil underneath my foundation failed and water rushed from the yard into the crawl space. And then the carpet pad had a watertight layer on it that was trapping air. And so as the crawlspace flooded, the rush of water was compressing the air in the crawlspace, and that was what was blowing the carpet up.

INTERVIEWER(00:45:30):

That's a lot of force.

INTERVIEWEE(00:45:33):

Yeah. When I had been cleaning the yard the night before. I had left a couple of five-gallon buckets in the front yard. They were a distinctive green color. And as I was showing a friend, a couple of days later, the hole that had been created underneath the foundation, and poking around there with a shovel, I hooked onto something and what I drug out was a five-gallon bucket that had been flattened. It was squished flat as the water tried to force it around my footer. So the force of the incoming water was strong enough to crush a five-gallon bucket as it was trying to wrap around the footer. I had had in the yard a bunch of distinctive rocks that I had picked up over the years, and shells and whatnot,

INTERVIEWEE(00:46:30):

and I'm still finding those in my crawlspace. The other day I found in the crawlspace a three-pound rock from the yard that was probably 20 feet from the hole, but that's the

force that the water had when it went through the soil underneath my house. That's something worth looking into in the future, with the HESCO barriers or the idea of a levee or whatnot: it's not just what's above the ground that matters, but it's also what's under the ground – because this sandy silty gravelly soil is not stable enough to resist the force of water in a massive flood. So that's had me nervous about different approaches to short-term and long-term mitigation.

INTERVIEWER(00:47:17):

I think that's what got the Army Corps nervous enough, they don't want to put HESCO on View Drive.

INTERVIEWEE(00:47:25):

Yeah. Yeah. And I forgot you had a question and I was going to come back to it.

INTERVIEWER(00:47:34):

Oh, I was just curious if your joists are doing fine, the wood material, if that seems like it's able to dry out with the spray foam on it.

INTERVIEWEE(00:47:40):

It was a lot of work. There were a couple different groups around town. Red Cross was helpful. They gave us money to buy supplies and they gave us, I can't remember, they gave us fans and dehumidifiers or whatnot. There was another group in town...

INTERVIEWER(00:48:01):

United Way?

INTERVIEWEE(00:48:01):

No, I recall that they were here, but there was a third organization, [Team Rubicon], and they brought in volunteers from around the state and potentially around the country to provide labor. And I had a crew of them come and help work on the crawlspace, and we had to chip a lot of, spray-foam. A group of four of them spent three days in a crawlspace chipping out spray-foam

INTERVIEWEE(00:48:35):

to expose the wood so that the wood could dry. And that was a stunning amount of work that they contributed, sweating down there. I cut a hole through the floor right inside the front door so that they could pass stuff up and out more easily. And they were down there all day and at the end of the day they said, we have to ask permission to do this, it's not automatic, but we're going to ask if we can come back tomorrow and keep working tomorrow. And on the end of the second day, they said, we're not done yet,

we're going to ask permission to come back for a third day. But four of them spent three days in the crawlspace chipping out spray-foam.

INTERVIEWER(00:49:25):

That's huge.

INTERVIEWEE(00:49:27):

So that's a downside to spray-foam. It's really hard to remove,

INTERVIEWER(00:49:31):

But you kept it on your concrete, right?

INTERVIEWEE(00:49:34):

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER(00:49:34):

Nice.

INTERVIEWEE(00:49:38):

And then in the weeks after that, a series of friends loaned me vehicles. My ex's place nearby, the water had come up into her garage

INTERVIEWER(00:49:53):

Really?

INTERVIEWEE(00:49:54):

but it didn't get the sheet rock, it didn't get the living spaces, so they were able to keep living there. We came within inches of my kid losing both of his homes, but luckily that house stayed dry. So I stayed with them a few weeks and then started house-sitting for other friends who were out of town, and had a series of different vehicles that people loaned me, trying to figure out my own transportation again.

INTERVIEWER(00:50:26):

Did you have comprehensive and collision insurance?

INTERVIEWEE(00:50:29): I did a good job of having my vehicle insured.

INTERVIEWER(00:50:32):

So they totaled it for you when you got, that was a sad thing to hear about people who had older vehicles that didn't have comprehensive, who lost that

INTERVIEWEE(00:50:43):

Yeah,

INTERVIEWER(00:50:45):

It's hard enough when you just have to figure out with the wad of cash what to do. But when you don't have any payout and you lose it, it's just in the middle of summer too.

INTERVIEWEE(00:50:56):

In hindsight, I would've flip flopped the approach I took on the house and the car. But that's in hindsight.

INTERVIEWER(00:51:09):

It's hard to imagine it happening until it happens.

INTERVIEWEE(00:51:13):

I thought really, honestly, I thought it's going to have to be so much worse to come up in the ditches here, and it's going to have to be unimaginably worse to come up over the yard and get the garage wet and the house is a couple feet above the garage. Something I think that is not well understood – and this is something that I wish people would know – is that what the National Weather Service calls the Mendenhall River flood gauge is located on Mendenhall Lake north of Skater's Cabin. If you think about the broad surface area of Mendenhall Lake, I don't know what the surface area is, but if you take a lake and you raise the level of that lake afoot, the outflow river is going to act much, much differently. The gauge isn't telling us that the RIVER is going to be nine inches higher.

INTERVIEWEE(00:52:35):

Their forecast is telling us that the lake is going to be higher; but the river might be feet higher than the lake. And that was something I didn't understand until suddenly this flood brought it home.

INTERVIEWER(00:52:48):

Even that's a moving target because the dynamics change.

INTERVIEWEE(00:52:52):

And that's another thing, that the river acts a little differently each year.

INTERVIEWER(00:52:57):

It's pretty reliable for my neighbors who are on the lake side of view drive, because they're just a straight shot almost.

INTERVIEWEE(00:53:04):

Yeah. Gotcha.

INTERVIEWER(00:53:05):

'23, '24, '25, their depth on that side of View drive changed commensurate to how much that gauge changed. Six inches higher. It was six inches higher for them. The other side of View Drive that we are on is not like that.

INTERVIEWEE(00:53:21):

Yep. That's not linear.

INTERVIEWER(00:53:22):

We actually had less in '24 than in '23. And then we had a lot more this year probably because of a mixture of the HESCO and the Mendenhall bridge. So it's just changes. It's like even for an individual home, you can't really guess because then for you downstream further it's scouring, but there's also,

INTERVIEWEE(00:53:44):

Or not.

INTERVIEWER(00:53:44):

There's no dredging happening where it enters the ocean. So I don't know how all of that.

INTERVIEWEE(00:53:50):

Something I've been trying to educate every person I talk to about flooding is, hey, be mindful of where the Mendenhall River flood gauge is. Because it's on the lake. And when they talk about water level being a foot higher than the year before, or nine inches or whatever, that may not hold true for the Mendenhall River near you. And then the other thing I hadn't thought about until after the '24 flood was, there's a big hard bend in the river near Killewich and Melvin Park upstream from me. And I had not thought about the river jumping the riverbank and coming down Riverside. One of my neighbors that night, after he got his family out, he came back in and got in his flat-bottom boat with an outboard with a prop on it. And he was driving his prop boat around the neighborhood trying to help people out. And he said Riverside looked like a river. And if I recall correctly, he picked up a couple people that were on the roof of their car

INTERVIEWER(00:55:09):

Really?

INTERVIEWEE(00:55:09):

On Riverside.

INTERVIEWER(00:55:10):

Geez.

INTERVIEWEE(00:55:11):

If you go online, you can grab data, not just on the quote unquote “height of the flood water” at the lake gauge, but you can also look at the calculated river flow, like the cubic feet per second. And it's stunning to see how for decades, a big flood on the Mendenhall was maybe like 15,000 cubic feet per second,

INTERVIEWEE(00:55:48):

or something under 20,000 cubic feet per second. And then all of a sudden in '23, it jumped up to 30 some thousand cubic feet per second. In '24, It was like 42,000 cubic feet per second. And in '25, like 52,000 cubic feet per second. And you watch the rise and it's kind of a squiggly line for decades, and then all of a sudden it's just going up astronomically. And that makes me really fearful about the future, with the flow, the forces getting stronger and stronger at a very significant rate each year. And that makes me worry about, what this is going to be like in the years ahead?

INTERVIEWER(00:56:42):

In 2025, did you stay in your home or did you evacuate ahead of time?

INTERVIEWEE(00:56:47):

No. This is my little joke after the 2024 flood: That evening before the flood, as I was walking around the yard thinking about things to do, I thought maybe I should tie the canoe to the porch, maybe I should put the gas can in the boat and grab the life jackets. I was standing in the yard thinking about that, and I thought, no, that's crazy talk, that's paranoia, there's no way I would need to get into the boat in middle of the night and boat away from the house. And then later in the middle of the night when it was flooding, I was trying to think, where's the drain plug to the boat? And oh, the gas can is in the shed. And where are the canoe paddles?

INTERVIEWEE(00:57:45):

And it was such a shock to realize my absolutely nightmarish dream scenario that I didn't feel was worth treating as valid and preparing for, of having to boat away from my house – suddenly in the middle of that night, I was wishing I could. A couple days after the flood, I was talking to a buddy and I said, God, next year I'm putting the drain plug in the boat, I'm putting the gas can in the boat, I'm getting the life jackets out, I'm tying the

canoe to the porch and I'm going to be ready. And then I said, Actually, the hell with that: next year I'm going to be five miles away.

INTERVIEWER(00:58:29):

Yeah, we were out town helping our friend in Sitka tender salmon when it happened in '23. So we hadn't really seen it. So then in '24 we stayed in our house thinking, okay, we've got all these contingency plans, we might as well just stay. We have a second story,

INTERVIEWER(00:58:48):

We have a generator, then we can kind of monitor the situation and take plenty of photos for flood insurance. And if it's not a very big flood, maybe keep the water out, whatever. And it was just astounding the feeling you get to, and we're maritime people. I had an actual survival suit. We both have the actual nicest Mustang inflatable CO2 vests. We have Mustang suits, not survival suit. We had all that stuff. And I was realizing as it got higher and higher, I was realizing, huh, and we have a Whaler, a 17-foot Whaler, whatever, but it's like realistically, what are we planning to do with this Whaler? View Drive goes like this. So you kind of have to try to maneuver through the trees, but the way our neighbors are, we either have to intentionally go to the actual river, which is stupid

INTERVIEWEE(00:59:54):

Because all the forest...

INTERVIEWER(00:59:55):

Or we have to somehow kind of just bumper-boat off of pieces of the road because there's just a lot of up and down. Like, functionally...And there is parts of View Drive that have never gotten wet yet. So then what? We're just going to stand on the asphalt next to our boat until the water gets high? What are we thinking we are gonna do here?

INTERVIEWEE(01:00:14):

Just like me thinking, do I go up on the roof and just hope?

INTERVIEWER(01:00:17):

... So then I'm laying there in bed. What was I really thinking? If the river gets high enough that it starts to compromise the entire structure, how much time am I anticipating I have

INTERVIEWER(01:00:33):

to get my two cats and my partner and I out somehow off the second story. Somebody was mentioning like, oh, you got this time between when the windows start to break... But I was literally, because our bedroom is over, just the way that the house may or may not kick out if it was going to fully go.

INTERVIEWER(01:00:56):

I mean, those things do actually go pretty fast as we saw in that video in '23. So I was just like, I don't know what planet I was on when I made this plan. Because I just hadn't seen. And one side of the house is almost no current, the

INTERVIEWER(01:01:12):

Middle of View Drive, but then the side, that's the river side,

INTERVIEWEE(01:01:15):

You've got actual current.

INTERVIEWER(01:01:17):

I was like, there's no way I'm getting in that water. And it's like a lot of force, but also not a lot at the same time you were describing. But there's all these little eddies and we just have natural stuff. It's not like even a path you could walk on the river side. And anyway, we were just watching the ground was moving fast, so I took some videos of it. You could see there was also oil on the water. You could see, see it

INTERVIEWEE(01:01:41):

I could smell Diesel that night. I never saw it. But yeah, as I was walking away from the house. I could smell Diesel that night.

INTERVIEWER(01:01:48):

But yeah, it was just like, oh, okay, I thought we had a plan for this. But then we were like, well, we weren't going to pump water out anyway, so this year we just left.

INTERVIEWEE(01:02:00):

So in '25 on one hand I wanted to have an awareness of what was going on, but on the other hand, I could not bear the thought of having to try to get away from another flood. And I thought, no, I just need to be away and safe.

INTERVIEWER(01:02:21):

And something I have asked some people is, most people who have invested in flood fighting, nine out of 10 of those types of things require a person to be there, active. And so that's just the safety risk that the City, there's one thing of course, people can

cognitively say they understand the risks of being there, especially with the HESCO. It's not a good idea to get on the HESCO, that sort of thing. But the reality is that a certain number of people are

INTERVIEWER(01:02:54):

trying to keep the water out of their house and you can't do it if you leave. So it actually is a choice of do you want to have a chance that your house doesn't get damaged this year or are you leaving?

INTERVIEWEE(01:03:07):

It's like if there was a forest fire in the area, you'd have the same choice. Do you get the hell out or do you stay and get the hoses out and try to fight it and protect your structure? But that means you need to be there, which means that your life is potentially at much greater risk and it's a terrifying choice. In 2025, I didn't sleep at all that night.

INTERVIEWER(01:03:33):

We didn't either. I was like, oh, it'll be relaxing. It just, won't be there. It'll be fine. It was not relaxing.

INTERVIEWEE(01:03:39):

I laid down and tried to sleep and I couldn't. And there was just that stress about like, God, okay, the HESCO barriers seem to be keeping most of the water back, but the water level's getting pretty dang close to the top. And it's seeping through in some places. And

INTERVIEWER(01:04:04):

We'll see how well they're able to reinforce it all this spring

INTERVIEWEE(01:04:08):

I'm really worried about

INTERVIEWEE(01:04:11):

the long-term viability of those.

INTERVIEWER(01:04:12):

Seems like they have the full force of the Army Corps of Engineers behind it this year. So

INTERVIEWEE(01:04:14):

Yeah,

INTERVIEWER(01:04:16):

Hopefully...but it's a real threat to life with the changing dynamics. If HESCOs fail in one spot,

INTERVIEWER(01:04:27):

That's what they were warning people. But I don't know if people really understand. I mean, I don't fully understand it. I just am scared of the idea of the flash flood coming from one hole.

INTERVIEWEE(01:04:38):

I didn't have my eyes open [in '24]. I wasn't looking out in the backyard when the water came into our neighborhood, but one of my neighbors said that he was up and awake and moving around and, like me, his plan was not to fall asleep till after the crest had passed, but he did a better job of staying alert. He said he thought he heard a bear in the backyard, and he flipped on the backyard light and looked out, and if I remember his words correctly, he said it looked like a hill of water was coming down into the neighborhood. He could see the slope of water coming down. And it wasn't a bear that he had alerted to. It was water rushing into the neighborhood. Other people talk about a wave of water coming in, flooding the neighborhood fast enough, quickly enough that the wave bounced off of the houses.

INTERVIEWEE(01:05:39):

I didn't see that kind of thing myself, but talking to neighbors, that's the sort of thing that people who had their eyes out in the backyard at that moment that that came in, that's how quickly it happened. I don't know, I don't know how quickly it happened. My guess is that our neighborhood went from dry to flooded in 10 minutes or 15 minutes or something like that. I thought the water would rise up out of the ditches to the west. I didn't anticipate the water coming at us from the northeast. I didn't anticipate it jumping the bank at Killewich and flooding down on us from the northeastern direction.

INTERVIEWER(01:06:25):

And it flooded a bunch of sewer drains too at the same time, I think that year. So you had it coming from under, around you on all sides almost.

INTERVIEWEE(01:06:34):

Yeah. I dunno. Spooky,

INTERVIEWER(01:06:39):

Have you repaired your house to,

INTERVIEWEE(01:06:41):

I don't know what to do.

INTERVIEWER(01:06:47):

Are you living in it right now?

INTERVIEWEE(01:06:48):

I am, yeah. This is a little personal aside, but having an awareness of, disasters are a possibility -- I've always found it really interesting, you'll hear stories about down in hurricane country where they'll get wiped out by a hurricane and then they'll rebuild and then they'll get wiped out by a hurricane.

INTERVIEWER(01:07:17):

You're like, why are you doing that?

INTERVIEWEE(01:07:18):

One of the things I've really struggled with is, how much does one rebuild when one is faced with a recurring threat? How much money do you sink into a house when your dollars may just get washed away next year and

INTERVIEWER(01:07:41):

The National Flood Insurance Program would thank you for that attitude.

INTERVIEWEE(01:07:45):

And the other side of it too is, what's the impact of all that? My child was devastated by all the material being thrown away in those days after the flood, just seeing all that waste, just dump-truck load after dump-truck load of things being thrown away. Why would we rebuild completely if there's some risk that all this might just have to get tossed in the dump next year? And so I don't know where I am on rebuilding. The house is warm and dry, but I have no idea how long it will be before I put flooring in again. I'm living with hand-me-down cabinets from a friend who was doing a kitchen remodel. And I have no idea how long it will be before I remodel my kitchen and invest in cabinets that are new.

INTERVIEWER(01:09:10):

Did you have to get new appliances or did some of them just keep working?

INTERVIEWEE(01:09:14):

I had to get new appliances.

INTERVIEWEE(01:10:07):

Yeah, so I've gotten hand me down stuff

INTERVIEWER(01:10:09):

Basically

INTERVIEWEE(01:10:10):

To get me through and it's been a wonderful thing about this community: an oven, cabinets, furniture...

INTERVIEWER(01:10:22):

Did a lot of your furniture dry out okay or?

INTERVIEWEE(01:10:27):

Thankfully, because

INTERVIEWEE(01:10:29):

I don't have a lot of money and I'm fairly frugal, I didn't have much furniture and

INTERVIEWER(01:10:34):

Beds. Were they high enough that the mattresses didn't get wet?

INTERVIEWEE(01:10:37):

We had built our own bed frames, and thankfully we'd built them high enough that the mattresses stayed dry.

INTERVIEWER(01:10:45):

Yeah, we built ours. So you can put a black and yellow tote underneath.

INTERVIEWEE(01:10:48):

Yeah, exactly. Storage. It's like living on a boat. You've got to use all the space you got. But yeah, luckily a lot of the furniture that I had was stuff that I'd made myself out of solid wood or plywood, or it had been stuff that I'd gotten really cheap, like old dressers or whatever made 50 years ago that were solid wood, that I had put a lot of sweat equity into and refinished. Some of those items, thank God they weren't particle board, because they dried out.

INTERVIEWER(01:11:24):

And did your child lose all the stuff in their bedroom or a lot of their stuff?

INTERVIEWEE(01:11:28):

He lost a tremendous amount of toys and things like that. Books.

INTERVIEWER(01:11:32):

Was that hard for him?

INTERVIEWEE(01:11:33):

A lot of books, which is tough, for both of us. I had some old old Alaska books that my parents had bought 50, 60 years ago that maybe weren't new then, and those were all destroyed and a bunch of hand-me-down kid books that had been in the family for a couple generations. Things like that, the sentimental value is frustrating. And <my child> ill has silty Legos that we are still working on cleaning.

INTERVIEWER(01:12:26):

Sometimes the silt is really tenacious.

INTERVIEWEE(01:12:27):

Oh, it's tremendously.

INTERVIEWER(01:12:29):

You'd think it would just sort rinse off

INTERVIEWEE(01:12:30):

It's almost like it's got a static-cling thing going on or something, yeah.

INTERVIEWER(01:12:34):

It's amazing.

INTERVIEWEE(01:12:38):

But on rebuilding, for coming up on a year and a half I've been in kind of no-man's land or this middle ground of, what do I do when? And I don't know. I've talked with friends of mine, I've got a friend who's a civil engineer, a couple of friends who are contractors or have done a lot of carpentry work, and it's a puzzle to all of us: what to do when. Some neighbors went whole hog right away and were putting sheet rock back in two weeks later.

INTERVIEWER(01:13:07):

We're experimenting with some concrete board...

INTERVIEWEE(01:13:29):

Interesting.

INTERVIEWER(01:13:30):

We're just sort of experimenting because it's pretty cheap.

INTERVIEWER(01:13:33):

...But we are much like you in our attitude toward these repairs because it's like even if you really want to do the finished work and our neighbors that keep doing it every year, it takes over six months of their life and it's a huge, even if you have insurance, inevitably you end up with tens of thousands of dollars of extras that aren't part of the insurance payout...

INTERVIEWEE(01:14:35):

We're like, what's the point of putting interior doors on? Because if you get a cheap door, it's going to come apart in the next flood. Or you could spend a bunch of money and get a solid wood door and it would probably live through the flood, but that's a lot of money.

INTERVIEWER(01:14:56):

And then it's

INTERVIEWER(01:14:57):

Still going to sustain some damage.

INTERVIEWEE(01:15:00):

So yeah, it's like, we've got a shower curtain for the bathroom door, so to speak, and that works for my child and I. But yeah, just all those decisions, and then wondering also what's the validity of flood insurance long term?

INTERVIEWER(01:15:21):

You have it now?

INTERVIEWEE(01:15:21):

I have it now. I have, my insurance agent called me the day after the flood and said, I recommend you get flood insurance. I went and saw him about a week later and I said "so about that retroactive flood insurance," and they gave me a blank look for a moment until I told them I was joking. But I've got it now.

INTERVIEWER(01:15:44):

Who's your insurance company?

INTERVIEWEE(01:15:45):

State Farm. But I got it a week after the flood.

INTERVIEWER(01:15:49):

They're smart enough to not push on the joke in case it

INTERVIEWEE(01:15:53):

Exactly.

INTERVIEWER(01:15:55):

They've been really good to deal with. For us,

INTERVIEWER(01:15:58):

The best we can do is keep the insurance because then I guess we're grandfathered in the lower rates. But yeah, it's not like a super reliable

INTERVIEWEE(01:16:11):

Where I'm at mentally right now is I don't have a lot of trust in anything -- it's like we take for granted that the earth beneath our feet is solid and firm and is going to be there and steady, and then we have an earthquake and we're reminded, oh yeah, things can change.

INTERVIEWEE(01:16:37):

And I feel like in some ways this is very similar in terms of, I had this assumption that I would buy a house and that would be a safe and secure place, and now it's like, oh yeah, just about everything in this world is temporary. And so even though I knew a lot of this stuff as a kid, it really brought home to me personally, what is going to be here tomorrow or next week or next month or next year? My dad was in the '64 earthquake in Anchorage, so growing up I heard lots of stories about earthquakes and I didn't like having things up high on shelves because I didn't want things to fall on my head in an earthquake. And now I have this fear of having things low because they might get flooded.

INTERVIEWER(01:17:38):

We now use this small stepladder to get into our garage freezers because my boyfriend put them up three and a half feet, so you got to go to the freezer.

INTERVIEWEE(01:17:53):

Yeah

INTERVIEWER(01:17:53):

It's a different reality. Different reality. Yeah. Well, and when it comes to this huge amount of financial expense, it sounds like you had a lot of help with the cleanup, but there's still inevitably all this expense. And also it sounds like a lot of decision making expense and financial planning. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about, so

INTERVIEWEE(01:18:12):

We can talk about that.

INTERVIEWER(01:18:13):

How has that affected

INTERVIEWEE(01:18:16):

It's financially... Mentally, the financial situation is just stunningly overwhelming and...I don't have a good idea where I'm at. The house was a stretch; and then to take a huge hit financially, was just mentally devastating.

INTERVIEWEE(01:18:46):

The State Aid program helped out some. That was advertised pretty quickly, and I went down that road with them and they were helpful, which I appreciate. But that was an awkward situation too; the caseworker that I had, I kept having interactions like, this person just does not seem to like their job. It was, from a customer service standpoint, really awkward. And then after some weeks went by, they sent me an email saying, by the way, I'm leaving, I'm taking a different job. So it was like, oh, well, that fits with what I had been sensing. But the State was helpful. FEMA was fabulously

INTERVIEWEE(01:20:06):

helpful. And between the state money and the FEMA money, that probably covers half of the contractor's estimate to put everything back the way it was.

INTERVIEWER(01:20:30):

It sounds like you're kind of making a similar decision to my household where you're like, well, why would I spend out all this money

INTERVIEWER(01:20:38):

If it's maybe just going to get destroyed?

INTERVIEWEE(01:20:40):

Again, in a perfect world, if this was a one-off event,

INTERVIEWEE(01:20:45):

I would've rebuilt immediately, but I don't want to rebuild year after year after year:

INTERVIEWEE(01:20:56):

the stress of those decisions, or making those decisions, and the potential waste, and the fatigue. My approach is basically, spend a minimal amount of money, try to find the sweet spot between what's an acceptable level of comfort and a not-overly-risky expenditure of the limited amount of money that I have. And I don't know where that line is, but I'm perpetually trying to find it. And then ideally when the Corps [USACE] is confident that they have a good fix implemented, rebuild then. Or if we have multiple years of like, "Hey, this seems to be keeping us safe, and now the floods are diminishing," but I don't know when I'll be comfortable with that. It's hard to imagine putting tile back down on the floors anytime soon because that's expensive and that could all have to be ripped up to dry the floor out again.

INTERVIEWER(01:22:17):

Well, and it sounds like you got some assistance for about half the contractor estimates, and so if you did try to make all the repairs, you still have to somehow come up with the other half. And some people are pulling into retirement, pulling into all of their other possible savings. Is that a choice that you decided not to do?

INTERVIEWEE(01:22:34):

Yeah, I didn't have a heck of a lot of equity in the house at the time the flood happened. And most of it was, say, theoretical equity because the City had decided the house was worth more than it had been at the time I bought it. There's been half a dozen houses on the street that have gone up for sale, but I don't know what sale prices are, so I have no idea what my house is worth right now. I suspect I'm underwater on it, so to speak. Financially.

INTERVIEWEE(01:23:47):

A bunch of buddies came through in the days after the flood, and a couple of 'em are contractors and one came through and looked around and after 10 minutes of looking at the house, he said, have you thought about giving this back to the bank and just walking away from it? And I said, no...

INTERVIEWER(01:24:10):

Why did he say that?

INTERVIEWEE(01:24:11):

...I haven't. Because the cost of repair is greater than the equity,

INTERVIEWER(01:24:18):

But then it affects your ability to purchase again. That's the problem. It's like this. Okay, well, so at least you have a place to sleep, right? Except until next time it floods.

INTERVIEWEE(01:24:31):

Yeah. I'm in this limbo of thinking like, well, how much money would I have to pour into the house to make it sellable, to hope that somebody would buy it, and how much would they buy it for? And I don't know the answers to any of those questions.

INTERVIEWEE(01:24:48):

I could fix it up, I could return it to normal, and live here, and maybe I wouldn't flood again; that would be the optimistic approach. I could fix it up to where it was sellable and try to get a decent price for it, but I have no idea why somebody would buy a house in my neighborhood. I wouldn't buy a house in my neighborhood, so I don't know why anybody else would. And I'd be passing the risk off to somebody else and, would I get my investment back, or anything close to that? And I don't know. That's unanswerable.

INTERVIEWER(01:25:56):

Are you wanting to stay in Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(01:25:59):

It's funny,

INTERVIEWEE(01:26:01):

I was born here. This feels like home. There are some things about Juneau that I wish were different, but no place is perfect. And I'm envious of the days when my parents lived here, when the population of the town was 15,000, because summer times are busier than I would like. This is going off on a tangent, but I want to live in Alaska, not Disneyland.

INTERVIEWEE(01:26:51):

But this is where I was born, and I love the mountains and the forests and the bears and the salmon and the deer. This is home. And yet at the same time, Juneau's an incredibly difficult place to live financially. It was a tough place to live before we the floods. And it was interesting when they were talking about the LID and that whole process, they were saying, we want those 400 properties who got wet to carry a significant part of the burden of installing the HESCO barriers. And then immediately after the '25 flood, they said, oh, the HESCO barriers saved a thousand houses. And it was like, well, why were you putting so much of the burden on 400 households, if you were protecting a thousand? And I remember the answer to that [before the '25 flood] was, because they

didn't have accurate flood maps and they were just guesstimating who the HESCOs were protecting. And so they were going to put 40% of the financial burden on those who they knew had gotten wet in '24.

INTERVIEWER(01:28:20):

And then they installed more HESCOs without charging anyone. And then now the Army Corps is going to pay for all of it. So I'm going to be interested to see if... I'm surprised that they haven't just proposed to remove the LID altogether. Did you notice they delayed?

INTERVIEWEE(01:28:36):

I have my fingers crossed

INTERVIEWER(01:28:37):

Did you notice they delayed the charges till next year? So I'm hoping what they're going to ultimately do is just figure out how to just rescind it.

INTERVIEWEE(01:28:44):

Yeah. One: That's an extra financial burden, which is hard when you're already strapped. The other thing is, okay, so if the HESCO barriers protected a thousand houses in 2025, that means if the HESCO barriers fail, there are potentially a thousand houses that are at risk from a 2025 flood. What if the 2027 flood is much worse than the 2025 flood, or the 2030 flood is much worse? How many houses are at risk? What's the Juneau housing market going to look like if we lose 500 houses, if we lose 200 houses, if we lose a hundred houses?

INTERVIEWEE(01:29:35):

I started living in Juneau again as an adult in I think '94. And there was lots of talk about the housing shortage in Juneau. Now it's 2025. The population of the town is about the same, but we still talk about this housing shortage. How many of the places here are owned by corporations and just serve as summer housing for their seasonals? What is going on with Juneau housing? What's it going to look like if some of these flooded neighborhoods are no longer available for housing? I have no idea what Juneau's going to look like five years from now or 10 years from now. And I don't know if I'll be able to afford to live here long-term. I'm in the spot I'm in now: I have a partially repaired house, I have a low interest rate on my mortgage, I can get by in my current situation. But if my house floods again, what will the future look like? I don't know. If it floods multiple times? At what point do I pull the plug, so to speak, and walk away? I don't know. And these are the things that keep me awake at night

INTERVIEWEE(01:30:58):

And have for a year and a half.

INTERVIEWER(01:31:01):

This is a different question on the next page, but how often do you think about the floods? On a weekly...

INTERVIEWEE(01:31:06):

Every hour

INTERVIEWER(01:31:07):

Or a monthly basis,

INTERVIEWEE(01:31:09):

Every hour?

INTERVIEWER(01:31:10):

Do you have any kind of a cadence or rhythm to that or is it pretty much all year long right now?

INTERVIEWEE(01:31:17):

I'm okay during the day, but at night I can't think about anything else. For a long time after the flood when I heard rain, if I woke up to the sound of rain, I'd be in that moment of panic. And there've been times when I woke up to rain and I was afraid to put my feet down on the floor, I was afraid I'd step into water. And growing up as a coastal-Alaska boy, I used to love the sound of rain on the roof, and suddenly it means something different to me. In those weeks after the floods, I was probably working on the house until one o'clock in the morning and then I'd try to lay down and sleep and then at three o'clock I'd wake up and couldn't go back to sleep and so I'd just go back to work on the house. And that has diminished over time, but I'd say I'm still lucky to get six hours of sleep a night.

INTERVIEWER(01:32:34):

Well, and when you're thinking about the different stresses, are you feeling like it's a broad spectrum of aspects of the flood or is it more the physical safety or the financial crippling... or is it... Yeah, more of a spectrum.

INTERVIEWEE(01:32:50):

I'm not afraid, well, how to put numbers on this? Maybe 5% of my fear is physical. That scenario where I wake up with a nightmare that, oh, I'm flooding again. I'd say there's

some amount of stress from things we lost that are irreplaceable family heirloom type things that are gone. But the overwhelming stress is the uncertainty of finances

INTERVIEWEE(01:33:56):

and where I'm going to be living three years from now and

INTERVIEWER(01:34:03):

Trying to solve the puzzle. But

INTERVIEWEE(01:34:06):

It's unsolvable.

INTERVIEWER(01:34:06):

Do you ever get the thing where you're like, you're going through your day? For me, for example, today came back in last night on the plane dealing with the cold, whatever. Looking at the ice damming on our gutters, it's like, "oh yeah, we should really insulate the roof better." But anything to do with any kind of decision-making that thinking about icicles on my roof really quickly cascades into, well, we can't invest in fixing the roof because we can't.

INTERVIEWEE(01:34:32):

And that's,

INTERVIEWER(01:34:33):

And everything comes back. And so anyway, it's just the same thing. I was wondering if you sometimes get that with

INTERVIEWEE(01:34:39):

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER(01:34:40):

I wonder what happened to that book, or I want to do this thing with my <child>, but then we can't, or the playing Lego, whatever

INTERVIEWEE(01:34:48):

My extra glasses that are single-vision only, which are great for being outside or hunting or driving or whatever, I have no idea where they are. I had them after the flood, but at one point I had belongings in five or six different locations around town, friends' garages.

INTERVIEWER(01:35:10):

Yeah. Oh, we lost a tool this summer, like a specific grinder for the fiberglass on the boat that was like,

INTERVIEWER(01:35:17):

It's expensive, but it's not like the end of the world. But it became this really stressful thing because we were like, you know what? We would know where this was

INTERVIEWER(01:35:24):

if it wasn't for all of our stuff in multiple storage units...

INTERVIEWEE(01:35:27):

I've also got an extra pair of pliers that showed up that I have no idea who they belong to. And everybody I've asked says, "Nope, those aren't mine." Somebody, one of the hundred people who came through the house, left a pair of pliers behind, and I can't for the life of me figure out who. But yeah, there are things where it's like, okay, I know I used to have this, I think I had it after the flood, but I have no idea where it is and I have no idea where I'll find it again. I've had a lot of stuff in a storage unit that I was able to get after the flood, and then I still have belongings at two friends' places.

INTERVIEWEE(01:36:31):

...But the financial side of it: Maybe the 40 hours a week when I'm at work, I'm not thinking about it every hour. But when I'm on my own time: Every hour...

INTERVIEWER(01:36:51):

What do you think was the most unexpected about the financial costs or if you had to think about, and I guess you could also anything that was most unexpected, but I know with a lot of people, there'll be like a few things that they're like, I never really thought about this.

INTERVIEWEE(01:37:05):

No, I don't.

INTERVIEWEE(01:37:13):

What gets me is that I failed to anticipate how much higher the water would come. My neighbor, in 2023 -- there's a storm drain not very far away, and he was keeping an eye on the level of the water in the storm drain, and it never got within a couple feet of the ground level. So the water in the storm drain was down multiple feet below ground level in '23. And in '24, the level of the water over that same storm drain was six feet above the storm drain. And I just did not anticipate the flood water in our neighborhood would come up that high, that there would be such a big jump from '23 to '24. But after that,

the costs ... I've been around home construction, I've helped buddies with houses in different parts of Alaska, and I know it ain't cheap. So there hasn't been anything there where it's like, oh God, I can't believe I have to pay for this too. [Another unexpected consequence: I injured my back during flood deconstruction, herniating several disks. That was really limiting the first six months or so after the flood. It's impacted my ability to live life and to work, and I'm still doing PT trying to get back to "normal."]

INTERVIEWER(01:38:33):

Given what we talked a little bit about 2025 and the HESCOs came close to breaching, but they didn't, did that give you, do you have any kind of feeling of, different approach to thinking about the flood now that there's one year? Or is it kind of the same level?

INTERVIEWEE(01:38:52):

No. None whatsoever. I had mixed emotions about the HESCO barriers. I was glad to see the government trying something. There was a lot of hubbub about, what's the right thing to do. I'm not an expert and I didn't have a perfect answer, which is not unsurprising. I was like, well, if the experts think HESCO barriers will be helpful, hopefully they'll be helpful. It felt good to see the contractors putting the work in to do something to help us out. I felt really bad for those folks along the river who were having their properties impacted, but I was glad that the community was trying to do something

INTERVIEWEE(01:39:51):

for the greater community good. I am glad they were there. I got frustrated in the days after the flood with people talking about how the HESCOs saved everybody and prevented damage because I have some awareness that something like three dozen households were still significantly impacted. A lot of people in the community wanted to think, "oh, we've solved the problem." And I very much think we haven't solved the problem. We bought people some time, and it mostly worked for '25, and it protected most of us who had been flooded in '24. I don't remember the exact number, but say if 300 households were flooded in '24 and only 40 or 50 or something were flooded in '25,

INTERVIEWER(01:41:06):

It was like 40 that were affected and only 20 that actually had much...above the garage.

INTERVIEWEE(01:41:14):

that's wonderful, that's a huge improvement, but it's not a win. That's not without cost. Some people still took a hit. I look at the HESCOs and my attitude is they kept me dry in '25, which I am oh-so-thankful for, but – seeing what the water did, how it pushed its way through the ground underneath my foundation – I don't trust that the ground underneath the HESCOs won't fail. And if the ground underneath the HESCOs erodes

and falls into the riverbank, as I'm afraid it might do at Killewich, or Melvin Park -- or if the water blows through the ground underneath the HESCOs -- what risk will there be? And that's unanswerable, but I'm afraid of it.

INTERVIEWER(01:42:09):

I think they've talked a little to that in the public meetings about how they're trying to figure out how to make them higher, because the more weight you put on them, the more likely that happens. So that might've been part of why the Army Corps decided to throw a whole lot more effort at this this year. Maybe they thought, looking at it, they're not going to last. I dunno for sure.

INTERVIEWEE(01:42:28):

I don't know who's been driving the bus. I know I was surprised when the HESCO barriers went in, the spring of '25, that sometimes they did an eight-foot double stack and sometimes it was just a four-foot stack, and sometimes they cut a layer in half and did a six-foot stack, did one-and-a-half layers of HESCOs, and I kept thinking,

INTERVIEWER(01:42:53):

Yeah, I'm not sure how much they focused on minimizing the height for people's view,

INTERVIEWER(01:42:58):

Which seems irrelevant to me

INTERVIEWEE(01:43:00):

Yeah

INTERVIEWER(01:43:00):

Versus the weight of the actual stack on there.

INTERVIEWEE(01:43:02):

And I thought, how finely are they trying walk this tight rope between minimal impact versus safety? And one thing that I'm afraid of: I think it was city staff had been in the fall of '24 saying, we're going to design the HESCO barriers so that they protect against the '24 flood plus a couple of feet. And I'm like, well, if the level comes up nine inches a year, that buys us a couple years. But what if things don't go as expected?

INTERVIEWER(01:43:58):

I was surprised at how close it was to the top this year.

INTERVIEWEE(01:43:59):

Then they started saying that they would protect from an 18 foot flood. Then at some point they said, well, we're going to charge 400 properties because we don't know who we're protecting and who we're not. And then in some media, somebody on city engineering staff was saying they were surprised at how much water came up against the HESCO barriers in 2025 and how they were over-topping in places with waves washing over them. And I thought, how can you be surprised by the fragility of a barrier that we implemented to protect against a flood that's really hard to predict?

INTERVIEWER(01:44:56):

That they designed prior to even having the inundation map...

INTERVIEWEE(01:45:01):

And what's the margin for error and what's the margin of safety? What's the freeboard? And if you're designing a boat to just barely be afloat, that's a risky way to live. I don't have great faith. I have hope, but little faith in the ability of people to design the HESCO barrier installation in a way that protects us from everything that might happen in the next five or 10 years because we don't know what might happen. So I appreciate the work that went into that, I appreciate all the work that's continuing to go into that, but I don't view anything as infallible.

INTERVIEWER(01:46:00):

That's a good description. Oh, one thing I didn't ask actually is do you typically travel a lot? And does this affect your...?

INTERVIEWEE(01:46:07):

I used to like to.

INTERVIEWER(01:46:08):

Did you use to travel in the summer and is that affecting your travel schedule?

INTERVIEWEE(01:46:12):

I'm afraid to leave town in the summer because I don't know when the flood will be, and I don't want to be out of town during the days when I will need to be preparing for a flood. I've also, in the last year and a half, I've tried to cut down on every discretionary expenditure that I can.

INTERVIEWER(01:47:21):

Yep.

INTERVIEWEE(01:47:27):

My level of worrying about finances is, at what point do I replace my jeans? And I can deal with it, but my financial situation was tight before the flood, and the future's unknowable, and things are super tight now. But that is what it is.

INTERVIEWER(01:48:06):

Is there anything I haven't asked you about the financial pieces of this that you think would be important for folks to understand? I think you've done a pretty good job explaining all that, but it just as a summary of, if people ask what

INTERVIEWEE(01:48:19):

One thing that stunned to me was how affordable flood insurance is. I don't know why, but I'd had this preconceived notion that flood insurance was a considerable expense, and then in reality, it turned out to be quite affordable, at the moment at least. And that's something I wish that everybody within the mile of the Mendenhall River was very aware of. I haven't gone door to door telling people, "Hey, if you haven't got flood insurance yet, you might want to," but I've done that with friends and colleagues who live in the Valley, and I've said, "Hey, if you have ever wondered if water might reach your doorstep, talk to your insurance agent."

INTERVIEWER(01:49:16):

Yeah. It's something that I didn't feel personally responsible between '23 and '24, but it was something I felt very frustrated and disappointed about, that there wasn't really a public awareness campaign because when my household got impacted as a surprise, our home had never had inundation from water, not in the garage. The water had come in at varying levels to the yard because we're only a few feet above the river level. But in all the years that that home had been there, and we had moved there in 2017, there was no history of water inundation on our property. And we actually only carried flood insurance for the first couple of years. We had it then didn't, and then it was our bank that said "they redrew some of these and we won't require it because of specifically where your home's located on the property, but we really think you should get it." And so we got it the year before it flooded again. And anyway, so then when we went to the city meetings after the first flood and the scientists said, "it's going to get worse," it was stunning to see that no public awareness campaign was done.

INTERVIEWEE(01:50:31):

It's interesting. [For comparison] Every now and again, I'll get a flyer from the city saying, don't dump the grease from your holiday meals down your drain.

INTERVIEWER(01:50:41):

And it would be really simple. I think there was also a misunderstanding on the assembly and city staff that National flood Insurance Program and NFIP is public, therefore they're allowed to promote it. Because they're not really allowed to promote a private insurance, right? But when I was working with the Lions Club to put the information out this spring as we were working with the city, and there was a lot of misunderstanding about if the city was even allowed to really cheerlead. So that's part of it.

INTERVIEWEE(01:51:09):

I have noticed that private individuals and organizations have been trying to communicate about things like that.

INTERVIEWER(01:51:16):

Technically the city has added "get flood insurance" on their information, but it hasn't been what I would think would be prudent because it's so cheap,

INTERVIEWEE(01:51:26):

I was stunned. That was the one financial part of the equation where it was like,

INTERVIEWER(01:51:36):

Well, and I am just... coming from somebody who's right on a peninsula in the river. We also didn't carry it for a couple years because we were like, well, we aren't going to get flooded. There were houses that always got flooded on View Drive and the houses that didn't. That's kind of like what the human brain...

INTERVIEWEE(01:51:53):

I don't know if I shared it with you, but I actually made a graph of the river flow rates to just educate myself after my confusion about the Mendenhall River flood gauge and the way the river has acted over the years.

Table 1. Graph made by interviewee and shared after the end of the interview.

I grabbed the data from online and made myself a graph, and whenever I have a conversation with somebody about the flood, I show the visual difference between the years. And to me personally, it's stunning how much that river has changed over the last several years, and the river's behavior. And that is not something that the public has a very good awareness of. And I know from the city's conversation about avalanche mapping and landslide mapping, that some people in the city are loath to shine light upon risks because they're afraid they'll impact property values. But I also feel like there's a moral responsibility, never-mind the financial aspect or the political aspect, there's a moral responsibility to be clear.

INTERVIEWER(01:53:28):

And a broader vision of financial stability. If you had paid 50,000 less for your house but didn't go without flood insurance, then if we're a managed area basically, then the house would potentially retain more value for resale. So instead of trying to just have this and then a crash of some [making hand gestures showing roller coaster motion], but that's a different kind of approach...

INTERVIEWEE(01:53:55):

In the big picture, having been around Alaska awhile, and having been to some extent a student of Alaska, I have a frustration with the boom mentality that eventually leads to a surprising bust, and then we get sucked into another boom, and then there's another bust. But that's a whole 'nuther tangent.

INTERVIEWER(01:54:23):

Well, the last two questions on here, just is there anything I haven't asked you about or something that you want folks to know about the physical health, stress, lifestyle, or mental components of this for life in Juneau?

INTERVIEWEE(01:54:37):

Oh,

INTERVIEWER(01:54:44):

A lot of what you've talked about touches on that.

INTERVIEWEE(01:54:46):

The big thing for me looking at Juneau in the long term is, can I live here? Does this make sense, to live here? We've got steep mountain sides, we've got saltwater. We've got a river that is potentially catastrophic. And where do people fit into this environment? And how many of us can fit in here? And where's the quality of life?

INTERVIEWEE(01:56:03):

One thing that's frustrating for me, I was born here, I have history here. And yet you look around and at some point start thinking, "well, is this just a millionaire's playground? "

INTERVIEWER(01:56:26):

My partner's an electrician. And the last time he did residential work...he had multiple customers who were retired age, lived in Juneau, but they actually owned two 2000-plus square foot homes in different areas in Juneau. And they weren't even renting them out. Fully furnished, everything. Maybe spend some months over here, some months over there. I feel like it's, like [they] can't be bothered to rent it out.

INTERVIEWEE(01:57:02):

And they're probably making money on their house investments if property values go up

INTERVIEWER(01:57:07):

As long as, as long as that mentality carries forward, right?

INTERVIEWEE(01:57:11):

A lot of people will say, real estate's a great investment because it always goes up. But I've been around long enough to know it doesn't.

INTERVIEWER(01:57:20)

We have the millionaires who live here, and then we have the millionaires who don't live here. And then we have, like you said, the companies that are buying properties. And it's definitely a challenge.

INTERVIEWEE(01:57:35):

Many communities in Alaska are unique, especially those that have limited access. Because it's not like you can just commute from another town 15 miles away. Juneau's a unique place. And I feel like there's some pretty significant divides here between business, government, and residents of different economic classes. And for me, feeling like I was just barely able to afford a house here, this flood adds a heck of a lot of stress to the financial side and to the thoughts of, "is this a viable place for me to live?" I love it here. It's fun for me to walk up the hill downtown and say, yeah, there's the hospital I was born. There's a clique of old timers who were born at St. Ann's, and I just love when I'm able to say, oh, I was born at St. Ann's too. Then we have this bond, and we're friends after that. I was probably one of the last kids born there, but it makes me feel connected to the old timers.

INTERVIEWER(02:00:15):

Yeah, when you just said that, I was like, I don't know what hospital you're talking about.

INTERVIEWEE(02:00:21):

And I don't know, this is home, but I do wish it was an easier place to live in.

INTERVIEWER(02:00:30):

So the last question is, is there anything else about Glacial Lake Outburst Flooding that I haven't asked about that you want the city or other community members to know about impacts?

INTERVIEWEE(02:00:43):

I lived in Kodiak for a while as a kid, so I remember having a strong awareness of the tidal wave risk, the tsunami risk. We had elders come into the class in elementary school and talk about their experiences of, the ground shook and then the water went out and then the water came back in and there was a tidal wave. And one thing that I learned immediately after the flood, I had the realization of, "Oh yeah. I live next to a glacial river."

INTERVIEWEE(02:01:38):

And why were we not -- why was I not -- more aware? Why was the neighborhood, why was the community not more aware, not more cognizant of the fact that this is a glacial valley and there's a risk to living in a glacial valley, next to a glacial river, downstream from glacial lakes. And these risks were known by some people, but they weren't well recognized by everybody. I read in some media article an expert saying that they had an idea after the '23 flood of the potential for a much greater impact in '24, but they were afraid to scare people, so they didn't speak up. And I thought, I can see that fear, and that's a valid fear, of not wanting to be fearmongering. And yet at the same time, don't we have a responsibility to be open and to communicate and to be aware of the potential risks? I think we try to close our eyes to the fact that, sometimes the earth might shake, sometimes there might be a tidal wave, sometimes there might be a landslide, sometimes there might be an avalanche. Sometimes there might be a massive river flood. And I wish that people in positions of leadership or authority were less fearful of upsetting the public and were more communicative about the possibilities. And for that matter, I guess I wish the public was more open to hearing

INTERVIEWEE(02:03:59):

about potential risks. Everything in life is a balancing of risk, right? And we each have to make our own decisions. We will get into our vehicles after we leave this and we'll go drive on an icy road. And there's a risk to that. And we're saying, "well, I think it's a worthwhile risk." And someday it may not be. But we're choosing to take on that risk. And we're fairly well-informed about less traction and other drivers and stoplights and whatnot.

INTERVIEWEE(02:04:35):

But I wish there'd been more dialogue about the potential risks of living within any distance of a glacial river. I thought a thousand feet was a safe distance back from the river. I've hated, over the years, watching people buy property and live in a house on a cliff-front property, where the cliff erodes, and then from the time I was a child to the time I was an adult, their front yard disappeared, their porch disappeared, their house started to fall off the cliff because of erosion. And I'm not comfortable with that particular level of risk, but I was surprised when a house I thought was a safe distance from the

river, a thousand feet from the river -- and that was a choice I made to buy a house a thousand feet from the river, thinking that I was making a wise decision -- I was very surprised when that turned out to be a poor decision. And it'd be nice to have more dialogue about these sorts of things, and just to approach risk with open eyes. I feel like I rambled on that one.

INTERVIEWER(02:06:08):

Oh, I was just thinking you did a good job drawing right back to where you started, actually. Because you talked about a thousand feet from the river, like your first sentence, I think in the whole interview. Awesome. Well, that's all my questions.

END