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Two chances for Skagit flood control

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Expanded Skagit River flood control will have two chances in Congress this year, according to an aide to Congressman Al Swift.

Authorization for the proposed \$55 million U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project could come from either an omnibus public works bill or from separate legislation, Swift staff member Drew Pettus said this morning.

Swift expects to introduce the separate legislation tomorrow, Monday or Tuesday, Pettus said.

In addition, the Bellingham Democrat has asked the chairman of the House Public Works Committee to include the Skagit project in an omnibus public works water projects bill, he explained.

There is no indication when an omnibus bill might emerge, he stated.

Under the proposed project, the levee system would be extended upriver from Mount Vernon to Sedro-Woolley and levees below Mount Vernon would be raised by 2 to 8 feet.

An expanded Skagit River project would provide 100-year flood protection for Mount Vernon and Burlington and 50-year protection for rural areas below Mount Vernon, the Corps claims. The present levee system provides 5 to 15-year protection.

The original levee improvement project was authorized by Congress in 1966. A general design memorandum on the levee improvements is expected to be released next month.

Pettus cautioned there is a chance Congress will approve neither the omnibus bill nor the separate legislation, given the Carter administration's austere budget.

But because the Skagit River project is small compared to other water projects, it stands a better chance, he explained.

If not approved by Congress this year, the project could be introduced again next year, he added.