

June 6, 1979

# Skagit Valley Herald

## Clear Lake residents work with county, Corps on flood levee

MOUNT VERNON – Clear Lake residents who have actively opposed proposed flood control measures for Skagit County, are working with officials of the county and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers toward reconciliation.

Barbara Austin, representing the Clear Lake group, told the county commissioners Tuesday that residents might be willing to live with the latest mitigation proposals if certain aspects are cleared up.

The group wants some guarantee that protection measures to that area would be one of the first to be implemented, she said.

They also want adequate protection to farms and livestock outside the protected area, Austin said.

“These (farms) are businesses the same as those in Mount Vernon or Burlington,” she said. “Other businesses are getting protection, and these should be addressed in the same vein.”

Farms that would be adversely impacted by the flood control project should be examined individually to determine the best solution for each, she said.

The group also wants impacted homeowners to have the option to stay in their homes rather than relocate.

Ken Johnson added that the Clear Lake Nookachamps residents want to know exactly what will be implemented.

If these conditions are agreed to, Austin said she thinks the majority of the area residents would no longer oppose the project, even if they don't think it's the best solution.

Commissioner Jerry Mansfield said he thinks the county owes a firm commitment to these residents.

Commissioner Bud Norris agreed, saying “Before this gets much further, we should cement a commitment.

“It's imperative to do this because the success of the project and its acceptance by the community depends on groups such as yours that are closely involved with the project. It isn't too much to ask us to approach each business on an individual basis, and see what the impact will be.”

Because of opposition from the Clear Lake-Nookachamps residents, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently added some flood protection measures to the proposed project to lessen the impact on this area.

As originally proposed, the project could cause the area to receive increased water in the event of a severe flood.

The Corps now is proposing to extend a levee around Clear Lake, which would give three-fourths of the residents 100-year flood level protection.

Homes outside the protected area would either be raised above the flood plain or bought out, depending on which is more economically feasible.

Residents still concerned about protection available for livestock in the event of a flood, and have already established a legal defense fund to fight the project.