

September 6, 1979

# Skagit Valley Herald

## County's \$14 million levee share Flood control financing plan goes on ballot

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MOUNT VERNON – A \$14 million excess levy proposition to finance the county's portion of the proposed Skagit River flood control project will be placed on the November general election ballot.

A resolution placing the proposition on the ballot was approved by the Skagit County Commissioners Wednesday.

The commissioners said they recognize the need for a flood control project, but because of state-mandated limitations on revenue, they are unable to fund the local share from existing revenue.

If the proposition is not passed by the voters, the county probably will not be able to finance its end of the project.

"It appears that the only way we'll be able to meet our portion of the project is through an excess levy," Commissioner Bud Norris said.

Norris added, "Any time the county expends that large a sum of the public's money, it's a good idea to go to the public with a vote."

Commissioner Howard Miller said, Skagit County residents should be willing to pay some of the cost of the flood reduction plan.

The total cost of the project, which still must be authorized by Congress, is estimated at \$55 million. If authorized, federal funds would have to be appropriated to finance the bulk of the project.

Senators Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson have testified in favor of the project, and Magnuson said last week he will continue to push for its authorization.

Commissioner Jerry Mansfield said the levy proposition "is a step toward upholding our

end (of the project) if suitable solutions are found to some pocket problems in the plan."

Although the levee and channel improvement project would increase flood protection to many vulnerable areas of the county, it could adversely affect some areas, including Nookachamps and the Samish basin.

Congress authorized an abbreviated version of the project, from Mount Vernon downstream, in 1966. The project currently proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would improve existing levees to provide 50-year flood level protection to the Cook Road area, Fir Island, and west to LaConner.

Burlington, Sterling, Avon, west Mount Vernon and Clear Lake would receive 100-year protection, and Mount Vernon would receive 500-year protection.

A \$14 million levy is the maximum necessary amount estimated at this time. The purchase of needed rights-of-way, easements and impact-reduction measures are included in this sum, which could be reduced depending on the number of easements the county already has.

At least 8,000 county residents must vote to validate the ballot measure, 40 percent of last November's turnout. Of this number, at least 40 percent, or 4,800, must vote "yes".

The auditor's office reports a 20,000 voter turnout last November, 16,000 voters in 1977 and 17,000 voters in 1976.