

October 31, 1979

Skagit Valley Herald

Flood control: our last chance to head off a disaster

To the Editor:

In all the publicity about the nuclear plant vote, there is a very real chance the people of Skagit County will miss familiarizing themselves with an issue of vital importance to all of us, Proposition 2, the flood control measure. This will be our last chance to head off a flood disaster with loss of life and property without parallel in the history of our community.

Simply stated, it gives Skagit County, as the prime sponsor of a comprehensive lower levy improvement project; the authority to sell flood improvement bonds to raise the local participation money to begin in the early 1980s the improvements in our local diking system. The major cost of the project, 4 out of every 5 dollars, will come from congressional appropriations well along in the process.

This project is the culmination of the efforts of Skagit County people knowledgeable about and responsible for the flood protection of our community including the county commissioners, county engineers, and the local dike district commissioners who have historically been charged with maintenance of our protection system.

We simply do not have the capacity in our diking system to take care of any more flood waters than we had in the recent December of 1975 flood, and we know from past floods that we must prepare for water in many places at least three feet higher on our

dikes. Federal and state authorities recognize the seriousness of the threat. In the words of one agency, "Skagit County is a disaster waiting to happen!"

All of us, no matter where we live or work, will benefit from this project. The Anacortes water system, which supplies 80,000 people in western Skagit and Island counties and many of our major industries, is in one of the most vulnerable areas. Burlington and Mount Vernon, which will receive 100-year flood frequency protection, will get permanent protection, lower insurance rates, lower building costs and protection for their growing business and residential areas. We'll all get protection for our vital water, phone, gas and electric utilities. Our county roads, streets, schools, public buildings and parks will be protected from millions in potential damages. Our farms will also get vitally needed protection. Skagit County's diverse and sophisticated farming economy simply cannot afford floods like we've had in the past, from our large dairy farms, to our bulbs, strawberries and other horticultural crops.

We'll all be able to sleep better nights once we've gone together to complete this project. We your neighbors, the Dike Commissioners of Skagit County earnestly ask your support and a vote FOR PROPOSITION 2, the Flood Control Bonds.

Pete Walker, Chairman
Skagit Flood Control Council