

NOV 1963

Honorable Henry M. Jackson
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Jackson:

This is in reply to your inquiry of 4 November 1963 about a letter from Mr. C. A. Flanery of Mt. Vernon, Washington dated 23 October, concerning various studies being made by the Corps of Engineers on the Skagit River.

Mr. Flanery considers that flood control is not a significant problem in the Skagit River Basin and that something wrong has been done at the mouth of the North Fork years ago which is responsible for any flood problem now existing. Inclosure 1 shows conditions at the mouth of the North Fork. The only significant works are the dikes which maintain the entrance to Swinowish Channel. These dikes obviously have no effect on floods in the Skagit River. There are also a variety of miscellaneous mattress and dike structures shown at the mouth of the Skagit River. These structures were constructed many years ago and have been long abandoned. They have deteriorated so that their effects are barely noticeable at low flows and imperceptible in flood flows.

Mr. Flanery proposes dredging of the river as an alternative to the Avon Bypass. We have considered dredging and found it infeasible for these reasons:

1. Dredging would undermine the existing levee system and thus require extensive set back of levees which would be unacceptable to the present diking districts.

2. The annual bed load sediment carried by Skagit River is estimated to be 700,000 cubic yards per year. Dredging to maintain a channel subject to this deposition is not economically feasible.

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3. Upstream effects of channel dredging would not provide nearly the flood protection to Mt. Vernon and Burlington that can be developed by the Avon Bypass.

With respect to current flood control studies on the Skagit River, the following information may serve to indicate the broad interest in these studies. In 1959, high water flows on the Skagit River led to requests by local interest groups to their Congressional representatives for a study by the Corps of Engineers of flood control and other water resource needs in the Skagit River basin. The study was initiated in 1961. At a public hearing in February 1961, testimony was presented by representatives of diking districts, by the County, by Chamber of Commerce representatives, by municipalities, by representatives of agriculture and by many others. This testimony was overwhelmingly in favor of development of higher standards of flood control in the Skagit River. Our studies to date have confirmed that flood control measures are urgently needed in the Skagit River valley. Accordingly, we are preparing interim reports in order to expedite provision of those flood control improvements found to be justified.

The District Engineer, Seattle, has recently issued a Public Notice and an Information Bulletin, (inclosures 2 and 3), about a hearing to be held at Mt. Vernon on 22 November on the first phase of the proposed flood control improvements. The Bulletin sets forth in detail the basis for the flood control studies. I strongly urge that Mr. Flanary present any factual information that he may have on these projects at the hearing for the information of the Corps of Engineers, and so that it may become a matter of public record.

The Avon Bypass Project which is discussed briefly in the Information Bulletin consists of a diversion channel of 60,000 c.f.s. capacity located downstream from Burlington, and improvement and extension of four miles of levee from the head of the Bypass to high ground upstream from Burlington. This project in combination with the work described in the Bulletin will increase the level of flood protection of 68,000 acres of diked land in the Skagit River delta from a present average 5-year flood frequency to 30-year flood frequency. The benefit cost ratio for flood control only is estimated to be about 2 to 1. Addition of recreation and fisheries as described in the Information Bulletin would further enhance the project. Strong support of the project has been evidenced by the County Commissioners, by most of the Diking Districts by a Citizen's Committee, by the State and by many others.

As noted in the Bulletin, reports on Skagit River for navigation from Concrete to the mouth and on upstream storage are still in the study stage. Separate public hearings will be held on these projects after their feasibility has been determined.

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Mr. Flanary has also expressed concern about impact of the Corps project on the Skagit River fishery. We recognize that the Skagit River supports the most important steelhead and salmon fishery in the Puget Sound Region. All of our plans are evaluated by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service and the Washington State Departments of Fisheries and of Game. Adverse or beneficial effects of projects on fisheries will be examined by these agencies and by the Corps of Engineers in the light of the recognized importance of this resource.

I hope the foregoing information will clarify our objectives in the Skagit River Basin studies to Mr. Flanary and will serve to advise him how he may effectively present any facts that he may have with respect to the projects under study.

Sincerely yours,

ERNEST L. PERRY
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

4 Incl

- 1. Skagit River Map
- 2. Public Hearing Notice
- 3. Information Bulletin
- 4. C. A. Flanary ltr dtd 23 Oct 63

cc: OCE ATTN: ENG CW-PD w/basic
NPD ATTN: NP DEN-PL "

Gedney

Steinborn

C. C. TEMPLETON

Exec Ofc /s/

COLONEL PERRY

Major

ED-BasinPIng