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

Dear Senator Jackson:

This is in further reply to your letter of 24 February concerning correspondence from Miss Edna Breazeale about the Avon Bypass project, and your letter of 4 March transmitting letters from Mr. R. L. Nelson and Mrs. John Swisher about the same subject. My interim replies of 6 and 12 March returned these letters. On 13 March we met with a group from the Mount Vernon and Burlington areas about the matters discussed in these letters. The following persons attended this meeting:

Mr. Norman Dalstead  
Mr. Rey Billips  
Mr. Warren Good  
Mr. C. R. Carter  
Miss Edna Breazeale  
Mr. John Swisher

We believe the meeting provided an excellent opportunity to exchange information at first hand covering the contents of the letters and to clarify objectives of the protesting group as well as of the Corps of Engineers.

Our replies concerning the questions and statements posed in the letters are set forth below. In Miss Breazeale's letter:

Q. Is the Bypass an accomplished fact with respect to future construction? As Miss Breazeale notes, the Information Bulletin which accompanied the public hearing stated, "The Avon Bypass project is not intended for discussion at the 22 November hearing, but if there are any outstanding comments on this project, they will be heard."
A. We must acknowledge that the procedures whereby the Corps recommends authorization of a project to the Congress and the procedure whereby a project is funded for preconstruction planning have generated a misunderstanding in the present instance. The levees and channel improvements and the proposed added purposes of fishery development and recreation for the Avon Bypass are new proposals on which we are preparing a report to the Congress. The Avon Bypass project is already authorized (Flood Control Act 1936), but has been inactive because local interests had not been able to furnish assurances that local cooperation requirements could be satisfied. Recent studies of the Skagit River basin have shown that the Avon Bypass has a high degree of merit as part of a basin plan for flood control and water resource development. The District Engineer has prepared a report recommending reactivation of the Avon Bypass project. This report is now under study by the Chief of Engineers. The appropriate local authorities have indicated a willingness to furnish the necessary local cooperation, subject to more detailed investigations which will establish the alignment of the project and determine the actual costs that would be incurred in local interest support of the project. The more detailed studies necessary to finalize the alignment and to establish these costs can only be made in the preconstruction planning stage. We have assured Miss Brozeval and the members of the citizens group attending the meeting in this office on 13 March, that at such time as funds may be provided for a preconstruction planning study of the Bypass, we will carry our studies only to the point necessary to establish this detail, before holding a public hearing on a specific plan of Bypass development. No further work will be undertaken on the project until the citizens of the area have had a full opportunity to express their views, and the responsible local officials have taken a position on whether or not they are prepared to enter into an agreement to undertake the necessary aspects of local cooperation. The chairman of the Board of County Commissioners has gone on record as stating that the residents of the county will be given an opportunity to vote on any tax levy necessary to finance the county's obligation in connection with the Avon Bypass project.

Q. The significance of a petition opposing the Avon Bypass and bearing the signatures of about 1000 persons has not been considered by the Corps of Engineers.

A. At the 10 January hearing, mention was made that such a petition was being circulated and asked that the record be held open for
its inclusion. Until the time of our 13 March meeting with Miss Breaazale and her group, we had not received any copies of the petition or signatures. At the 13 March meeting, Mr. Dalstead furnished us photostatic copies of a petition bearing approximately 740 signatures. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to any plans to modify the structure of the Avon Bypass for any purpose other than flood control and are in fact opposed to the Bypass itself because as presented to us it will not provide protection from major floods. The cost of construction and maintenance is beyond Skagit County’s means, and the project would endanger a new area to flood hazard and eventual silting up of shallow Padilla Bay."

The significance of the above noted petition should not be minimized. Unfortunately the basic petition contains a number of statements for which there is no factual engineering basis. Very briefly these statements are:

a. That the Bypass will not provide protection for major floods.

b. The Bypass will endanger a new area to flood hazard.

c. The Bypass will cause eventual silting-up of shallow Padilla Bay.

I will go into further detail about each of these matters in my letter. It is unfortunate that so much misinformation has been incorporated in a petition which has had such widespread circulation. Certainly the petition emphasizes the need for a separate public hearing to which we are committed, as I noted in the answer to the preceding question. We also received a petition containing 219 signatures endorsing the Bypass. The sponsors of this petition stated they would be happy to get additional signatures. Obviously, we have reached a point where decision making should be based on more detailed engineering information which can only be developed in preconstruction planning and on presentation of these facts at a public hearing. Miss Breaazale and the citizens group accompanying her to the 13 March meeting in my office, are in agreement with us on this procedure.

Q. Why have the downstream channel improvements been packaged in with the Bypass on an all or nothing basis?
A. As stated in Miss Breazeale's letter, proponents and opponents of the Bypass all generally agree that they desire flood control in the Skagit River valley. The urban and agricultural lands in the Skagit River valley warrant a high degree of flood protection. The comparatively minor improvements being proposed in the forthcoming Survey Report for downstream levee and channel improvements extend over 18 miles of river channel. These improvements would increase the present minimum channel capacity from about 93,000 c.f.s. to 120,000 c.f.s. This is the limit of improvement of the existing system of channel and dikes that is economically feasible. These improvements would only increase the level of dependable flood protection from the vicinity of Mount Vernon downstream from a frequency of flooding of once in three to ten years to a minimum level upwards of once in seven years. This low-level increase in flood protection, in itself, does not appear sufficient to warrant Federal participation. However, the downstream channel and levee improvements in combination with the Avon Bypass would make it possible to accommodate a 180,000 c.f.s. flow from the downstream limits of Sedro Woolley to the mouth. This increase not only doubles the present minimum channel capacity, but provides two feet of freeboard as compared to one foot used in the estimate of the present minimum capacity of 93,000 c.f.s. The 180,000 c.f.s. capacity corresponds to a level of flood protection with a frequency of flooding of once in thirty years. This degree of flood protection is compatible with the nature of the area being protected. These two projects in combination with possible upstream storage could develop an overall level of flood protection of approximately once in one hundred years. Studies of the feasibility of upstream flood storage will extend over the next two to four years as part of the Puget Sound Comprehensive Study. Because the downstream levee and channel improvements and the Bypass are part of a comprehensive plan, and because these measures in themselves will give a high level of flood protection, we have proposed that these measures be considered first, in order to develop a timely plan of flood control for the valley.

Q. Are the hunting and fishing and recreation potentials of the Bypass project being forced on an unwilling local populace?

A. Residents of the area are concerned that a horde of hunters and fishermen would invade the privacy of the area, cause damage and otherwise be objectionable. The Avon Bypass project has sound economic feasibility for flood control alone. The Avon Bypass is a local flood control protection project. The recreation,
fishery and hunting potential are dependent upon the state and county for support and development. From the standpoint of the Federal government, the development of these potentials is entirely permissive and is not a requirement for economic feasibility of the project. If any aspects of the proposed recreational developments are not desired by the state and county bodies concerned with the development, these purposes can be omitted. We would expect that these developments would be implemented on a gradual and controlled basis consistent with the needs of the area. The purpose of the Corps present survey report to Congress on addition of these purposes is primarily to identify the potential and to obtain authorization for Federal participation in the development of these purposes to the extent that such participation is appropriate in the construction and planning of the basic project facilities.

Q. The Bypass will endanger a new area to flood hazard.

A. The basis for this statement is not known. The Bypass would divert flows from the Skagit River to Padilla Bay. Because of the necessity for spoil disposal adjacent to the channel, the levees bordering the channel would be 40 to 100 feet wide. There is no hazard from breaching of these levees. The Bypass project would also include all necessary provisions for interior drainage discharging into the channel.

Q. The Bypass will cause settling-up of shallow Padilla Bay.

A. The Bypass would include provisions for a continuous diversion flow of 100 c.f.s. to prevent stagnation. The diversion flow is less than one per cent of the total flow of Skagit River and much of it would occur during periods when the Skagit River is carrying little, if any, sediment load. With the downstream levees and channel improvements, the Bypass would only be used once in about four years for flood flows. The amount of discharge every four years would vary from perhaps 10,000 c.f.s. to a maximum of 60,000 c.f.s. at 30-year intervals. The duration of this flood discharge would be from 24 to 48 hours. On an engineering basis, neither of the foregoing operations would result in any sedimentation that would affect or even be noticeable in Padilla Bay.
Q. Federal and state agencies, such as Game and Fisheries would like to take advantage of the Bypass if it were created. This does not necessarily mean approval of the Bypass itself.

A. The statement is quite correct. These agencies do not ordinarily make judgments about the feasibility of the flood control aspects of the Corps projects. However, they do evaluate the recreation, fishery and wildlife impact and potential. We rely upon these agencies for the professional evaluation of these benefits necessary for the project. There is no intent to commit them to an evaluation of the necessity of the project for flood control purposes.

Q. The State Parks & Recreation Commission has not committed itself on the project.

A. We believe the enclosed letter (Incl. 1), from the Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission indicates a keen interest in development of the recreation potential of the Avon Bypass project.

Q. The State Department of Highways said that since it had never suffered flood damage it would not bear the cost of necessary road alterations.

A. Enclosures 2 and 3 are photographs showing evidence of flood damage to highways. Our understanding of the Highway Department's position is that they are limited in extent of participation by statute and by precedent to the costs of reconstruction of State highways above flood levels. They cannot participate in providing any of the general benefits attributable to the flood control aspects of the project.

Q. Residents of the area are concerned about the possible relationship between the Bypass project and the Padilla Bay development of the Pioneer Oyster Company.

A. There is absolutely no basis for this allegation. To the best of our knowledge there are no physical connections or underlying purposes relating the Bypass and the Padilla Bay development. Mr. Bailey's inquiries to this office have been in the nature of an interested citizen with an industrial development in which navigation might
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In a letter, he has suggested that we should issue an order to stop the project. He has also suggested that the Secretary of the Interior should be consulted before any further action is taken. We believe that this is a reasonable request. We will review the information we have on this project and will respond to your letter.

The project is the first of several similar projects that will be developed in the area. We understand that the project will involve the construction of a dam and a power plant. The dam will be used to generate electricity, and the power plant will be used to supply electricity to the local community.

We will consider the matter further and will respond to your letter.

With respect to your letter, we will review the information we have on this project and will respond to your letter.

Q. Is there any public support for this project?

A. The project has received widespread support from the local community. The local community has expressed its support for the project, and we believe that it will be a valuable asset to the local economy.

Q. The project will be associated with a possible flood today. Do you think this is a flood that will occur in the future?

A. The project will be associated with a possible flood that will occur in the future, but we do not believe that it will be a major flood. We have conducted a thorough analysis of the flood hazard, and we believe that the project will not increase the risk of flooding in the area.

Q. What is the purpose of the project?

A. The purpose of the project is to generate electricity for the local community. The project will also provide flood control benefits to the area. The project will be operated by the Federal Power Commission, and will be subject to federal regulations and guidelines.

Q. Is the project a part of a larger project?

A. Yes, the project is a part of a larger project that will involve the construction of several dams and power plants in the area. The project is part of a larger effort to develop the area's resources.
Mount Vernon is located on the Potomac River, and many of its residents rely on the river for a sense of community and history. The river's course has been altered by human intervention over time, with dams and locks built to control flooding and navigation. Today, the river is a symbol of the city's past and a reminder of the challenges it faces in adapting to future environmental changes.

In the 1960s, the city embarked on a comprehensive program to improve the river's condition. This involved the construction of new spillways, dredging of the riverbed, and the installation of new flood control structures. The city also worked to educate the public about the importance of maintaining the river's health.

Today, Mount Vernon continues to be a vibrant and active community, with residents who are committed to preserving the river and its surrounding environment for future generations. The city's efforts to protect the Potomac River have been recognized at the national level, and the city is proud to be a leader in environmental stewardship.
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"Mount Vernon residents clearly remember the date of Feb. 10, 1951. The record books show that on this date the Skagit River reached a flood stage peak of 150,000 c.f.s. But to Mount Vernon residents and the City of Mount Vernon's officials, the peak flood flow of 150,000 c.f.s. was of no immediate concern through that long night and the following early morning hours of the next day. When our Mount Vernon officials do remember is that the Skagit River filled their banks completely in Mount Vernon and that the flood crest rose until the water level had completely covered our development area and was leaping at the gutter line of Main Street at the Myrtle Street intersection. Another 6 or 9 inches would have required sand-bags to keep the Skagit River from spilling over into our downtown commercial area.

Watching the river crest at flood stage was not all our thoughts were on their minds, however. The City officials had serious problems with their sewer system - our Main Street gate main collapsed inside of our protective shut-off gates but outside of the road and flooded both into the residential area in the southern section of our town. Filthy muck covered and flooded streets and homes until the water level would be jump and the sewer line would split off by splitting Main Street at half height. It was possible to stop the sewer main.

As in the Mount Vernon proposal to place City officials around to keep the flood waters under and from spilling into the mains of the Skagit River.

Mount Vernon’s flood waters would be completely under the control area of the Skagit River.

With the memory of this 1951 flood and the 1947 flood of 150,000 c.f.s. fresh in our minds, it is not difficult for the City of Mount Vernon to evaluate the policy of planning for a minimum flood prevention plan.

The City of Mount Vernon, with full knowledge of what a flood flow of 150,000 c.f.s. meant to our city, hereby congratulates the City of Englewood for their comprehensive and forward-thinking flood prevention plan.

The amount spent by Federal and non-Federal government agencies for improvements in the Diking District in the period 1947 to 1956 is tabulated below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Diking District</th>
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<td>$194,000</td>
<td>$322,000</td>
<td>$492,000</td>
<td>$722,000</td>
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All of the Federal monies have been into emergency repairs of
flood following floods and that have not contributed to overall
improvement of the levee system. The St. Landry County and the
Diking District have together contributed about two millions
dollars towards improvement of the existing diking system. Signif-
ically the State, the County and 14 of a total of 14 Diking
Districts have informed the Corps plan for flood control by down-
stream levees and channel improvement and for construction of the
Avon Bypass.

Q. The channel should be widened as well as deepened and have
levees pushed back as they are needed.

A. The plan suggested by Mr. Nelson has been studied as an alter-
native to the Avon Bypass and the downstream levee and channel
improvement plan. For such a plan to be feasible, the back-
water zone of the river would have to be widened. There would
not be any appreciable savings of the time and labor for the
maintenance of the high maintenance and they would be expected from suspension
of the levee adjustment load carried by the Meriwether River. This
widening of the channel is estimated to move over 100,000 cubic yards of
material. The additional floods that would follow to the bypass
and the levee and channel improvement of the river by the river
channel diversion would be for about 20 miles. Meade Wiley would be required to
an average velocity between 400 and 600 feet per second between the
channel characteristics. This widening would have to extend an
length of about 10 miles from the downstream limit of
Meade Wiley to the mouth of the Meriwether River. A few letters
showed that the cost of this widening would be about 10 per
cent more than the cost of the bypass plan. However, with the bypass and downstream levee and channel improvement
plan, all of the principal reasons for the Meriwether River to be
d thousands of the area on both banks of the river is well
developed and any widening involves high relocation and land
acquisition costs.

With respect to the letter from Mrs. John Scatter, I believe most of
Mrs. Scatter's comments have been answered in the foregoing discussion.

I hope the foregoing information will serve to assure your representa-
te the Corps of Engineers has no intention of attempting to implement a flood protec-
tion project which is not desired by local interests. Final judgment on the
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24 Mar '64

The feasibility of the Altamont Project as an element of a State flood control plan should be examined until such time as detailed design information is available on the cost and the structure of the project. The Corps of Engineers has no intention of proceeding beyond this point until firm assurance of local support of the project are forthcoming.

Please feel free to make further inquiry if additional clarification is desired or if there are any further questions.

Very truly yours,

ERNEST L. PERRY
Colonel
Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

[Signature]

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