



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SEATTLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
1519 ALASKAN WAY SOUTH
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98134

IN REPLY REFER TO
NPSEN-PL-TE

25 AUG 1968

Claude B. Wilson, Chairman
Board of Skagit County Commissioners
Skagit County Courthouse
Mount Vernon, Washington

Dear Mr. Wilson:

This letter pertains to the Skagit River Avon Bypass Project and to general planning for flood control in the Skagit River Basin. In a 1 August 1962 letter (copy inclosed), Mr. Joe Busha, then chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, requested that steps be taken to reactivate the Avon Bypass Project.

Since receiving the above letter, we have completed studies that resulted in the February 1965 reactivation of the Avon Bypass Project. A study to determine a firm alinement for the Bypass channel and a basis for determining a reasonably firm estimate of cost of local participation was completed by the Seattle District in July 1966. This study is currently being reviewed by our higher authority but the details are reasonably firm for your consideration at this time.

The proposed location of the Bypass is shown on the inclosed Plate 2 of Inclosure 2. In brief, the present plan provides for a channel beginning at Avon and discharging into Padilla Bay through Telegraph Slough. Also included in the plan is channel widening of Skagit River upstream from Avon and extension of levees upstream of Burlington to further protect that area from flooding. Project details are shown on Plates 3, 4 and 5 of Inclosure 2. In general, the plan is similar to the plan considered in our 1965 studies except that the entrance to the channel has been moved downstream approximately three miles. The new alinement was developed in cooperation with the Skagit County Engineer and Skagit County Planning Director and has not only been found to be less costly than the original alinement but also eliminates many objections about cutting off the Burlington area from future expansion.

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NPSEN-PL-TE

Claude B. Wilson, Chairman

A summary of Federal costs and non-Federal costs is given in Inclosure 3, together with details on costs of local cooperation. A comparison of benefits and costs based on our latest study shows that the project is well justified with a benefit-to-cost ratio of 1.5 to 1.

The overall project has increased from \$23,250,000, at the time of our public hearings in 1964, to \$28,200,000. Of this amount, local interest costs have increased from \$4,150,000 to \$6,100,000. Part of this price increase has been due to the price increase in cost of construction since the 1964 estimate. The balance, and particularly that part relating to local interest cost has increased because of increases in land value, because of higher standards used in the bridge crossings, and because of addition of approximately \$220,000 for lands proposed for spoil disposal which presumably will be salable at a higher value after the project is completed. Before detailed planning can proceed on the Avon Bypass Project, we must receive assurances that the requirements of local cooperation, as set forth in Inclosure 4, will be satisfied. If the requirements for local cooperation cannot be satisfied, the project would again become inactive and deferred for future consideration until some indefinite time in the future.

We believe the Avon Bypass Project is the most urgently needed flood control project in the Skagit River Basin. This project in itself would raise the immediate level of flood protection in the basin from once in three years with present diking district flood protection to an average of once in 25 years, and in combination with the proposed levee and channel improvement in the lower river to a level of flood protection of once in 35 years. On a long-range basis, the addition of upstream storage could ultimately provide 100-year flood protection for the Skagit River Basin. However, I am certain that you and others of the community recognize that development of upstream flood protection in the Skagit River Basin will take a long time to attain. I am happy to advise you that the survey report on "Improvement of Downstream Levee and Channel Improvement" has now been presented to the Public Works Committees of Congress and is awaiting Congressional action for authorization.

Recent meetings between representatives of this office, your Board of County Commissioners and representatives of the Drainage and Diking Districts of Skagit River Valley and the Washington State Department of Conservation have revealed a serious diversity in views on the courses of action that Skagit County may take in regard to developing a long-range comprehensive plan for the overall basin. Mr. Hastings, Supervisor of Flood Control, Department of Conservation, has pointed out that State support of future flood control maintenance for the extensive installation of dikes now protecting the valley cannot be expected to continue

unless Skagit County develops a firm plan for a higher level of flood protection than now exists. The meetings also demonstrated a broad diversity of opinion between representatives of the Diking and Drainage Districts and the County on sharing of costs in developing a higher level of flood protection plan for the basin.

The combination of circumstances pointed up by the foregoing matters appears to be these:

1. Skagit County Diking Districts are faced with a loss of State support for maintaining present dikes unless an improved plan of flood protection is developed for the valley.

2. Based on extensive studies by the Corps of Engineers, the most feasible plan for improving the level of protection is the Avon Bypass Project. However, unless the necessary local support for the project is generated, the study will again become inactive. If deferred to the future, the cost of the Bypass or other alternative plans will probably become so costly as to forestall future consideration prior to occurrence of a disasterous flood which could cause many millions of dollars damage to the Skagit River Basin.

3. The Skagit Basin has been exceedingly fortunate in not having been subject to really major floods since about 1921. However, the period 1896 to 1921 is replete with examples in which at least six times, past floods would have exceeded almost twice the present channel capacity. Again in 1951, flood stages were within inches of overtopping the dikes at Mount Vernon. These events can be readily repeated, even with full consideration of present-day upstream storage.

In effect, it appears that Skagit County is facing a crisis in their planning not only for maintenance of the existing levee system but for attaining a higher level of flood protection in the valley. We have discussed this matter with representatives of the Washington State Department of Conservation and find that they are in general agreement and that this is a realistic evaluation of the present situation.

Our immediate needs with respect to the Corps of Engineers efforts are to make a realistic determination of sponsorship for the Avon Bypass Project and to work with Skagit County representatives in developing a comprehensive plan of flood control that is responsive to the needs and desires of the residents of the area.

We have, of course, extensive technical data on the physical aspects of the flood problem, and would be most willing to work with the County

NPSEN-PL-TE

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Commissioners or any other designated body to assist the County in accomplishing this objective. We would appreciate an early expression of your views on this matter so that we may schedule on a realistic basis our future planning for the Bypass Project and for future flood control planning in the Skagit River Basin. You may be assured of our fullest cooperation.

Sincerely yours,



C. C. HOLBROOK
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

4 Incl

1. Cy ltr from Bd of County Com., 1 Aug 62
2. Plates 2 thru 5, Dwg E-6-6-268
3. Summary of costs
4. Requirements of local cooperation

Copy Furnished w/incl:

George Dynes, Commissioner
Diking District No. 20
Rt. 4, Box 246
Mt. Vernon, Washington

H. Maurice Ahlquist, Director
Department of Conservation
State of Washington
335 General Administration Bldg.
Olympia, Washington 98501