FACT SHEET

NPSEN-PL-RP

22 February 1978

SUBJECT: Ammendment to Skagit Levee and Channel Improvement Authority

PRIOR AUTHORITY:

Levee and Channel Improvements. The Skagit River Levee and Channel Improvement Project was authorized by Section 203, Public Law 89-789, dated 7 November 1966, and provides for flood protection levees and channel improvements along the lower Skagit River to provide a minimum channel capacity of 120,000 cubic feet per second (cfs)

Avon Bypass. The Avon Bypass Project was authorized by Section 5, Public Law 74-738, dated 22 June 1936. It involves three features; a bypass channel, generally 400 feet wide, for flood diversion only from the vicinity of Burlington to Padilla Bay, flood protection levees along the Skagit River from the vicinity of Mount Vernon upstream past Burlington to the vicinity of Sedro Woolley and construction of recreation facilities for a resident fishery and access to Padilla Bay for fishing and hunting. The bypass channel capacity would be 60,000 cfs.

DISCUSSION: The two main features of the Avon Bypass Project (the bypass and the upstream levees) can be considered separately. The bypass channel would provide higher levels of protection primarily to the agricultural land downstream of Mount Vernon and could be an independently added item. However, because of the high local cost, the adverse reaction toward taking agricultural land in order to construct a flood control channel, and environmental objections, it is doubtful that locals will support the bypass channel portion of the Avon Bypass Project. However, there continues almost unanimous public support for additional urban flood protection along the Skagit River near Mount Vernon and Burlington. The aim of amending the Skagit River Levee and Channel Improvement Project, is to allow combining into one project all flood control structures along the river. Accordingly, that work authorized under the Avon Bypass which is needed and strongly supported by the public would be brought under the Advance Engineering and Design umbrella of the Skagit River levees, since the Avon Bypass, as such, has not been funded for Advance Engineering and Design and probably will not be.

The proposed shifting of the upper levee system from the Avon Bypass Project to the Levee and Channel Improvement Project would be prudent since it would provide an incremental increase in flood protection, that would be compatible with any forseen future project that might be developed for additional incremental flood protection - including the bypass channel. We expect that the estimated cost, given in the proposed legislation as $12 million, would be offset by an attendant incremental rise in benefits. Based upon updating of information from old reports, the benefit-to-cost ratio of the levee extension is about 1.3 to 1. The detailed flood damage appraisal which is being performed as part of the Levee and Channel Improvement Project may increase the flood damage reduction benefits due to increased development in the area. In any event, each levee increment will be economically justified.

sent to Nordhill on 21 Feb 78

P004409