

4 October 1978

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MEMO FOR: RECORD

SUBJECT: Field Trip, Recreation Sites along Skagit River

1. On 25 September 1978, I attended a field trip conducted along the lower Skagit River. The purpose of the trip was to view riverfront recreation areas which might receive further development through the Skagit River Levee Improvement Project. Leaving from the Skagit County building, the trip began at approximately 10:30. Those in attendance were:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Jon Aarstad     | Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department |
| Don Nelson      | Skagit County Road Department                 |
| Terry Stevenson | Skagit County Planning Department             |
| Pete Walker     | Skagit County Flood Control Council           |

2. During the course of the trip, eight sites were visited. These sites were distributed along the North and South Forks of the Skagit River in addition to areas adjacent to the main stem. A sizable amount of variation was found in the level of development for individual areas. This diversity in development was shown through the presence of sites only providing access to the river with unpaved roadways as well as areas containing additional facilities for picnicking and boating activities. Considering that the field trip was taken on a weekday (Monday), a substantial number of visitors were present at most sites. The majority of recreationists were involved in fishing activity.

3. For each area I took descriptive notes regarding the ownership, acreage, current usage, type of access road, distance from river to existing or proposed levee, quality of fishing experience, and existing facilities. This information is provided in Inclosure 1. In addition, a series of photographs was taken in each area.

4. Considering the number of recreation sites along the river, the need for establishing priorities in site development is present. After viewing the eight river front areas, Mr. Aarstad and Mr. Nelson suggested two sites which they considered to receive top priority. One site is located between the communities of Mount Vernon and Burlington and it is intersected by a Burlington Northern railroad bridge. The second area is owned by Skagit County and is adjacent to the community of Conway on the South Fork of the river.

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5. At the completion of the field trip several important comments were made regarding the recreation sites. Mr. Aarstad felt that the scarcity of permanent boat ramps and picnic areas was particularly prominent in terms of deficiencies in recreational facilities. Mr. Nelson stressed the need to maintain access to the sites in the face of new levee construction and levee enlargement. Mr. Nelson also emphasized the importance of providing future recreational opportunities in Lions Park. The potential floodwall or levee in the park area could seriously disrupt the usage of the facility. Mr. Nelson felt that the citizens of Mount Vernon were appreciative of the efforts shown by the Lions Club in developing the park. Loss of the facility would be disturbing to many Mount Vernon residents.

6. The field trip ended at 16:30.

Robinson  
ROBINSON

1 Incl

as

cc w/incl:

Robinson

Feten (Civ Des Sec)

Swanson (Civ Des Sec)

Brooks

Mettling (ERS)

Newman

Worthington

RP Sec File

ED-PL File (COPY)

NOTE: ORIGINAL CAN BE FOUND IN REGIONAL  
PLANNING SECTION (ROBINSON)

## SKAGIT RIVER RECREATION SITE EVALUATION

1. General. This inclosure contains information gathered during the field trip for viewing recreation sites along the Skagit River. A number of general factors such as type of existing facilities will be described for each area. Some personal observations regarding the sites will also be included. The numbering of the areas has been taken from a topographic map used to locate the various sites. The sequence of description for the sites shows a downriver direction. Few indications of the size of areas will be given due to uncertainty on the part of local officials. More specific information on this factor will be gathered as work is done on determining the location of easements for the levees. The quality of the fishing experience at each site is basically dependent on the general condition of the river. Distances in feet to the levees are approximate measurements.

a. Site Number 1 - (Photos Number 1 and 2). This site was used as a ferry landing for a number of years and large wooden dock piles are still visible in the area. Access to the site is provided as an unpaved extension of Gardner Road. The distance from the river's edge to the levee is approximately 300 feet. The land currently used for fishing activity is basically part of the riverbed. This area is owned by the State Department of Natural Resources. The land from the defined edge of the river to the levee is in private ownership and is heavily vegetated.

On Monday morning the site contained a substantial amount of recreational activity. At least 6 fishermen with lines in the river were present and there was some inflow and outflow of recreationists. Traditionally the area has received heavy usage and is known as one of the better fishing spots along this section of the river. As the group was leaving the site, a large boat was being towed into the area. No formal boat ramps have been constructed but boat launching is possible due to the absence of a sizable bank. No restroom facilities have been built in the area. Future development in this area could enhance the fishing and boating opportunities.

b. Site Number 3A - (Photos Number 3-5). This area possesses a much different character from the first site. Located on the bank above the river, the site basically consists of a fairly small parking lot. One has the feeling of being quite elevated from the river due to the steepness of the bank. Vegetation along the bank is mainly composed of grasses. Access to the site is obtained on a gravel road which runs along the top of the levee. The State Department of Game holds an easement for access to the site. Distance from the edge of the river to the levee varies considerably as the levee basically wraps around the area.

During the visit to the site I observed no recreational usage. With the elevation above the river the area offers an excellent view of the river corridor. If the edge of the river is to be utilized for fishing activity, work must be done to provide safe access down

the steep bank. No restroom facilities are provided at the site. Some trail use potential exists as this area and site 3B are connected by an unpaved road which borders the river.

c. Site Number 3B - (Photos Number 6-9). With ownership by the local dike district this site is given a high development priority by local officials. Good access to the site is provided from Whitmarsh Road. The levee is located to the north of the road and there is a distance of 100 feet between the levee and the river's edge. Several elevations within the site provide interest and increase the recreational potential for the area. A sizable gravel bar borders the river with a fairly steep bank being adjacent to the bar. Above the bank a level, open area stretches to the road. Vegetation in the open area consists entirely of grass. The site is intersected by a main line bridge for the Burlington Northern railroad. The bridge tends to dominate the area as the structure is elevated above the site.

In terms of recreational usage, several people were fishing from the gravel bar during our visit. The fishermen commented that the old ferry landing (Site Number 1) was too crowded and therefore, they had moved to this area. The main interest in the site is fishing but the open area offers potential for other types of activities. Perhaps the most advantageous usage of the level area would be to accommodate other activities such as picnicking;. No restroom facilities are supplied for the site.

d. Site Number 4 - (Photos Number 10-12). With a location in West Mount Vernon, this site is accessible from a residential street. The levee is 150 feet from the river's edge and a fairly heavy wall of vegetation screens the river from the flood control structure. Mr. Nelson thought that the property was owned by the Game Department. A large parking area is adjacent to the riverbank and a muddy bar is used primarily for fishing. A roughly constructed stairway allows movement down the short bank to the bar. Two modern portable toilets are located on the edge of the site near the levee.

The group reached the site by late afternoon and a substantial amount of fishing activity was occurring. A comment was made that the area normally received a good deal of usage. The close proximity of the site to Mount Vernon makes it very convenient for visitations by local residents. No boat ramps have been provided at the site.

e. Site Number 7 - (Photos Number 13-15). This area is owned by the Game Department and shows more development than several of the other sites. Funds for this development were supplied by the State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation. At the intersection of County Farm Road and Higby Road, access to the site can be gained over a road atop the levee. For a substantial portion of the area the levee is quite close to the river's edge. A small bank is present with no appreciable sandbar in the river. The shape of the area is linear with a large parking area adjacent to the river bank. Facilities on the site include a concrete block boat ramp and modern toilets.

The area was completely empty of recreationists which greatly surprised Mr. Nelson. He commented that the site normally experiences heavy usage. The wider area near the boat ramp contains adequate space for the establishment of additional facilities to compliment the fishing and boating activity.

f. Site Number 8 - (Photos Number 16-18). Located near Skagit City on the South Fork of the river, this site is one of the more secluded areas visited on the field trip. The area is owned or leased by the Game Department. Access to the site is provided by an unpaved roadway which crosses the levee. This unpaved road may be reached where it intersects the Skagit City Fir Road. A distance of 300 feet separates the levee from the edge of the river. A small vehicle turnaround area is present which appears to be cut out of the dense vegetation on the site. This dense vegetation greatly contributes to the secluded nature of the area. The landscape on the other side of the river basically consists of field and agricultural buildings. One portable toilet and an old picnic table have been furnished for the site.

Along this quiet stretch of river four people were fishing from a muddy bar. Very little bank is present between this bar and the vehicle turnaround. In the recreational area the bar is quite large and it extends along the shore in both directions.

g. **Site Number 9** - (Photos Number 19-23). According to Mr. Nelson and Mr. Aarstad, this site should be given top priority for development. Located near **the community of Conway**, the five acre area is owned by Skagit County. Access to the site crosses a recently constructed levee. The spacing between the levee and the edge of the river is a distance of 200 feet. Similar to the situation with Site 3B, a bridge intersects and dominates this recreational area. The bridge carries traffic for the Fir Island Road.

The vegetation pattern naturally divides the site into three areas. In the area containing the entrance road the vegetation is solely grass which results in an open area. Adjacent to this section is a heavily timbered area where the underbrush has been cleared. Several picnic tables have been placed in this area. The final section which is to the south of the heavily timbered area contains both trees and underbrush. A rough boat access point has been cut into the bank which is quite small at this point. Some problems exist in the use of this access point due to fluctuation in river level caused by tidal influences. When the river is down, people have backed their boat trailers well into the riverbed in order to launch their boats. Occassionally a vehicle with trailer becomes stuck in the riverbed mud. The County maintains the few recreational facilities present in the area.

Six vehicles were parked in the area with most of the activity involved with fishing. One of the local officials commented that the

site provided fairly good fishing opportunities. In general the area offers development possibilities with the variation in vegetation and the level topography.

h. Site Number 10 - (Photos Number 24-26). This final site is located on the North Fork of the Skagit with access from Browns Slough Road. The actual access road is unpaved and crosses the levee. Distance from the river's edge to the levee is 150 feet. At this time the local officials are unsure of the ownership of this land parcel. A small turnaround and parking area are present on the site. Behind the parking area a heavy vegetative wall exists which limits one's perception of the size of the area. Basically no riverbank is present and the parking area is adjacent to the water's edge. The shape of the area is quite linear with fairly level topography. No restroom facilities are provided on the site.

In terms of recreational usage six persons were fishing in the area. No boat ramps have been built but the absence of a steep bank would allow some boat launching. Fishing is the major recreational activity at the site and will continue to be dominant in the future.

2. Conclusions. Visitation to the sites indicated that there is a substantial amount of recreational usage at many of the areas. The dominant recreational interest at the sites is unmistakably fishing

activity. Great variation is present in terms of the level of development at individual areas. The top priority areas, suggested by Mr. Nelson and Mr. Aarstad, should receive strong consideration due to the large land parcel size and potential to accommodate several recreational activities.

*Robinson*  
ROBINSON