

# Committee wants

## 'definite answer' on dam

By STEVE BERENTSON  
Staff Writer

**MOUNT VERNON** — After delivery of a "progress report" Tuesday, members of the Skagit River Flood Control Committee told the Skagit County Commissioners they are searching for "some sort of definitive answer" as to the feasibility of a Sauk River dam.

After discussion of the committee's draft recommendations — and a few frustrations — commissioners Bud Norris and Howard Miller told the committeemen they are grateful for the time they have contributed to flood control proposals in the 10 months since they were appointed.

Committee Chairman Jess Knutzen told the commissioners his group's recommendations would probably be ready in November but in the mean time he was anxious to "get some direction"

from them.

Subcommittee Chairman Bob Hulbert referred to recent news reports regarding the possibility of a Sauk River flood control dam and said, "I somewhat regret public debate on this before we submit it to you people."

Hulbert's comments were made in reference to comments made by U.S. Rep. Al Swift, D-2nd District, who recently termed a Sauk River dam project "virtually impossible."

While Hulbert called the proposal "the one alternative that would help everybody in the county," Swift has cautioned that serious obstacles include fisheries concerns, high costs and a necessary Congressional amendment to the Wild and Scenic River Act.

Knutzen told the commissioners the Army Corps of Engineers has indicated

they are interested in providing feasibility information but Hulbert noted the Corps "is a creature of Congress' will."

Knutzen said members of the committee met briefly with U.S. Sen. Henry Jackson, "but he didn't give us too much encouragement."

Committee members are still pursuing efforts to discuss the proposal with Swift and with U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton.

"We just want some sort of definitive answer as to whether the dam is possible," Hulbert said. "If it isn't feasible, we ought to know that once and for all."

Hulbert also referred to Swift's projected estimates that a Sauk River dam could cost local government \$20-\$60 million. Alternate flood control options, he suggested, would also be expensive, which is why the committee wants to see up-to-

date feasibility reports that would allow a comparison of costs.

In further discussion of their draft recommendations, subcommittee chairman Arnold Hansen said his group sees a "restricted density floodway" as the only realistic option to meeting floodway designation requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

A density floodway would restrict development of a percentage of each parcel of land in areas likely to be flooded by the Skagit River.

But Mount Vernon Building Inspector Ron Maynock told the board and committeemen FEMA officials had indicated to him in a recent letter they would not accept a density floodway proposal.

Norris had suggested local officials should seek to be "firm" without "alienating" FEMA officials. But Maynock said

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Bob Hulbert

evidence of other communities' experiences with FEMA indicates Skagit County "will have to fight and scratch all the way" to win approval of a floodway proposal opposed by FEMA officials.

Because of time restrictions on the federally-mandated floodway designation, Knutzen said his committee will likely forward that portion of its recommendations to the Board of Commissioners next month.

Norris said he would like to see the board review final committee recommendations before making any decision on them. Public hearings will likely be held during review of the final recommendations.

The flood control committee meets again Thursday, August 20 at 7:30 p.m. in Hearing Room C of the County Administration Building in Mount Vernon.