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SKAGIT PLANNING COUNCIL ISSUES FLOOD STATEMENT

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT-VOTE ON QUESTION TUESDAY

The question to appear on the ballot at the municipal elections next Monday, whether or not to approve a flood control district, is one that most of the county voters know little about. The Skagit County Planning Council realizes this and have prepared a statement setting forth their arguments in favor of the proposition and given an explanation of the plan. The statement, in part, follows:

“The Planning Council believes the formation of our Flood Control district the most important thing this county has attempted to do. The Skagit and Samish rivers have always presented a serious problem. Through the years, instead of growing better, the dangers have constantly increased. Something must be done or the entire valley faces disaster. In the past we have tried to work single-handed. This has failed.

The land in this valley has been reclaimed from overflow by rivers and salt waters at tremendous cost. Fifty years ago the individual tried to dike and drain his land. In a few years he learned that he could not succeed alone. His neighbors joined with him and formed dike and drainage districts designed to protect and reclaim small isolated units. Neighboring farmers formed similar districts; each trying to protect its property, regardless of what happened to the adjoining district. We now have twenty-seven independent diking and drainage units. Through the years they have spent over \$1,000,000 of the taxpayer's money for protection.

We have recently realized, thru the flood of two years ago, when over 20,000 acres was under salt water, and through the fact that each winter we now have floods from the Skagit and Samish, that we must have help.

More Flood Danger

As we have been building our dikes, the timber has been logged from our hills. They no longer hold back the rainfall and melting snow. At Hamilton, Lyman, Sterling and a hundred other places on both the Skagit and Samish rivers are each year washing away acres upon acres of land. This silt has filled up the mouths of the rivers and the river beds. The dikes cannot hold back the flood waters. The entire farming area and the existence of towns such as Mount Vernon, Burlington, Lyman and Hamilton is jeopardized. At Sterling the Skagit has so changed its course and is so rapidly cutting away the river bank that it will soon force a new channel north of Burlington through the farming county to salt water.

This condition is common to all of Western Washington. Realizing that something must be done, the last legislature passed a series of laws known as the Flood Control legislation, which permits the formation of large flood control districts. On December 3 the residents of the mainland of Skagit County will vote on the formation of that territory into a flood control district.

Two Mill Levy Limit

The proposed district upon which you will vote embraces all of Skagit county except Fidalgo island. To avoid the cost of setting up new machinery and a completely new set of officers, the law makes the three men elected as commissioners, by vote of that election, the directors of the district. The law specifically limits the power of the district, when formed to tax any land. This act reads:

“Any flood control district may raise revenue by the levy of an annual tax on all taxable property within such districts, such levy to be made and taxes collected at the same time and in the same manner now or hereafter provided by law. . . . , such levy not to exceed 2 mills on the dollar in any one year.”

If you live in town and own a home which is carried on the tax roll at a taxable valuation of \$1,000, that means the flood control district has no power to tax your property more than \$2.00 in any one year.

We wish to point out that the taxpayer is spending many times the amount of money that can be involved in the formation of the district or its continued existence, but he does not know it. In 1909, the flood in this valley did approximately \$1,000,000 in damage. In 1917, the damage was at least half that. Similarly, in 1921, and all of the other floods, the cost has been hundreds of thousands of dollars. There has never been a flood in this valley that has not cost the county itself, for road and bridge and highway repair, at least \$25,000.00.

If the very maximum levy is made under the flood control district-2 mills of the dollar-it will only raise around \$25,000 in the entire county.