

Dredging Will Affect Valley, Hughes Warns

County Commissioner Lowell Hughes warned the Chamber of Commerce board yesterday that dredging the Skagit river could produce good or bad results to the lower Skagit Valley depending on what work was done to the river.

"What you do at the mouth of the river affects the lower valley," Hughes said.

He said that dredging the river would help in flood control, but would not be permanent since river silt would fill the bottom again. A "wing dam" would be needed to create a permanent channel, but such a dam might increase the danger of floods along the lower part of the Skagit, he explained.

Hughes, who has worked for the county on many river projects, was invited to the noon luncheon meeting at the President hotel by Leo Beckley, chairman of the river committee.

The Chamber's board started a program to have the river dredged and improved at its meeting three weeks ago to make Mount Vernon an inland port.

Beckley suggested, and the board approved, a letter being written to Congressman Jack Westland asking for a meeting with him about the river when he returns to the second district in August.

River freight companies and representatives from the Army corps of engineers will be invited to the meeting. Steve Mergler pointed out that a long range plan would have to be developed and adequate proof of need given to the government before the government will pay for river work.

Board members agreed that a regular freight service on the Skagit river would probably lower freight rates through competition.