

River Group Awaits Information By Army In Planning New Move

The answer was no, but they're not done yet.

Such was the feeling yesterday by the eight men from Skagit County as they left the Seattle district Army Engineers headquarters in Seattle after having their proposal to declare an emergency to have a new channel in the mouth of the Skagit River turned down.

County Commissioner Lowell Hughes acted as spokesman for a committee from the Skagit County Flood Control Council which was instructed by the council at their Dec. 16 meeting to seek federal aid in having the new channel dredged at the mouth of the north fork of the Skagit River.

Gives Resolutions

Hughes presented resolutions on the 11 dike districts in Skagit County to Col. Norman A. Matthias asking that the work be done in order to provide a faster runoff of the Skagit's water and lower the river level by a foot or more.

"You can't realize how important the difference of a few inches in the dikes during a flood means," commented Hughes.

Members of the colonel's staff pointed out that their studies showed that the river bottom of Skagit has remained more or less stable in the past 18 years, but admitted that the tidal flats at the outlet would continue to build up with silt.

Col. Matthias told the group

that federal emergency funds can be used only for replacing public works that have been destroyed or are in the process of construction. Otherwise, he said, the committee would have to ask Congress for money to conduct another survey of the area to see if the benefits would justify the cost of new work.

Funds Sought

(The chamber of commerce earlier this year requested Congressman Jack Westland to work for a \$20,000 appropriation from the U.S. to finance such a survey. It is expected that efforts to obtain that federal allocation will be stepped up.)

George Kurttila, civil engineer for the Army in the planning section for navigation projects, pointed out that their office has a report on flood control and navigation made on the Skagit now in Washington, D.C., before the Chief of Engineers.

He said action is expected on the report in the next two years. However, the colonel said that the information within the report would be made available to the county and the dike districts.

Kurttila said that some of the main recommendations in the report were for extension and raising of the dikes from Burlington down to the mouth of the river.

Agree to Study

In addition to this information, the Army Engineer agreed to have his staff make a compara-

tive study of 1937 soundings of the river and the tide flats as against those taken in July, 1955, and forward the report to the Skagit County engineer, H. O. Walberg, next week.

Col. Matthias indicated that it might be possible to do some work on the river under a 1947 resolution by Congress concerning development of navigation on Puget Sound inland waters. He said that many factors could account for the high water this past November when the volume was 47,000 cubic feet per second less than in the flood five years ago and that the same amount of water might have a lower level at the next high water due to changes in the river.

Those attending the meeting from Skagit County included besides Hughes: Earl Hanson, chairman of the flood control council; Daniel Sundquist, chairman of Dike District No. 3; Charles Christianson, secretary of Dike District No. 1; Noble Lee, chairman of Dike District No. 2; Jim Dunlap of Dunlap Towing Company; Leo Beckley, representing the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce; and Skagit County Engineer H. O. Walberg, who acted as technical adviser.

Members of the group said this morning that they were awaiting the promised information from the Army before announcing their next step in their fight to lessen the flood threat to the lowlying farmland of Skagit County.