

Group gives its approval of bypass

By GEORGE GEASEY
Staff Reporter

Agreeing that the proposed Avon Bypass is essential to a proposed dike extension along the Skagit River from Mount Vernon to Sedro-Woolley, Nookachamps Valley property owners Wednesday night endorsed the Bypass plan. They also elected a committee of three men to study the dike extension proposal.

More than 50 persons attended a meeting to discuss the diking plan at Clear Lake School. Commissioners of Diking District 20 called the meeting to determine feeling in the Nookachamps Valley concerning extension of the district into that area to permit dike expansion. James G. Smith, District 20 attorney, explained the proposed diking system cannot be built without a municipal corporation like a diking district to sponsor it and deal with federal agencies which help engineer and finance such projects.

THREE ELECTED

Elected to the interim study committee were James C. Christopherson, J. W. Wallace, and Bill Moore, all property owners in the Nookachamps Valley.

It was Skagit County Superior Court Judge A. H. Ward, himself a Nookachamps farmer and property owner, who cited the value of the Avon Bypass plan to any Skagit River diking proposals. Judge Ward said it would be foolish to consider building any dikes unless an outlet is provided for surplus flood water through the Avon Bypass.

"I feel building of this dike is a good deal if the Avon Bypass is assured," Judge Ward said. He suggested delaying any action aimed at having the Nookachamps Valley join District 20 until installation of the bypass is assured.

Earlier in Wednesday night's meeting, it had been explained several times that the Nookachamps area has served for years as a "reservoir" for Skagit River flood waters. Whenever the Skagit rises to near-flood levels, its first high water usually spills over into the rich valley lying northeast of Mount Vernon. Such a condition long has been considered a natural protection of sorts against much more severe flooding in other areas down river from the Nookachamps region.

ENGINEERS STUDY

George Dynes, District 20 commissioner, explained Wednesday night that he had taken representatives of the United States Army Corps of Engineers into the Nookachamps Valley 1½ years ago to discuss possibilities of relieving the area of its role as a "reservoir." The dike extension scheme was thus developed, Dynes said.

Support for the plan in the Nookachamps Valley will enable Army Engineers to justify an intensive study of the proposal as part of a larger Skagit River flood control survey Dynes said. Ray Skrinde, an engineer from the Army Corps, agreed with Dynes Wednesday night. Skrinde said the Corps hopes to study possibilities of

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Nookachamps group favors Avon Bypass

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protection in the Nookachamps Valley when it begins after July 1 of the Avon Bypass. Both upstream water provided by dams along Skagit River and the Bypass are essential to the Nookachamps plan and other long-range plans for Skagit basin control, Skrinde explained.

SEE SYSTEMATIC

Ray Harms, Skagit representative for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, told Wednesday night's audience the Nookachamps Valley contains 46,000 acres of land. He commented on a large diking district including both District 20 and the Bypass would help make flood control programs more systematic.

Dynes also urged support Wednesday night for the Avon Bypass.

He said opposition to the proposal, largely centered in the Burlington area, has "slow-down" studies of the plan by Army Engineers. Dynes reported 650 persons in the Burlington area had signed petitions opposing the Bypass.

One person attending the meeting had a humorous alternative suggestion for profiting from the Nookachamps Valley's role as a "reservoir." He suggested land owners in the area might charge fees to property owners farther downriver whenever Nookachamps farms are submerged by flood waters which thus are kept from doing heavy damage downstream.

The three-man committee elected Wednesday night to represent the Nookachamps property owners indicated it will report back to the larger group about two months.

Almost no objection was heard to either committee election or the Avon Bypass resolution in Wednesday night's vote at Clear Lake.