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SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS WINS "PROJECT OF THE YEAR" AWARD FROM AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION

Skagit River flood history project is winning entry

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SKAGIT COUNTY – The Washington State Chapter of the American Public Works Association annually presents a “Project of the Year” award for projects of Historical Significance. For 2005, at their annual awards luncheon held in Seattle yesterday, the Skagit County Public Works Department was the winner.

The award-winning project submitted by Skagit County was a major research project archiving historical newspaper articles on Skagit River floods dating over more than a century. Participants in the project were Larry Kunzler, his son Josef Kunzler, and Skagit County Communications Director Dan Berentson.

The Kunzlers and Berentson worked many weekends paging through the bound archives of the Burlington Journal, Mount Vernon Argus, Sedro-Woolley Courier Times and the Skagit Valley Herald gleaning material. Some of the bound files dated back into the 1800s. “One of the criteria of qualifying for the award was to demonstrate the use of history in understanding and solving today’s public works problems and issues,” said Berentson. “This archive which is now available online and in bound form outlines and documents more than 100 years history of flood damage and devastation, political and agency action and inaction, dams, levees, dikes and public works projects.”

“Larry Kunzler did the lion’s share of the work on this project, indexing hundreds of articles and organizing it into a very professional archive,” said Berentson. “The people of Skagit County owe Larry and Josef and the entire Kunzler family a great deal of thanks for their hard work on this project.”

The project is available online at www.skagitcounty.net under “Skagit River Flood Information.” It is also available on Kunzler’s website along with an extensive collection of flood related documents at www.skagitriverriverhistory.com

“We really appreciate the cooperation of Skagit Valley Herald Publisher Stedem Wood and Argus Editor Tony Flynn and Courier Times Editor Ruth Richardson for their cooperation in this project. Kristine Perkins at the Burlington City Library also was very helpful with their Burlington Journal archives,” said Berentson.

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