

April 29, 1974

District Engineer
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
1519 Alaskan Way South
Seattle, Washington

Dear Sir:

The Board of the Skagit Conservation District wishes to support the statements made by Commissioners Jack Wylie and Howard Miller quoted in last Wednesday's Skagit Valley Herald concerning the Forest Service Study recommendation that the Sauk River be declared a Scenic River under the Wild and Scenic River System. We felt such a declaration will have more far reaching consequences for the Skagit Community than most of our people realize and that local people and organizations must begin making themselves aware of these consequences. A copy of this newspaper article is enclosed.

Fifty year flood protection for the lower Skagit flood plain is an essential part of the development of our community as well as an essential goal for protection of our existing community. As Mr. Miller says, just because we have been lucky in recent years doesn't mean we dare be complacent or that we won't again have serious flooding. Our board feels the Community has delayed essential flood improvements for too long now. All knowledgeable people concerned with the Skagit feel fifty year flood frequency control is an essential and attainable goal, including the Army Corps of Engineers and our own County Engineering Department. The first steps are already taken with flood control on the existing dams on the Skagit and more flood protection in the offing on the Baker with an agreement with Puget Power to increase flood control capacity. Levy improvement on the lower Skagit has federal funding and we understand will soon be pushed forward by the Corps. However to achieve the full fifty year frequency protection, which is vital, one of two projects is necessary. The alternatives here are either the completion of the Avon By-pass or a flood control dam or such flood control structures on the Sauk.

However, a Federal designation of the Sauk would eliminate one of this community's options for avoiding a serious future flood in that any structure like this is prohibited on so designated rivers. We feel it would be folly for this community to give up this option or to think we could get reclassification to build such a structure if it became needed in the future. To have to go to Congress or even some Federal Agency in Washington D. C. for reclassification of the stream to achieve flood protection would surely be impossible for a small community like ours.

P 002336

We feel that Mr. Wylie's statement that there is no wide local support for the Avon By-pass is a forth right statement of fact. This project would be a very major dislocation to the community to say nothing of local expense. The Skagit River Study has produced a lengthy Environmental Impact Statement on the supposed effects of making part of the Skagit Recreational and the Suiattle and Sauk Scenic. However, if such dislocation precludes flood control structures wouldn't adoption of the plan force the Avon By-pass if we were to have flood protection all knowledgeable people say we must have? No Environmental Impact Statement on the Avon By-pass or Sauk Dam is in the report. We feel no such plan should be considered at any level before such an impact statement was made and carefully explained to all our county's people and we ask our Congressmen and Senators, as well as all concerned agencies and bodies to insist that such a procedure be followed.

Mr. Barth, who made the Skagit Study for the Forest Service, dismisses the Sauk flood control structure by saying that he understands the Corps felt that a Dam "would never justify itself now." The Skagit Conservation District and no one we know of in Skagit County has ever officially or unofficially heard anyone from the Corps say that a flood control structure on the Sauk was not feasible. A phone call today from our office to the Corps in Seattle confirms this position. We have heard many people say such a structure or the Avon By-pass was necessary for fifty year flood frequency control. Any serious study given by the Corps to the project is almost twenty-five years old. Cost benefit ratios based on today's realities could very well change conclusions reached. Skagit flood plain developments in agriculture alone run into the hundreds of millions of dollars to say nothing of homes, businesses, malls, and other existing developments.

In summary the Skagit Conservation District insists that this community must make itself aware of what is involved in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Study and it's recommendation. The Skagit Conservation District also demands that a feasibility study be made of both the Sauk River flood control structure and the Avon By-pass by the Corps of Engineers or any other concerned governmental agency - this study to include further clarification to the people of the Skagit of their options and effects of such structures before allowing any classification of the river or any of it's tributaries under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Sincerely
Skagit Conservation District

BH/rk

By: Bob Hulbert, Chairman
James Solseth, Vice Chairman
Lyle Weson, Secretary-Treasurer
Art Johnson
Floyd Nelson