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April 22, 1975

Representative Lloyd Meeds
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Federal Wild and Scenic River Study

Dear Representative Meeds:

The U.S. Forest Service is in the process of completing a Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers study of the Skagit River and several of its principal tributaries. Tentative recommendations of the Forest Service, if acted upon by Congress, could result in a loss of an important project that is now part of our comprehensive Skagit River flood control plan, adopted in 1970. Phase I of the plan is obtaining additional flood control storage at Puget Sound Power and Light Company's existing Upper Baker project. Phase II would be construction of the Skagit River levee and channel improvement project, authorized by the 1966 Flood Control Act. A flood control dam on the Sauk River and/or construction of the Avon Bypass would be accomplished under Phase III. All of the projects are discussed in the Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters Study report, completed in 1971. This report was made available to Congress in July, 1974.

The Seattle District, Corps of Engineers is currently completing feasibility studies of changing the operation at Puget Power's Upper Baker project (Baker Lake) in the interest of additional flood control storage. We understand that their report is expected to be forwarded to Congress some time late in Fiscal Year 1975. Authorization will be sought of Federal compensation of Puget Power for power production foregone in the interest of Skagit River flood control. Subsequent to approval of the Baker River proposal, we hope the Corps can begin preconstruction planning studies of the authorized levee and channel improvement project. This would lead to completion Phases I and II of our plan.

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While the combination of the levee and channel improvement project and increased storage space at Baker Lake will materially improve control of Skagit River floods in the lower delta areas, additional measures are required in order to secure an adequate level of protection. **Either of two projects, (1) the Avon Bypass, authorized in 1936 or (2) a dam on the lower Sauk River, about 5 miles upstream from its mouth, could, in combination with other proposals, provide at least a 50-year level of protection for the flood plain below Burlington.**

As you are aware, the U.S. Forest Service over the past several years has been conducting studies of the Skagit River and its tributaries, the Sauk, Suiattle, and Cascade, in compliance with Public Law 90-542. The Forest Service studies are essentially complete. The Sauk River, from its confluence with the Skagit River upstream to Elliot Creek at river mile 43.3, has been tentatively selected by the Forest Service for classification by Congress as a Federal "scenic river." Such classification under terms of Public Law 95-42, **would preclude construction of future dams.** We do not feel that Congress should act on the Forest Service recommendation until further studies are undertaken of the feasibility of constructing a flood control dam on the Sauk River. While we recognize the significant environmental attributes of the **Sauk and its importance as a spawning area for salmon and steelhead trout,** we do feel it may be possible to formulate a flood control project that would not significantly impact these resources. In any case, further studies would appear to be in order before a decision is made on this particular river.

The Avon Bypass, estimated to cost in excess of \$40 million, is not viewed as a viable project by the community. The local share of the project's cost, about \$8 to \$10 million, is prohibitive. Also, a considerable amount of agricultural land would be taken out of production. **On the other hand, a flood control dam on the lower Sauk River would essentially be totally financed by the Federal Government.** Either the Avon Bypass or the dam on the lower Sauk could provide, in combination with the previously mentioned proposals, the degree of protection desired for our county. Perhaps if the cost-sharing formula for the Avon Bypass project were changed to reduce local funding requirements, it would be more acceptable to the community. If a decision is made to lock up the Sauk and thereby forego an option the county now has for additional flood protection in order to satisfy national, state or Puget Sound area (Seattle-Tacoma-Everett metropolitan complex) interests, we ask that the Avon Bypass cost-sharing requirements be modified.

The immediate purpose of this letter is to request that you direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake feasibility studies of a flood control dam on the Sauk River and that you secure necessary funds to allow completion of these studies as soon as possible.

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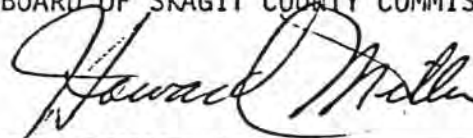
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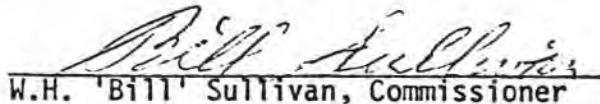
The potential along the Skagit River for flood damages, based on existing land use, developments, and improvements, is estimated at nearly \$4 million, on an average annual basis. While a major flood has not occurred since 1951, we are still quite concerned as the potential exists for a very disastrous event, which could result in many millions of dollars of damages to valuable croplands and possible loss of life. Therefore, we urgently request your assistance.

Respectfully,

BOARD OF SKAGIT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Howard Miller, Chairman



W.H. 'Bill' Sullivan, Commissioner



Jack Wylie, Commissioner

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