

SKAGIT COUNTY/WSU
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

112 County Administration Building - Mount Vernon, WA. 98273 Telephone 336-9322

Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics in Cooperation with the College of
Agriculture, Washington State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

LOCAL Gene S.

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M E M O R A N D U M

SKAGIT COUNTY

DATE: March 8, 1979

TO: Ag Coordinating Council

FROM: Frederick E. Wepprecht
Area Extension Agent

Frederick E. Wepprecht

SUBJECT: Meeting to discuss dredging as an alternative proposal
for providing Skagit flood protection.

The Corps of Engineers will be with us on Monday,
March 19, 1979 at 7:30 P.M. in the County Administration
Building, Hearing Room B. 5130

To critically evaluate any and all proposals, the
attached outline has been developed to assist us in coming
to any conclusions.

I asked Dr. Faas, W.S.U. Extension, to give us a
starting list of objective questions to apply in the analysis
of the various proposals.

If you would review this outline and add your own points,
we will base our discussion of proposals (comparisons) on it.

If the council should decide to hold community meetings
on the project, this outline could also be used in guiding
those discussions.

FEW:jh

Enclosure

P004945

CONCEPTS FOR
EVALUATING PROJECT ALTERNATIVES*

Ronald C. Faas
Extension Economist
Washington State University

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SKAGIT COUNTY

I. Some First Questions

Before evaluating project alternatives, it is necessary to closely examine three questions:

A. WHAT do we want to do?

Ex: - implement a comprehensive flood control plan;
- reduce flood damage to life and property;
- preserve undeveloped lands in the flood plain for parks and open space.

B. WHY do we want to do it?

Objective should be stated in terms of what the solution should do. Need to know what problem the project is to solve before the project alternative can be evaluated. Usually a variety of reasons for needing a project; related to a third point.

C. WHO wants to do it?

Different people have different reasons for supporting a project alternative.

1. Not everyone will agree on a single alternative;
2. Different people view the problem differently;
3. **One person's solution may become another's problem.**

There is seldom any such thing as a "community's objective;" need to work for consensus or majority support for an alternative, while being sensitive to objections raised by minority.

II. Some Project Evaluation Criteria

(Note: This is a suggested list of five criteria to start with, along with some analytical questions to stimulate discussion of each criterion.)

* Prepared for use by the Skagit County Agricultural Coordinating Council in community meetings to evaluate project alternatives concerning the Skagit River.

A. Effect on FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT BASIC GOALS

- How well will each project alternative reduce flood damage and where?
- What will be the effect on land use patterns?
- Will further development of the flood plain, as a result of the alternative, increase rather than reduce exposure to flood damage?
- Preservation of flood plain lands for parks and open space?
- Relocation of roads?

B. COST EFFECTIVENESS

- Will other project alternatives achieve the same project objective at less cost?

(Which cost - initial implementation cost, annual management cost, or both?)

(Whose cost - federal, local, or both?)

C. EFFICIENCY of Resource Use

- Will the project alternative result in more efficient use of the flood plain and related resources, including water quality, fish and wildlife, recreation, transportation and cultural resources?
- Efficiency from whose perspective - national, regional, state, or local (including interests on and off the flood plain)?
- What opportunities will be foregone to the community by selecting this project alternative and spending its implementation and annual maintenance costs?

D. Effect on EQUITY

- Who benefits from the project alternative, and who bears its costs?
(Project alternatives involve the shifting of risk and exposure from one group to another, such as, exposure to a rise in 100 year water surface elevation.)
- Under each project alternative, which few individuals are asked to bear the short-run costs of obtaining a long-run gain for the broader community?

E. FEASIBILITY

- Is the project alternative politically feasible?
- Are the equity impacts of the project considered fair?
- Is accomplishment of the project goals considered worth the local share of implementation and annual management costs?

- Is the project alternative administratively feasible?
- Can the structural aspects of the project alternative be achieved?
- Will the related flood plain management techniques (zoning, flood proofing of future structures, flood warning, etc.) be implemented and enforced to achieve project goals?

III. Summary

A. This discussion began by asking some first questions:

WHO wants to do WHAT and WHY?

What do we want to do?
Why do we want to do it?
Who wants to do it?

B. We looked at five (or more) criteria for evaluating project alternatives:

1. Will the project alternative accomplish the project's basic objectives?
2. Is the alternative cost effective or will another alternative achieve the project objective at less cost?
3. Will the project alternative result in more efficient use of resources?
4. What is the effect on equity; who will benefit from the project alternative, and who will bear its costs?
5. Is the project alternative politically and administratively feasible?

C. This was a suggested list of criteria to begin our evaluation of the project alternatives. Others could be (and were?) added.

- Different people place different importance to specific criteria.
- There are trade-offs between criteria.
- One project alternative may rate quite high on some criteria and low on others.

Hopefully, these are some criteria with which reasonable people can disagree with each other in their evaluations, and yet continue to debate the relative strengths and weaknesses of each project alternative.