

Concrete Herald

PRINTING AND PUBLISHING

1000 1st Avenue, Seattle, Wash. 98101

February 6, 1961

Col. R. P. Young, District Engineer
U. S. Army Engineer District
Seattle 4, Washington

Dear Sir:

As editor of the upper Skagit valley newspaper for the past thirty years I feel that I have a great stake in the development of the Skagit river, both for flood control and for better use of the river for navigation.

Reviewing the various projects suggested by the U. S. Army Engineers as possible flood control restoratives, the earth dam at Faber is one that should be avoided until all other possible avenues have been used. My personal reasons for speaking against this dam are that such a dam would have too many disadvantages to the upper valley, county and state to be considered as a possible solution to present problems.

First, flooding of the upper valley permanently to prevent flooding of a small area in the lower valley at very infrequent intervals seems a bit fantastic. Due to the five dams now on the Baker and Skagit rivers, control of high water in the Skagit has almost eliminated the flood threats we used to know. Now only freak conditions bring abnormally high water. This high water could adequately be handled by dredging in the lower valley at a fraction of the cost of the Faber dam.

Secondly, the steelhead and salmon runs in the Skagit would be seriously threatened by a dam at Faber as a great portion of the spawning is done above this point. Our experience with fish ladders, etc. has been that the best have been none too good and the runs are bound to suffer.

Third, the Northwest section of the state has been working for many years to effect a cross-mountain highway from the Skagit to Methow valleys. This highway is now on its way to completion. Flooding of the upper Skagit valley would end for all time this important asset to the economy of this corner of the state.

Fourth, the upper Skagit area is a storehouse of untapped mineral resources, still uncut timber and unlimited recreation areas. In the past few years new roads and bridges have been opening up this area and property once believed of no value is now eagerly sought. Land values will rise swiftly from now on--to the benefit of county and state tax rolls.

Fifth, this is home for hundreds of people who love the scenic valley and would not want to see it destroyed without the assurance that benefit gained would many times overshadow the losses suffered. The Faber dam cannot promise these gains.

Other suggested projects on the Army Engineers report could be of more benefit while not having the objections of the main river dam. A dam on the Cascade River would control this presently uncontrolled stream. A site has been chosen for a number of years, but unfortunately it is uneconomical for power due to the small storage area. For power, water and flood control perhaps this could be overcome.

The dam on the Sauk river also has flood control possibilities far beyond the Faber site as it is the real problem of Skagit flooding. There is no control on the Sauk, or the Suia-ttle river which joins it. Silt from the Suia-ttle provides a great share of the mud and sand that fills the lower river. Control on this stream would be a final step on control of all streams or any size which flow into the main Skagit.

Navigation Possibility

As far as a program of dredging that would permit navigation on the Skagit as far as Concrete, you will find little opposition. In the upper valley this plan receives nothing but enthusiasm as our problems are always linked with transportation.

Barging on the Skagit as a regular commercial route for materials would provide outlet for cement, lime rock, talc, silica, lumber and woods products, coal and iron, chrome, olivine, lead, silver and all other types of minerals to be found in quantity in the upper valley. Up to the present time most of this materials has been awaiting access roads which are now just beginning to tap the sources. By opening the river to economical water transportation, these materials become valuable commercially. I believe that once water transportation to salt water is attained there will be a great boom in employment in the upper valley with the resultant boom for the economy of the county and of the state.

The upper Skagit valley is admittedly undeveloped at this time. It is just beginning to reach its potential as the new source of wealth for the county. Due to this I strongly urge that the program on the Skagit river be tuned to the development of the Skagit area by forward-looking projects that will not tend to retard in any way the bright future for the eastern end of Skagit county. I believe the flood control problem can be met with vigor by use of several of the proposed methods. I just as strongly believe that the Faber dam would defeat in the end the very purpose for which it was suggested--betterment of Skagit county as a whole.

Sincerely


Charles M. Dwelley, Editor