

January 10, 1979

# Skagit Valley Herald

## Levee improvements

### Swift promises legislation

By RON LAMB  
Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON – Congressman-elect Al Swift (D-Bellingham) said he would introduce legislation authorizing an expanding U.S. Army Corps of Engineers levee improvement project on the Skagit River if county officials give their okay.

The Skagit County Commissioners must decide soon which of several flood control alternatives they want the Corps to pursue, Swift said. Congress reconvenes Monday.

Authorization for levee improvements would become part of an omnibus public works bill similar to one which failed to clear the last session.

But Swift said he was unsure how the Skagit legislation would be received by Congress and by the Carter administration.

The White House took a hard line against water projects in the last session, vetoing as inflationary an appropriation bill containing \$300,000 for work on the lower Skagit. Congress later passed a scaled down version which included all of the Skagit funds.

The omnibus public works bill expected in the coming session, which Corps officials say is key to the entire project, would authorize levee improvements from Burlington to Sedro-Woolley.

“I’m pretty optimistic for the authorization portion,” Swift commented following a luncheon meeting with Corps, flood control and county officials Tuesday.

“But the appropriation portion is the key thing,” he added.

“Traditionally, every administration tries to cut what is asked,” he commented. “It’s just a matter of how hard the administration will fight to cut it.”

“What we have to do is stress the cost benefits of the project,” he added.

The Corps would ask for \$18 million of the \$55 million total for the levee improvement project from the coming Congressional session.

Other flood control alternatives, including an Avon bypass and a flood containment dam on the Sauk River, would require a delay in the entire project and may not be politically or economically feasible, he stated.