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# Skagit Valley Herald

## Commissioners haven't decided

### Levee project not funded

By RON LAMB  
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Money for the Skagit River levee improvement project was not included in President Carter's budget proposals for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction projects, an aide to Congressman Al Swift confirmed this morning.

But funding to begin construction of the Skagit River project next year could be inserted in Congress, the Swift aide stated.

Corps construction proposals are prepared well in advance for submission to the Office of Management and Budget and the President, Swift staff member Drew Pettus explained.

At the time the proposals were submitted, the Skagit County Commissioners had not decided to go ahead with the flood control project, Pettus explained.

Skagit County Commissioners have yet to decide if they want to go ahead with an expanded levee improvement project suggested by the Corps. The recommended option, costing an estimated \$55.3 million, would extend dikes upriver between Burlington and Sedro-Woolley, giving 100-year flood protection for Burlington and Mount Vernon and 50-year protection to rural areas below Mount Vernon.

"It's a question of how they (the county commissioners) want to proceed," Pettus commented.

The White House might support the project if it is introduced, he said.

The "\$64 question" is whether or not there is enough Congressional support, he commented.

Congress might be reluctant to expand on what the President labeled "an austere budget," he cautioned.

But Pettus hinted that the Skagit levee project has some influential friends.

"Congressman Swift feels that between the members of the Washington state delegation, including Sen. (Warren) Magnuson and Sen. (Henry) Jackson, the project stands a fairly good chance," Pettus commented.

"I'm fairly optimistic," he stated.

Magnuson is the ranking senior member of the Senate and chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee.

Carter's Corps of Engineers proposals includes \$65.6 million for the state of Washington in fiscal 1980.

Not all of the \$55.3 million cost of the Skagit levee project would be sought for 1980. Part of the cost would be local and some would be funded in subsequent years.