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Skagit Valley Herald

Swift enters Skagit flood protection bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Legislation to expand flood control and greatly reduce the risk of flooding in the Skagit River Basin was introduced today by Congressman Al Swift.

The measure would extend protection upriver from Mount Vernon to Sedro-Woolley. Levees below Mount Vernon would be raised.

“With the rapid increases in both population and property values in the area, the concern about widespread flood damage has also grown,” said Swift. “This is a sound plan with substantial benefits to the area outweighing the costs.”

The Army Corps of Engineers told Swift the estimated cost of the project would be about \$38 million. Earlier estimates have placed the total at \$55 million. Swift said local officials, who have worked closely in developing the project, would pick up part of the cost, to be repaid to the federal government over a period of 50 years.

“The local community is to be congratulated for the excellent manner of coordinating its efforts and for working so effectively with the Corps and the state congressional delegation,” the 2nd district congressman said.

Senators Warren Magnuson and Harry Jackson plan to introduce shortly similar legislation into the Senate.

Swift said the Skagit Regional Council has settled on a combination of levee and channel improvements to increase the channel capacity. “The Corps of

Engineers has thrown its full support behind the project,” he said.

The bill, the first piece in which Swift is a prime sponsor, would extend the Skagit River Levee and Channel Improvement Project from Mount Vernon to Sedro-Woolley.

It would also incorporate authorization for recreational uses into the flood control design, Swift said.

“The local community has done its work and stands ready to meet its future obligations regarding this project,” he said. “Now, we should act to help them provide Skagit Valley citizens with reliable protection from the ravages of floods.

A 1975 flood did more than \$6 million worth of damage to the Skagit River Basin.

An expanded Skagit River project would provide 100-year flood protection for Mount Vernon and Burlington and 5-year protection for rural areas below Mount Vernon. The present levee system provides five to 15-year protection.

According to earlier estimates from the Corps, the county share of the project would be \$9.4 million, with \$3 million in road relocation, \$3 million in acquisition of rights of way and \$1.6 million for other costs, which could include relocation of boat ramps, connecting dikes and flood gates.