

Skagit Valley Herald

Skagit flood meeting

Army Corps to discuss flood control measures for county Tuesday night

By LAURIE DUNHAM
Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON – Flood control planning for the Skagit River Basin will be the subject of a countywide public meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday to the hearing room of the Skagit County Administration Building in Mount Vernon.

Col. John Poteat, district engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Seattle District, and members of his staff will conduct the meeting.

Poteat will tentatively recommend a plan for flood damage reduction and invite public comment. The plan will include structural and non-structural flood damage reduction measures for the entire flood plain downstream of Sedro-Woolley.

These revisions should help lessen any adverse impacts resulting from Alternative 3E, the favored flood control plan, Corps officials say.

Alternative 3E, as modified, would provide more than 500-year flood level protection to 2,200 acres in Mount Vernon, and 100-year protection for about 12,000 additional acres in urban areas. It would also provide 50-year flood level protection for about 39,000 acres of agricultural land.

Improvements to the present flood protection system would include raising and widening the levees, erecting flood walls

through Mount Vernon, construction erosion control sills near Sterling Hill to prevent river channel change, and relocating some county roads.

Forest Brooks, Corps study manager, estimated that if the plan is carried out, the increased protection provided would substantially reduce flood damages to nearly all residential, commercial, and industrial structures, as well as to roads, railroads and public utilities and facilities in the affected areas.

The benefits would be offset by some disadvantages, however:

Potential adverse impacts of the plan include an increase in flood water levels in some areas, relocation of some houses and buildings, pressure for development of farmland provided 100-year flood protection, and temporary community disruption during construction.

Recent modifications proposed by the Corps have been added to lessen these induced flood damages.

Plan modification have been made for the following areas:

– **West Mount Vernon.** The levee alignment will be moved from Ball to Front Street. Property between Front Street and the river will be purchased.

This change will reduce project-induced flood damages in the West Mount Vernon area and will provide 100-year protection to about 10 additional residences.

Approximately nine homes and the trailer court in this six-acre area remaining un-leveed will be purchased.

– **Mount Vernon.** Flowage easements and/or floodproofing will be provided for the Stokely warehouse and Moose Hall.

– **Nookachamps Creek and South Sedro-Woolley.** Residences will be raised above the flood plain if possible, otherwise relocated, purchased, or compensated with flowage easements.

This project modification will result in some compensation to area residents for project-induced flood damages. The number of relocations necessary is currently being determined.

– **Sterling.** Addition of a levee along the west side of District Line Road to provide 100-year protection for United General Hospital and other structures northeast of the road.

Other structures in the induced-damages area will receive compensation similar to the Nookachamps area. A few relocations will be required by project construction.

– **Clear Lake.** Addition of a levee west of Highway 9 and across the East Fork Nookachamps Creek to provide 100-year flood protection to Clear Lake.

The levee would parallel Mud Lake Road, run along the railroad and Highway 9, and cut across Francis Road through farmland for about 1,800 feet. A 150-foot segment of Mud Lake Road would be raised to provide an access ramp over the road.

Direct impact to fish and wildlife would be minimal. Adverse secondary impacts to such sensitive species as trumpeter swans and bald eagles could occur as a result of pressure to develop the area.

Other project modifications include:

– **West Burlington.** The levee from Burlington to Bayview Ridge was relocated to Johnson Road at the request of the property owners and the local sponsor to lessen impacts to farmland.

Impacts to property owners due to levee construction will be reduced by this levee alignment revision. An additional 500 acres will be provided 100-year flood protection.

– **Sterling.** The weir structure has been eliminated as a result of further engineering and economic studies. These revealed that a more effective method of maintaining 50-year protection to the Samish Valley would be through buried erosion control sills.

This sill will prevent the Skagit River channel from eventual relocation around Sterling Hill. As a result of this modification, the levee from Sterling Hill to Burlington Hill was realized.

Comments made by persons attending the public meeting or by mail will be considered by the Corps before the final design and environmental impact statement are forwarded to higher authority for review and approval.

Written comments must be received by June 30.

Cost of plan 3E is estimated at \$55 million, with \$10 million from local sources. The local share is expected to be less, however, because the county already has several necessary right-of-ways.

The plan still must receive Congressional authorization and funding before it can be implemented.