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Our Greatest Asset Needs A Push!

Recently it was announced that money had been appropriated in Congress for a survey of the Skagit river by Army engineers. Purpose of the study would be to determine the feasibility of dredging the stream for shallow barge transportation. To many people the full import of this project may be lost in the present day era when government survey funds are allocated for a multitude of programs ranging from rehabilitating the gooney bird to effecting world-wide birth control.

It should be pointed out, however, that the proposed dredging of the Skagit is not just another crackpot scheme or a ridiculous proposal fostered by dreamers. On the contrary, the possibility of opening the Skagit for limited navigation is most real, the need most pressing, the potential most exciting and the impact on the economy of this region most promising.

There are few counties in the state (or any other state for that matter) that can claim the natural resource advantages that Skagit county enjoys. In the Skagit we have a full-blown carrier, a second Columbia whose headquarters drink deep of high mountain snows the year around and whose mouth kisses the Pacific ocean. In the vast regions of its headwaters lie timber, minerals and rock deposits, many of them virgin assets that call for dependable, economical transportation to market before they can be put to use. The swath the Skagit cuts through rock and mountain provides gorges where great dams have been and are being built to supply the hydroelectric needs of hundreds of thousands in the Pacific Northwest. Sportsmen and

nature lovers find the Skagit and its resulting bounty an enviable playground 12 months a year. What a natural asset for development – yet its potential has hardly been scratched!

A specific and timely example of what economical river transportation can mean to the economy of this area is the Lone Star Cement plant located at Concrete. Unlimited deposits of some of the finest limestone rock to be found anywhere in the world are located nearby. The cost of getting this rock and finished products derived therefrom downriver to market compares unfavorably with available but inferior supplies found elsewhere. Transportation by river barge would cut deposit-to-plant costs and mean more business and jobs for Skagit county. Limestone is but one of the many raw materials that might find its way down the river once the stream was deepened for navigation. Added flood control and soil conservation could be considered bonus benefits that would automatically ensue.

Previous preliminary investigation by Army engineers indicates that shallow dredging is not only feasible but practical from a costs standpoint. A thorough study will be possible with the survey money allocated by Congress.

The dredging and ultimate development of the Skagit river would undoubtedly help in firming up employment in this county. There is no short cut to industrial progress. The groundwork must be laid first. Time, effort and money is needed but will be returned a hundredfold upon the success of such a program. It is imperative that every community effort possible be

expended IMMEDIATELY to see that the survey is started as SOON AS POSSIBLE and the money allocated is not diverted to some other area for a need deemed “more pressing.”

Utilization of the Skagit river is the first big step necessary for development of the industrial potential of this county. The program needs the strong support and endorsement of every Chamber of Commerce every planning group and every county official to expedite its fulfillment. Let's see some immediate action on this at all levels – county, state and federal – to get the survey underway!