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Skagit River By-pass Explained At Meeting

As the Skagit River swelled from recent melting snow and rain, nearly 50 community leaders, representatives of Chambers of Commerce and interested citizens pondered a flood control measure for the river Tuesday in the form of the Avon By-Pass.

The name of the water diversion channel is now a misnomer, but came about as a result of earlier plans for a similar plan to control the river during flood stages. Under the previous plan the river would have been diverted at Avon and flood water taken by a shallow ditch 1,600 feet wide and dumped into Padilla Bay.

Recent plans call for changes in the intake location of the ditch and a width of only 340 at the bottom but deeper than originally proposed. The intake of the channel has been relocated to utilize Gages Slough south of Burlington and follow the hillside north of the valley keeping to a minimum the amount of valuable farmland required. Cost of the structure estimated at \$19,000,000 with the Federal Government paying \$15 million of the cost. Average annual benefits from the project are said to be \$1,000,000.

Ray Skrinde, representing the Army Corps of Engineers at the meeting, said the relocation of the intake would offer more flood protection for the Burlington and Sedro-Woolley areas. The plans call for levee extension and improvement west of Burlington. Skrinde, upon questioning, said

he did not know at this time if the levee improvements were included in the cost of the project but stated the Corps planned to include the work in their plans.

The relocation of the ditch would necessitate the building of eight or 10 bridges for county, state and other secondary roads. The actual number of bridges finally decided upon and the measure of financial participation by various government agencies, would determine the actual amount of money to be furnished locally.

The meeting was sponsored by the Skagit County Flood Control Council to familiarize community leaders with the revised project and inform them of expected benefits. Both George Dynes, chairman of the meeting, and Scott Richards, representing the county commissioners, explained that the project was strictly a non-partisan effort and merited the support of everyone in the valley. They pointed out the danger of the plan getting bogged down in politics.

Skrinde and County Engineer Lloyd Johnson emphasized that the bypass, as it is now being presented, would not necessarily mean the end of all flood from the Skagit. Protection for about a 10-year flood is provided by the present levee system. With the by-pass, the area below the intake would have protection for about a 30-year flood. The Army Engineer said river flow up to 200,000 second feet of water could be controlled under the plan.