

LEVEE PROBLEMS

DRAFT

The Skagit County Commissioners were recently advised by the Corps of Engineers that according to law, landowners and other interested parties must be informed of the land requirements for any authorized project under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Army. The levee and channel improvement project on the lower Skagit River authorized under the Flood Control Act of 1936 falls within this category.

This project is one important element in the long-range basin plan for flood control which has been developed to provide flood protection of once in 100 years for the lower river flood plain area.

Another major element is the authorized Aven Bypass Project, which in conjunction with the levee and channel improvements, would provide protection against floods with an expected occurrence of once in 35 years.

The development of upstream storage, the third element of the basin plan, could increase the flood protection in the delta area to once in 100 years if added to the previously described elements of the basin plan.

The Seattle-District Office of the Corps of Engineers advised the Skagit County Commissioners that the levee and channel improvements, to be effective, must be constructed in conjunction with either the Aven Bypass Project or upstream storage. The levee and channel improvement project alone would increase the minimum level of flood protection on the Skagit River downstream from Burlington to once in only eight years. The present expected occurrence is once in three years.

The Corps of Engineers considers this increase too low to permit proceeding independently with this project. Such action would create a false sense of security from flooding. Therefore, timing for the acquisition of lands for the levee and channel improvement project is dependent on developing a coordinated plan for construction of these improvements in conjunction with the Aven Bypass or upstream storage.

The plan for the levee and channel improvements provides that the Skagit River channel, from the Burlington-Mount Vernon area downstream to the mouths of both forks, would be improved by raising and strengthening the levees and widening the channel. About 34 miles of the existing levee system would be improved. Widening is proposed for three constricted reaches of the river channel. This widening would remove serious obstructions to flood flows, reduce channel velocities and upstream river stages. The plan of improvement is shown on the attached drawing.

During final design, minor changes may be made in the proposed amount and location of channel widening, removal of channel obstruction and of levee raising.

Skagit County officials are cognizant of the local cooperation requirements for the levee and channel improvement project and have expressed their willingness to sponsor the project by letter of 4 January 1961.

The local sponsor would be required to:

a. Provide without cost to the United States all lands, easements, and rights-of-way necessary for construction.

b. Hold and save the United States free from damages due to the construction works.

c. Maintain and operate all the works after completion in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Army.

d. Provide without cost to the United States all relocations of buildings and utilities, roads, sewers, related and special facilities necessary for construction of the project.

e. Prevent encroachment on the improved channels.

f. At least annually notify affected interests of the limited flood protection provided by the recommended works.

OFFICE OF SKAGIT COUNTY

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