

SKAGIT RIVER COURSE MAY BE CHANGED, HUGHES

Chairman Lowell Hughes of the Skagit county commissioners announced this week that a \$100,000 project to send the Skagit river over a new course east of Burlington and eliminate the dangerous oxbow bend that has been eroding farmlands there might be undertaken this summer.

The commissioners this week are holding final consultations on the project with E. D. Berge, flood control supervisor and W. S. Douglas of the state department of conservation and development. If they decide to go ahead with the project, early approval of US army engineers will be sought.

Hughes told a county-wide chamber of commerce audience in Mount Vernon Tuesday night that the commissioners were "sticking our necks 'way out on this" because they believed immediate, drastic action was necessary. Otherwise, it is feared, the river may work out a new course of its own that might change the water plan of the entire lower valley.

The proposal most likely to be adopted, Hughes indicated, is to open a new watercourse from the upper end of the Burlington bend to the lower end, where Nookachamps creek enters the main stream. This would be accomplished by digging a shallow course with heavy equipment and letting action of the river deepen and widen the new channel.

Heavy erosion was observed during the May freshets in the Burlington bend area. The eating away of the farmlands in the bend is still going on and may grow worse, the commissioners say. Last year several farm buildings were lost to the river.

Hughes said owners of property that would be affected by the new channel project are being contacted. He hopes bids may be called for soon, the work started as soon as the river level falls and completed by late fall.

Only alternative to digging a new channel is a heavy revetment program around the bend, which would be much more costly.

Cost of the project would be met from a state flood control appropriation.