

# THE COURIER-TIMES

JUNE 27, 1946

## Skagit River Flood Control Plan Outlined

**A. H. Ward Says New  
Plan Will Not Harm  
Local Fisheries**

At the request of The Courier-Times, A. H. Ward, chairman of the county water resources committee, has written the following article, outlining plans now being considered for flood and erosion control of the Skagit river, and explaining his objections to an editorial last week which objected to proposed dam construction:

To the Editor:

Your editorial of June 20, entitled "Farm Land or Fishing" states that there is a pending conflict of interest between the fishermen and the farmers of this community over prospective flood control dams on the upper Skagit river and aligns the editorial policy of your paper with the fishermen and against the interests of the farmers.

Your editorial represents that the damage done by the Skagit river is limited to the loss of a few acres of farmland. This is such an understatement as to amount to a misrepresentation of the facts. You have lived by the Skagit river for over a quarter of a century and you are personally acquainted with the families of the farmers in that community who have lost their entire farms through riverbank erosion. While you have lived here, you have seen the river carry away the earnings and savings of a lifetime of hard work invested in river bank farms. You know that this erosion is going on right now and you know that this erosion will continue until some means is found to regulate the spring and fall runoff of water to a more steady stream.

You also know of the danger of great loss of property in this valley as a result of a major change of channel course which is now threatening. You yourself have presented this danger in prior editorials in the Courier-Times. You know that this danger of a major change in channel course results from the fact that in many places the land near the river is higher than the land some distance back and that on sharp curves in the middle course of the river this higher ground is being eroded away. After this high ground has been cut away, a flood high enough to put the river out of banks can easily cause a completely new channel to be cut. The geologists tell us that there have been several such complete changes of river

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## SKAGIT RIVER FLOOD CONTROL

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course in the past even when the valley was heavily timbered.

Your editorial completely ignores the matter of flood damage by the river. You state that the only work required on the river is channel straightening and riverbank revetments. Just how will river straightening and riverbank revetments eliminate the periodic flood damage in this valley? The engineers state that straightening the river course will increase the speed of the current, increase the danger of flash floods, and will increase erosion. A flood which measures more than 120,000 second feet of water at Sedro-Woolley will break the dikes and flood the lower valley. Such floods have occurred in the past on an average of about 10 years. The flood last October almost reached this volume. A flood which breaks the dikes does a great deal of damage in this farming community. It cuts channels and holes in the fields; it picks up coarse sand and gravel and spreads it over the farmlands; it scatters driftwood, stumps and logs over a wide area; it destroys growing crops, and in some cases destroys the productivity of farmland for a number of years; it drowns cattle and livestock; it damages highways and public improvements. What is your solution to this problem of flood damage? Ignore it?

Your editorial tends to divide the community into factions fighting each other over elements of this river problem. It is a problem big enough to require the united effort of every one in the county. It needs the support especially of the county papers. Local funds cannot be raised in an amount sufficient to control the river. Federal and state appropriations must be obtained. What chances are there for such appropriations if the leading newspaper in this community states that the damage from the river is limited to loss of a few acres of land only, and criticizes the federal agencies now working on the problem?

Certainly the matter of preservation of fisheries is a part of this problem to be solved and a most important part. In any river improvement work done, provision must be made for saving our fisheries. The army engineers are working on part of this problem right now in the survey being made. Before you start taking pot shots at the army engineers, why not wait and see what solution their report contains with respect to the saving of the Skagit river fisheries?

There are many other problems in connection with the development and control of the Skagit river system besides erosion, floods and fisheries. There are the problems of development of recreational facilities, irrigation, reforestation and hillside erosion, and domestic water supplies. Will it be to the best interests of this community if your paper succeeds in dividing up the people of the valley into hostile factions, each fighting the other for the benefit of its favorite project? We request the support of your paper for a program of control and development of the water resources in the county which will not favor one of these elements over the other but which will attempt to reconcile and harmonize any conflict of interest between these various projects.

A. H. WARD,  
Chairman, Water Resources Com.