

Open Skagit to navigation being pushed

Sen. Warren G. Magnuson today a Senate committee will consider funds for a study of navigation on the Skagit River when Congress convenes next week. The announcement came in the form of a resolution passed last week by the Inland Empire Waterways Association requesting a study. The study will be considered by the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, Magnuson, Republican, chairmans committee. He said that the project has "early endorsement" of 36 firms and Chambers of Commerce in the Valley.

THE WATERWAYS Association, meeting in Portland Nov. 21 and 22, passed the Skagit resolution along with 31 other resolutions backing various waterways proposals, mainly on the Columbia River.

The association is counted a strong influence on Congress, which will have the final say on making the Skagit River navigable.

Low-cost water transportation — the only natural advantage lacked by the Valley — appears to be attainable by simple dredging of the Skagit River from Concrete to Puget Sound, the senator said.

"THE SKAGIT Valley already has exceptional natural advantages that favor economic growth."

U.S. Army Engineers would make the river study, determining if navigation would justify its cost, explained Magnuson. A report on the study would be submitted to Congress "at the earliest possible date," he continued.

Brief initial studies have indicated navigation on the Skagit will show economic justification, engineering soundness and relatively minor dredging costs, Magnuson recalled.

Representatives of the Army Engineers who toured the river last fall indicated they received a favorable impression of the waterway's navigation possibilities.

MAGNUSON'S support for navigation on the Skagit could be a doubly strong influence, since he is also a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

That committee probably would have a big say so on movement through Congress of any appropriations bill for the Skagit River.

Skagit dredging would provide improved small craft navigation, shallow draft barge transportation and flood control benefits, he said.

THE INLAND Waterways Association, in its resolution, emphasizes that shallow draft barge transportation from Concrete to Puget Sound appears practical.

There is a growing industrial complex which would be enhanced by such transportation and it appears there is a potential volume of freight which would make such a project economically sound, the association continues.

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Inland Empire Waterways Association . . . does hereby respectfully request that funds in sufficient amount be made available to complete the study and submit a report thereon to the Congress . . ."

The association is an organization of port districts, Chambers of Commerce and other groups interested in promoting waterways.