

Bypass termed first flood control step

The Avon Bypass is the "first essential step in obtaining flood control in the Skagit River Basin," Col. Ernest L. Perry, district head of the United States Army Corps of Engineers told persons attending a public hearing today on flood control.

Although the bypass itself was not a concern at today's hearing, Col. Perry said comments about it would be welcome. The hearing's major concern were proposed improvements to downstream levees along the Skagit River and possible recreational

uses of the bypass if and when it is built.

DISTRICTS APPROVE

Just prior to today's hearing, the Skagit Valley Herald learned all seven Skagit Valley diking districts affected by the proposed levee improvement and channel widening program have generally approved. Confirmation came from George Dynes, president, Skagit County Flood Control Council. Dynes added that all 16 of the county's diking districts, except one, generally favor the plan. The single

exception objects to only some parts of it, he noted.

The seven directly-affected diking districts have asked Skagit County's Board of Commissioners, in effect, to sponsor the proposed levee improvement and channel widening program.

Col. Perry and his aides staged a press conference late this morning. Questions at the conference were general and covered both the proposed levee project and the bypass itself.

AWAIT FUNDS

Although the bypass project already has congressional authorization, Col. Perry explained at the conference, funds have not been allocated for it. Public hearings on the bypass itself will be held in the future, once planning for it is more complete, the district engineer said. Such hearing, he told a Herald reporter, probably are at least several years hence.

Col. Perry told newsmen this morning the levee improvement project is linked to the proposed bypass in corps planning because the bypass strengthens and justifies the cost-benefit ratio of the levee job. Without the bypass as an adjunct, the levee system would lack sufficient "life expectancy" to warrant federal expenditures, he said.

Both the press conference and the afternoon hearing were held at the Mount Vernon Elks Club.