

Outline flood control plans at MV hearing



BEFORE HEARING — Mount Vernon City Engineer G. D. LeGro, left, confers with Col. Ernest L. Perry district head, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, just prior to Friday's hearing on Corps' flood control proposals for lower Skagit River and recreational uses of Avon Bypass.

More than 300 persons turned out Friday for a hearing in Mount Vernon on flood control proposals affecting the Skagit River. But most of them came to listen rather than to speak.

Despite the crowd and intensive interest in the proposals, the hearing ended little more than two hours after it had begun with a detailed report on flood control plans by Col. Ernest L. Perry, district head of the Army Corps of Engineers, and an emotional plea for support of the proposals by Greg Hastings, flood control aide for the State Department of Conservation.

Army Engineers' proposals for strengthening the existing levee system along the lower Skagit River met with practically no dissent from anybody who spoke Friday. Objections were voiced however to both the proposed Avon Bypass and to recreational use of the bypass, whose major purpose will be to divert high water from the Skagit River.

The bypass itself was not an official topic for discussion at Friday's hearing. But Col Perry announced at the outset that testimony on the bypass would be heard as well on proposals to use it for recreation. Such proposals actually were an announced part of the hearing.

VALLEY DIVIDED

Friday's testimony disclosed the Skagit Valley still is evidently divided in feeling over the Avon Bypass. Much of the opposition to the bypass came Friday from the Burlington-Bay View area. Testimony for opponents in those areas was given by Fred Lubbe, Burlington attorney, and Edna Breazeale, retired teacher.

Lubbe, representing a number of persons and groups in the Burlington area, including a fire district, said opponents fear the bypass will physically divide the county's central area as well as Fire District Six. Opponents also feel dependence on the bypass as a major flood control project may delay other vital flood control work, Lubbe told Friday's audience. Such other work may well be far less costly than the bypass, opponents believe, the attorney said in his testimony.

QUESTIONS NEED

Miss Breazeale, representing the Bay View-Padilla Civic Association, told Col. Perry and the audience that the organization is not opposed to flood control measures but that it questions the need for additional recreational resources in the Skagit Valley, where existing facilities for recreation need development.

At the hearing's outset, Hastings asked his Skagit listeners "do we continue ineffectual and inefficient methods . . . or improve our program?" He said \$3,660,000 had been spent so far in this century in the Skagit Valley on flood control measures. He also reported the Skagit Valley is the biggest user of state flood control funds.