

The Burlington Journal

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Reader Suggests Hydraulic Dredge Instead of Dikes

The Journal's discussion of flood control in the Skagit valley, started last week, brought many comments and the first of a series of letters from readers. The letter, written by a Burlington man who for the present desires to remain anonymous, is printed below.

Other readers are invited to write their comments or suggestions, as briefly as possible, and send or bring them to The Journal office.

The letter follows:

Editor The Journal:

In our cussing and discussions on this problem of river control...there is one law that may not be violated with impunity; i.e. water in seeking its own level follows the line of least resistance.

For the purposes of this discussion we may assume that the sole purpose of the Skagit is to get back to Mother ocean by the easiest route; and if, in its haste, it unloads some impediments, that is our concern, if any one's. So long as the top of the mountain is above sea level this unloading and leveling up process will continue. That must be conceded.

During the few thousand years the Skagit and its predecessor, the small stream that formerly found tide water much nearer Concrete than at present, has been in the habit of unloading along the way, the habit has become so firmly established it will probably continue as

long as it is of interest to us.

Formerly this river shaped its course along the line of the least resistance, occupied that course until by deposition the accumulated particles of mountain that course became untenable, then moved over to a new bed. Hence the fairly level area extending from Blanchard south for miles.

Then comes puny man. Now we have no fault to find with the pioneer who diked his land with a dike a foot high, extending from spruce root to spruce root. As a matter of expediency this was an acceptable plan. However, since the bottom of the river at Conway has now become elevated by deposited silt until it is above the extreme high water mark of forty years ago, having added elevation at an average rate of six inches per year. It seems reasonable to suppose that the present bed will soon become untenable, for the water is now finding its line of least resistance through and not between the dikes, and we have long since reached the limits of that method of flood control as an expedient.

With the increased erosion to be expected with the removal of timber from the upper areas that dike in another forty years will be approximately fifty feet high. Then when she breaks, as she surely will, LOOK OUT BELOW! For every annual six-inch addition to the lower dikes at least an equal amount must be added to the dikes farther up.

Has any one the figures on how

few years will be required to bring the dike at Conway on a level with the river at Concrete? Then what?

One more factor: the material dropped by the river becomes of progressively poorer quality for dike purposes as we go upstream. That is obvious.

Now it seems to the writer that if we should in a measure try to cooperate with rather than continue to oppose nature our puny human efforts may be in a measure rewarded.

Since the deposit of silt at the mouth of the river is generally, and correctly, held responsible for the trouble, why not bend every effort toward removing said deposit at the earliest possible date and least possible cost?

A good hydraulic dredge can remove that silt for cents per yard as compared with dollars per yard for more dirt on the dikes by present methods.

Much of the deposit removed may be well used in strengthening and straightening the banks and such dikes as are necessary to maintain-stay outside and along the saltwater dikes.

The hydraulic dredge, in my opinion, is our greatest need.

Why not put in some good substantial control gates in the river dikes which will permit of an ordered and orderly flow into Varney slough and such other depressions as may serve as setting basins, thus securing for our use this valuable silt deposit, thus raising the level of the land and adding fertility, permitting the excess water to pass out through the saltwater dikes through well constructed automatic flood gates of ample capacity!

This may entail some systematic readjustments of the habits of life, and may even bring about some minor

changes in crop-production and farming methods. However, these would be very much more preferable than facing the possibility of having the Skagit go out to salt water by way of Edison of its own will.

– A FRIENDLY READER