

# THE MOUNT VERNON ARGUS

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## Whose River? Whose Future?

An editorial in The Seattle Times Thursday that seemed to land on both sides of the fence raised a serious question as to whether that newspaper be for us or against us here in the Skagit valley.

The Times was taking note of a U. S. Senate subcommittee hearing being held in Boise this week on the "wild river" bill, in which the Skagit river is proposed to be included.

Noting that "Seattle's City Light objects to inclusion of an 11-mile stretch of the river in the designation because it would rule out construction of a hydroelectric dam (Copper Creek) contemplated in the municipal utility's long-range plans to provide power for its customers," The Times offered as its "present view" this comment:

"... unless City Light can document a case otherwise, the 'wilderness river' concept should take precedence on the Skagit river. Too many of our mountain-stream valleys already have been despoiled of their natural site."

While The Times was attempting to register as its main point a complaint that determination as to use of and restrictions on natural resources, such as the Skagit, were being left to "outsiders," meaning the federal government, it seemed both to be taking a slap at its community's own City Light and at the same time to be ignoring opinion as to the needs of the Skagit valley as to utilization of the Skagit and its tributaries, for power and industrial development, water supply and flood control.

This proposal to designate the Skagit river as a "wild river" has advocates of flood control and industrial development worried, even scared. Stan Bruhn, the attorney for the Port of Skagit County, is going to the Boise hearing to seek out the facts as to the reported threat that our river would be "frozen" from Mount Vernon upstream. And George Dynes, one of the port commissioners, undoubtedly will be asking questions at Inland Empire Waterways Assn. conferences with federal officials in Washington, D. C., this week.

Those who have become concerned about the "wild river" bill understand that should the Skagit be so designated, the stream and its tributaries might for all time be barred from such developments as more power works on the Baker, the Skagit, the Cascade and the Sauk, and, especially, from a dam on the Sauk that may eventually be wanted to give the lower valley protection from a "100-year" flood. The more enthusiastic "developers" also look to Skagit tributaries as sources of water supply for future industries, sources that the "wild river" designation would deny to them.

Like the "wilderness" bills, the "wild river" proposal is one espoused by some sportsmen's organizations, the raw-outdoors enthusiasts and the conservationists. Much as The Argus appreciates their love of untouched Nature, it believes that denying the entire lower valley further protection against floods is too great a sacrifice to pay for the enjoyment of a "wild river." This is especially so when it is recognized that upper reaches of the Cascade and the Sauk, and the Skagit, as it flows today between Concrete and Copper creek, are likely to remain in substantially their present pristine state by the very nature of the terrain through which they course.