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Problems of Skagit River Discussed at Mt. Vernon Meeting

Problems of Skagit and Samish rivers were aired at a public gathering called in Mount Vernon Tuesday to better acquaint the office of Congressman Henry T. Jackson and army engineer with the two rivers and the needs to be met.

Forty-seven Skagit residents representing farmers, diking and drainage districts, sportsmen, county offices, business and industry were in attendance to present the numerous and varied problems which are centered about the Skagit and Samish streams.

Engineers Graves and Hutchinson, representing the U.S. Army; John Salter, secretary to this district's congressman; Charles Bartholet, supervisor of the Washington state conservation and development and Snohomish county engineers were among the outsiders to participate in the informal discussion of what might be done.

No definite program as to the future work on the two rivers was presented, the purposes of the session being to obtain material and data on the history of the two streams, the present problems, and the problems which might arise in the future. Numerous speakers brought out various phases for the visiting authorities to study before any postwar program can be formulated.

The lone government proposal for the prevention of floods on Skagit river, adopted in 1936, is the Avon by-pass, which has been deemed impractical by local residents inasmuch as it absorbs much valuable land and since it necessitates expenditures of local

funds estimated at between \$1,000,000 and \$3,800,000.

The keynote of the meeting was the presentation of a report to Congressman Jackson's office by Assistant Engineer L.J. Wright, which not only embodied most of the discussion of the day's hearing, but also covered both the Skagit and Samish rivers. The report is being filed in Washington, D. C. where it and accompanying maps and photographs will be available for study and reference in future legislation concerning the two rivers. The first part of the report is giving below. The remainder will be published later in issues of the Herald.

"The Skagit river, the largest stream tributary to Puget Sound, in fact second only to the Columbia along the entire Pacific coast of the United States, has its source in Canada about 30 miles north of the international boundary. It flows southerly and westerly for approximately 135 miles to Skagit Bay in Puget Sound. In its course it virtually bisects Skagit County along its long east and west axis. Its principal tributaries are the Sauk, Baker and Cascade rivers. Other important tributaries are Thunder and Ruby creeks and the Suiattle River. The Sauk and Suiattle in combination practically encircle Glacier Peak (elev. 10,436) taking the water runoff of its extensive glacial fields. The Baker takes a considerable share of similar glacial run-off from Mt. Baker (elev. 10,750), and Mt. Shuksan (elev. 9,028). The Cascade, main Skagit, Thunder and Ruby Creeks drain the west slope of the Cascade mountain range.

The entire drainage area of the Skagit basin comprises 3140 square miles and extends for a distance of 130 miles along the summit of the Cascade mountains. Much of the mountain area is above timber line and a considerable portion is one of perpetual snow and ice.

"The geology of the Skagit basin varies from bare rock in the high mountain sections to gravelly glacial benches and moraines along the river to the bottom lands of fine silt deposits which form the so-called Skagit flats. These flats, comprising about 210 square miles (from Hamilton to salt water) are highly productive and generally intensively cultivated. The U.S. department of agriculture rates Skagit soil as the highest in the nation. Many crop and dairy records for production are held by Skagit farmers.

"The bench lands are naturally of lesser productive nature, but are utilized to a considerable extent, especially for grazing cattle and sheep. On and above the bench lands to an elevation of about 4,000 feet, there exists a dense growth of high quality Douglas fir, cedar and hemlock timber, which has constituted the backbone of our 'economy' since its earliest stages of development.

"Interesting geological facts are that at one time the Suiattle and lower Sauk rivers reached tide water through the Stillaguamish River in Snohomish and that the upper six miles of the south fork of the Sauk River was once the head of the south fork of the Stillaguamish."