

TELL OF SKAGIT FLOOD DAMAGE

Citizens Appear Before War Department Engineer With Much Data

Citizens of Skagit county appeared before Col. W. J. Bardon, District United States Engineer of the War Department yesterday in the Mount Vernon Commercial club rooms and presented evidence of past damage by Skagit river floods. The hearing was called by the War Department officer "in connection with a report on preliminary examination of the river as directed by an act of Congress of May 31, 1924."

The Skagit river improvement committee composed of representative men of this county with H. L. Willis as chairman, prepared data which was presented at the hearing, calling attention to the report filed with the board of county commissioners by J. E. Stewart in 1922, a copy of which also was filed with the U. S. Biological Survey.

The report states the "cost of dikes already constructed together with repairs and enlargements has, to date, exceeded 1 1-4 million dollars."

"Your request for suggestions as to the methods considered most desirable for flood protection or prevention, call for more expert knowledge than the ordinary citizen possesses. This is not saying that every man in the valley has no remedy, for we all have our ideas of how to prevent floods. Many of these plans of our are impractical, either from the standpoint of cost or from the standpoint of the science of hydraulics of which we know little.

"The era of power development for electrical purposes into which we are now entering seems to give hope along a practical line for flood relief. There is at present one large dam on Baker river in process of construction. Another is projected in the Skagit at Ruby creek. Still another on the Sauk river has been discussed. If arrangements could be made with any or all the builders of these dams to hold always available the upper ten feet of the dam for flood storage the greater part of our flood menace would seem to be gone. Such storage for 48 hours would hold back the crest of the flood and give time for run-off. It is the crest of the flood that breaks the dikes and does the damage."

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The report quoted in detail from the report made two years ago by J. W. Collins, secretary of the Commercial club which stated that the flood of 1894 damaged crops in the valley approximately 1 1-2 million dollars. The flood of 1897 also did great property damage and in 1906 the loss was estimated at \$250,000 while that of 1909 was placed at 1 1-2 millions. The flood caused estimated damage at \$500,000 in 1917, according to Mr. Collin's report.

After the 1921 flood H. L. Devin of Sedro-Woolley prepared a detailed report with the following figures:

Public road and bridges.....	\$ 75,000
Buildings	30,000
Loss of logs and bolts	105,000
Merchandise and personal property	45,000
Dikes, ditches and drain tile....	100,000
Crops, harvested and unharvested	30,000
Live stock	55,000
Drainage land and future crops	100,000
Loss of wages	15,000
TOTAL	\$505,000

"There are also intangible losses. Among these are many thousands of dollars of trade and merchants either through the sudden cutting off of the transportation or through the crippling of the customer's ability to buy.

"The total losses from all floods in the past fifty years have been enormous; yet as the valley becomes more highly developed each succeeding flood is likely to be more disastrous than the last. The damage to the present valley of such a flood as that of 1820 which had nearly double the discharge of 1909, or of a flood like that of 1856, which was 40 per cent. greater than that of 1909, can hardly be conceived. While we yet have some property to protect it behooves us to seek out some practical method to curb this flood menace which is always lurking in the mountain ready to burst upon us."

Several citizens gave oral testimony as to the damage caused in past years by the overflowing the Skagit river and Robert E. L. Knapp county engineer appeared before the engineer and gave further technical testimony concerning the floods of the river. He also told of the county's work in establishing a hydrographic station on the upper river by means of which accurate data of the flow of the river and its rise and fall now may be kept.