

Flood Warning System Set Up; Forecasts Planned

Creation of a flood warning system for the entire Skagit valley with emergency service to spread the alarm in event of dangerous conditions was announced Wednesday by A. H. Ward of Sedro Woolley, chairman of the Water Resources committee of the Skagit County Planning commission.

The warning system will be sponsored jointly by the United States Weather bureau and Skagit county commissioners, with various county officials, public and private agencies and individuals cooperating. It involves daily rainfall, snow and river level reports from various co-operators located at ten strategic points throughout the Skagit basin. These reports will be telephoned or telegraphed at 8 o'clock each morning to the Seattle office of the weather bureau and the information coordinated there. Experienced personnel will then be able to compute river levels for several hours in advance after having studied the previous action of the river from accumulated data.

It was pointed out that several months will be required to make the project function smoothly and to gather the records which will form the basis for predictions in future periods of danger. However, the warning system would have immediate benefits in providing approximate predictions even before it has been possible to work out accurately a reliable scheme for relating all the data.

Whether flood warnings can be issued accurately this winter is problematical since it has not yet been agreed at what river stage a warning should be necessary. However, a river stage report will be supplied through the offices of the county engineer and the sheriff as well as the press so that this information will be available.

Flood warnings, when issued, probably will be of two types. One would be to "advise" that conditions were such that a flood might be expected. The other warning would be that a flood of a certain crest was on its way.

As the project develops and forecasts are based on information obtainable in the upper reaches of the Skagit, it will be possible to utilize power dams to aid in controlling the river. Weather bureau officials pointed out that the holding of the crest of an upper Skagit flood at Ross dam for only three hours might permit a Sauk river crest to pass harmlessly whereas the combined crest of both streams would result in great losses to farmers and other residents of the valley.

The office of Sheriff Walter Welch has accepted the Water Resource committee's request that it be the relay point between the weather bureau and strategically located persons who would see that the alarm is spread.

Sheriff Welch agreed that when a warning is received, the area affected would be notified. The county engineer, at least one commissioner for each of the 27 diking or drainage districts, the police and fire departments of the affected towns, milk truck drivers and others would be informed and act as secondary informants to spread the word.

The sheriff's office will receive a daily river stage report from the Weather bureau and make it available to the public. This information will have many uses to transportation and industrial concerns. In addition,