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Engineers Point To Beneficial Possibilities Of Avon Bypass

Highly favorable benefit-to-cost ratio for the Skagit River flood-control and Avon Bypass project is announced by Colonel Ernest L. Perry, Seattle Army District Engineer, in additional information about the plan which will be discussed in public hearing this Friday in Mount Vernon. The meeting will be held at 1:30 p.m. in the Elks Lodge.

Improvements to the Skagit levee system downstream from Mount Vernon and addition of recreation and fishery developments to the Avon Bypass will provide substantial benefits to the area, the Army Engineers will report. For example, a lake eight miles long will contribute fishing, hunting and other recreational activities as well as enhance flood control.

Pamphlets Mailed

A descriptive pamphlet and a notice of the hearing were mailed recently to all persons known to be strongly interested in the subject. Purpose of the meeting is to obtain statements of fact from both proponents and opposing interests to assist the Corps of Engineers in making its recommendations on the Project to the Congress.

Colonel Perry emphasized that other studies of the Corps of Engineers on the Skagit River, such as study of navigation from Concrete to the mouth, and upstream storage, are not intended for discussion at this hearing. These will be considered at future hearings when the Corps of Engineers' studies are

further advanced.

Downstream Work Is Essential

The downstream levee and channel improvement is an essential part of the plan which will make possible multiple-purpose use of the Avon Bypass for fisheries, recreation and other purposes, as well as for flood control. Under present conditions, the safe channel capacity of the Skagit River downstream from the proposed Bypass is only 90,000 to 120,000 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.). With the improvements on levees, a safe capacity of 120,000 c.f.s. with 2 feet of freeboard would be obtained. All levees would be widened and strengthened to provide a minimum 12-foot top width.

The proposed improvements would make possible less frequent use of the Bypass for flood control and thereby make it available for other purposes.

The Washington State Department of Game proposes addition of a resident trout fishery to the bypass. Two interior collapsible weirs would be added between the control structures at each end of the Bypass. This would result in a three-level lake, eight miles long, 400 feet wide and 8 to 10 feet deep. Boat usage would be limited to non-motored boats, to avoid surface contamination. A water right for a 100-c.f.s. diversion from the Skagit River would be obtained. The project would create about 340 acres of water surface.

Plan For Many Fishermen

Usage of the Bypass for a

resident fishery is estimated at 159,000 fisherman-days by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Washington State Department of Fisheries has requested that minimum provisions be made for future development of migratory fish spawning and rearing facilities.

There is also an outstanding recreation potential for camping and picnicking adjacent to this man-made lake. The State Parks and Recreation Commission is studying the possibility of developing this potential. Annual attendance for recreational purposes could be about 60,000 persons at the outset of the project and might well reach 750,000 within 50 years.

Accomplishments of the overall project of the Bypass and the levee and channel improvements would be to increase flood-control protection from an estimated average 5-year frequency at present to at least 30-year flood-cycle protection. Total cost of levee and channel improvements would be about \$6,500,000. A comparison of the benefits and costs that would result from the increased flood protection provided by the levee and channel improvements shows a benefit-to-cost ratio of 3.5- that is, \$3.60 return for each \$1 expended. Local cooperation for rights-of way and relocation of roads, utilities, buildings and fences is estimated at approximately \$370,000.

Benefits Calculated

The addition of fisheries and recreation to the Avon Bypass project would realize annual benefits of \$849,000 over the project life. Comparing these benefits with annual cost yields a benefit-to-cost ratio of 6.9. Development of basic facilities for fisheries and for recreation which can be incorporated in the basic Flood-control planning can be undertaken by the

federal government. The acquisition of land for recreation purposes; the developing, operating, and maintaining of recreation facilities; and stocking the fishery, would be the local interest responsibilities.

Further information about project details may be found in the Corps of Engineers' "Information Bulletin", additional copies of which can be obtained from the County Engineer's office at Mount Vernon and from the Seattle office of the Army's Corps of Engineers.