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Skagit Valley To Have Flood Warning Soon

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 today by Attorney 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 cooperators located at 10 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.

Although the system is being developed this week by weather bureau representatives, 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. The warning system will 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. An outline of how it operates will be announced next week.

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 by holding 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 might result in great losses to farmers and other residents of the valley.

The general plan was approved at a conference arranged by the county planning commission and attended by Phillip Light, regional hydrologic engineer, and T. E. Jermin, supervising forecaster, both of the U.S. Weather Bureau at Seattle.