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SKAGIT IS BACK ON WILD RIVER LIST

The Mount Vernon Argus, a weekly newspaper which does an unusually good job of covering all aspects of affairs concerning the county, last month went deeply into the "Wild River", proposal now in Congress. Editor Steve Mergler's column on the subject gives a complete picture of the situation as it now stands and is herewith reprinted in full:

Skagit Back in 'Rivers Scheme'

"Those who viewed with concern the Skagit river and its tributaries as "wild rivers," whose use and development would be severely limited, breathed some relief when U.S. Senate deleted this basin from its "immediate" list in recently passing S. 1446.

"But, left out of the Senate's list of six "wild" streams and instead consigned to future study, the Skagit is back in the "immediate" picture in a new bill introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. The House bill, H. R. 14922, by Rep. John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania, changes the name of the "don't touch" streams to "national scenic rivers" and proposes to so classify the Skagit (and tributaries) and 15 others at once. The Columbia is to be studied within three years for possible addition to the "scenic" system and, within ten years, the Methow, to name only one of the Washington state waters in a long list.

"Those who thought they had saved the Skagit from immediate consignment to a federal deep freeze have a new battle on their hands. Groups with special concerns include the North Cross-State Highway backers, flood control advocates who are interested in the U.S. Corps of Engineers' "Step Three" plan

for a future dam on the Sauk river to give the Skagit Valley protection against a "100-year" flood; Seattle City Light, that contemplates some day building a dam at Copper Creek, below Gorge Dam, and those interested in timber, mining and grazing.

"The Saylor bill would prohibit or restrict construction of dams, roads, and cutting of timber on, along or near its scenic rivers, in varying degree, accord to classifications that might be applied to them.

"H.R. 14922 would tie these strings at once to the Skagit, the Cascade, the Suiattle and the Sauk rivers, as follows: The Skagit "from near the town of Sedro-Woolley upstream to the Gorge powerhouse . . .", the Cascade "from its mouth to the junction with its north and south forks" and up the South for to . . . the Glacier Peak wilderness area; the Suiattle from the mouth to the same area, at Mill Creek; the Sauk from its mouth to junction with Elliott Creek, and the Sauk's North Fork to the Glacier Peak wilderness area.

"A special clause in the House bill would forbid the construction, operation or maintenance of any "dam or other project," except by special act of Congress, on not only the streams immediately designated as "scenic", but also those in the listings for future study. It also would expand (from the Senate "wild rivers" plan) from 300 feet to a mile either side the width of river lands that the federal government could condemn, and from one-quarter to two miles the width from either bank it could put under "scenic easements".

"The "scenic rivers" would be placed under one of three classifications, according to

Re-typed verbatim from the original microfiche obtained from the Washington State Archives.

location and degree of development along them.

“No new roads would be permitted within Class I areas, none paralleling the streams closer than 1320 feet within Class II areas. Public access roads along with “landing and other structures, relating to recreational use” would be allowed within Class I and III scenic river areas.

“Timber harvesting would be forbidden in Class I, but permitted “within one-half mile of Class II and III where it is found to be compatible with maintenance of scenic vistas from the stream and its banks.”

“So, it’s back to the lists in Washington, D.C., for you who have ideas as to the future use of the Skagit and its tributaries.”