

NEARER BURLINGTON

Flood ditch plan moves from Avon

The Avon Bypass — a big ditch that is supposed to carry flood waters from the Skagit River to Padilla Bay — is no longer destined to be located at Avon.

Ray Skrinde of the Corps of Engineers told a gathering of county people yesterday that redesigning has placed the bypass nearer to

Burlington, and extended its length to approximately 8 miles.

Compensating for the added length, however, is the fact that plans for the proposed ditch have narrowed it from 1,600 feet to 500 feet.

Skrinde was the principal speaker on a program sponsored by the

Skagit County Flood Control Council. Purpose of the meeting was to acquaint leaders from throughout the county with the plan that calls for a \$19 million dollar ditch to control the flood level of the Skagit River.

MORE PROTECTION

The Corps of Engineers representative said the big ditch plans were altered for several reasons. By connecting with the Skagit at the new location, he said, it will furnish more protection in the Burlington and Sedro-Woolley areas, because it will be above the highway and railroad bridge sites — where the river is greatly constricted. At the same time, the ditch will travel through less valuable land than it would if it were to leave the Avon location. Narrowing it will mean it must be deeper, but will make it less costly to bridge.

By relocating it, the ditch will utilize Gage's Slough as part of its channel, thereby keeping the use of valuable farm land at a minimum.

Skrinde's presentation was backed by County Engineer Lloyd Johnson, who supplied facts and figures about flood damage in Skagit County during prior floods.

ASKS SUPPORT

George Dynes, chairman of the council, asked those present to support the bypass plan and not consider it in a political light. He said the council is concerned recently that the method of controlling the Skagit may become embroiled in politics and fail to materialize.

Skrinde pointed out that the bypass will not offer 100 per cent protection against all floods, but will make the area able to cope with most floods. Floods upwards to 200,000 second feet of water, he said, will be controllable. Unusual floods, such as one experienced in the 19th century — which is unofficially reputed to have been a 400,000 second feet flow — still will cause havoc in the valley.

ESTIMATE MADE

Those advocating the plan say that during the 1951 flood, the flood stages on the Skagit River would have been lowered from 3 to 5 feet, and 2 to 4 feet on the North and South Forks, if the bypass had been in operation.

In addition to flood control benefits, the ditch is foreseen as a recreational area and a possible location of state fish farming. Both ends of it will be restricted by control gates in such a manner as to make through boat traffic impossible, but it will present what Skrinde called "a lake 8 miles long".

FINANCING NEEDED

If the Avon Bypass is to be realized, it will require local financing of about \$4 million and federal financing of \$15 million. On 20 year bonds, the taxation necessary to finance the county's share would amount to about 20 cents a year per acre on unimproved land as the basic figure.

In comparison, figures by the Corps forecast that an average of \$1 million dollars worth of damage a year will be done by floods