

## Outline flood control plans at MV hearing



**BEFORE HEARING** — Mount Vernon City Engineer G. D. LeGro, left, confers with Col. Ernest L. Perry district head, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, just prior to Friday's hearing on Corps' flood control proposals for lower Skagit River and recreational uses of Avon Bypass.

More than 300 persons turned out Friday for a hearing in Mount Vernon on flood control proposals affecting the Skagit River. But most of them came to listen rather than to speak.

Despite the crowd and intensive interest in the proposals, the hearing ended little more than two hours after it had begun with a detailed report on flood control plans by Col. Ernest L. Perry, district head of the Army Corps of Engineers, and an emotional plea for support of the proposals by Greg Hastings, flood control aide for the State Department of Conservation.

Army Engineers' proposals for strengthening the existing levee system along the lower Skagit River met with practically no dissent from anybody who spoke Friday. Objections were voiced however to both the proposed Avon Bypass and to recreational use of the bypass, whose major purpose will be to divert high water from the Skagit River.

The bypass itself was not an official topic for discussion at Friday's hearing. But Col Perry announced at the outset that testimony on the bypass would be heard as well on proposals to use it for recreation. Such proposals actually were an announced part of the hearing.

### VALLEY DIVIDED

Friday's testimony disclosed the Skagit Valley still is evidently divided in feeling over the Avon Bypass. Much of the opposition to the bypass came Friday from the Burlington-Bay View area. Testimony for opponents in those areas was given by Fred Lubbe, Burlington attorney, and Edna Breazeale, retired teacher.

Lubbe, representing a number of persons and groups in the Burlington area, including a fire district, said opponents fear the bypass will physically divide the county's central area as well as Fire District Six. Opponents also feel dependence on the bypass as a major flood control project may delay other vital flood control work, Lubbe told Friday's audience. Such other work may well be far less costly than the bypass, opponents believe, the attorney said in his testimony.

### QUESTIONS NEED

Miss Breazeale, representing the Bay View-Padilla Civic Association, told Col. Perry and the audience that the organization is not opposed to flood control measures but that it questions the need for additional recreational resources in the Skagit Valley, where existing facilities for recreation need development.

At the hearing's outset, Hastings asked his Skagit listeners "do we continue ineffectual and inefficient methods . . . or improve our program?" He said \$3,660,000 had been spent so far in this century in the Skagit Valley on flood control measures. He also reported the Skagit Valley is the biggest user of state flood control funds.

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Hastings assured Friday's audience that eight state agencies had agreed to cooperate in developing the Army Engineers' flood control proposals for the Valley, including Avon Bypass recreational uses.

Support for levee improvements and recreational develop-

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ments in the bypass came from the Skagit County Board of Commissioners, represented at the hearing by First District Commissioner Scott Richards.

Representatives of a number of central county diking and drainage districts also offered official support.

Paul J. McKay, district engineer for the state Highway Department, testified briefly that his agency had found motor vehicle funds could not be used to support construction of certain adjuncts to the bypass. The significance of McKay's brief testimony could not be immediately determined, but he apparently referred to use of such funds to help build or rebuild bridges across the proposed bypass.

## RECALLS 1951 FLOOD

In a statement prepared by Mount Vernon Mayor Herman Hanson, that city's engineer, C. D. LeGro, strongly supported the Corps' proposals. LeGro recalled the 1951 flood which almost swept into Mount Vernon's downtown area.

As for recreational uses of the bypass, representatives of both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Game Department, stressed such proposals have definite value and potential. They said recreational uses will contribute materially to the value of the bypass. Charles Simmons represented the federal agency and Ralph Larson the state department.

Testimony offered at Friday's hearing will be forwarded to the Public Works Committee of the U.S. Senate for study.

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