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CENPS-EP

7 July 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Skagit River Flood Control

1. On 6 July 1988 Art Harnisch, Chief, Economic and Social Evaluation Section, and Walt Farrar, Ass't Chief, Planning Branch, met with the Mount Vernon City Council. Also attending were the city engineer, planner and attorney. Most of the audience was made up of representatives from diking districts along the Skagit River and public works employees from Skagit County. The city engineer had requested the workshop meeting to discuss flood protection for the city of Mount Vernon and the possible reactivation of the authorized flood control project based on a 1978 GDM.

2. Prior to the meeting the city engineer, John C. Wiseman, conducted a tour of the levee system for Harnisch and Farrar. Inspection revealed that the levees were in an excellent state of maintenance and that various portions had been raised and strengthened since the middle 1970's.

3. At the city council workshop meeting Farrar and Harnisch presented an outline of the last Skagit River flood control plan in the 1978 GDM. Updated costs for various segments were presented (enclosures 1 and 2). The new procedures for implementing water resource projects under PL 99-662, cost sharing and other changes since 1978 were outlined for the council and audience (enclosures 3, 4, and 5). Enclosure 6 is a list of city council members and enclosure 7 is an attendance sheet including most of the audience.

4. General discussion between the Corps, city, diking district, and Skagit County representatives involved:

a. A review of the reasons why the previous plan was not implemented. The project was placed on an advisory ballot during a general election. The same election carried a vote on a proposed nuclear project in the county. The popular vote showed that people not subject to flooding ("hill people") voted against the project. Also, the Samish Valley residents would be paying for a project which would not provide protection for them. Some people believed that the proposed levee project would increase flood levels in certain areas. The ballot and many of the objections surfaced just prior to the election and sufficient time was not available to provide additional information to the public. The result was an unfavorable advisory vote on the proposed levee project.

b. Interest in additional flood protection was expressed by the city council. They referred the action to the Mount Vernon Public Works Committee for further consideration of possible avenues and provision of recommendation to the city council for action. John Wiseman asked if the Corps would attend the meeting of the Public Works Committee. Farrar said he would attend.

c. Interest and involvement of Skagit County as a joint sponsor of a total levee system remained an open question.

d. The city officials indicated that they would start attending meetings of the Skagit Valley Flood Control Committee to increase their knowledge and participation of flood control problems and possible solutions.

e. Diking district representatives stated that incidents of high water produce "Boils" that appeared to have a high potential for flood damage. Small animals burrow tunnels through the levees and adjacent lands. River water has been sprouting up some distance from the levee.

4. Summary comments and observations:

a. There was lots of general support for additional flood control for the valley. There were also lots of opinions as to the best solutions e.g. upstream storage, diversion, levees, dredging and other plans.

b. The city officials are interested in additional flood control but appear to be overwhelmed by the complexities of the alternative solutions, coordination of solutions and adverse flood conditions brought about by some alternatives. The city council and staff are just beginning to get involved in the Mount Vernon and Skagit Valley flood control problem. Most individuals were not involved in the project proposed 10 years ago.

c. Formulation of a project protecting just Mount Vernon would be difficult due to induced damages to the opposite bank, indecision where to terminate the downstream portion and cost sharing participation. Most of the benefits to the system accrue from the urban area of Mount Vernon.

d. The Seattle District will probably be requested to perform a recon study to provide current information on the protection provided by the existing levee system, possible solutions under existing conditions, benefits for likely solutions, and cost sharing alternatives.

Encls

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CF:
Exec Ofc
Prog Dev
Sellevold/Ploudre
Hogan
Welch
Foster
Harnisch
Weinmann
Real Estate
Opns Div/Emer Opns
GT/Sabo
Farrar
H&H/Spurlock, Regan