

REPORT ON PUBLIC HEARING ON YAQUINA RIVER, OREGON IN RESPECT TO FLOOD CONTROL  
HELD AT TOLEDO, OREGON - JUNE 3, 1948

UNDER AUSPICES OF DEPARTMENT OF ARMY, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 A. M. in the Lincoln Co. Courthouse by the chairman, Mr. Harry Hickson, Dist. Engineer for the Corps of Engineers. Judge Gilkey of Lincoln County was appointed and presided as floor leader.

The meeting was primarily concerned with the present status of two diking districts, No. 1 and 2, originally set up quite a number of years ago. D. B. Ambler, County Engineer, first testified as to the present condition of the facilities as follows: District No. 1 is located on Depoe Creek going up towards the Siletz from Toledo. Here the tide gates are still in but are not functioning due to leakage under the sill. In his opinion they should be rebuilt. District No. 2 is located on the Olalla Slough (Salal Creek) upriver from Toledo towards Corvallis. Here the flood gates have been completely out for a number of years and need rebuilding. The channel also requires some cleaning both above and below.

In both cases some work is needed on the levees but comparatively little. In general, testimony from private individuals concerned bore out the above with no major changes. A fair number of farmers emphasized the matter of the channels needing dredging as well as the work on the tide gates but a few opposed this, claiming that while such would improve the lower land it would actually be detrimental to the higher ground.

The testimony was unanimous in that all damage to the land is due to the brackish tide water backing up in the sloughs and that at no time has any damage of consequence ever been done by flooding by freshets or excessive rainfall. It was entirely a matter of holding back tidewater by means of tide gates. It was also reiterated time and again (with no opposition) that there is no navigation in these particular areas and that such should not be considered in building the gates. The belief was expressed that incorporation of navigation features in the original gates was one reason for their failure.

There are approximately 370 acres of land involved in these areas. Of these about 150 acres can not now be used but supposedly could by rebuilding of proper gates, etc. Again it should be noted that some farmers owning higher land were mildly opposed to this work on the grounds that lowering of the water levels which would permit working of the lands would result in drying of their higher land with resultant lower production. The majority of the land is now used and would continue to be used at least for the immediate future for grazing. Testimony showed for example that where the farmer now kept six milk cows, he could keep perhaps nine if the work were carried out. However, two individuals testified as to the suitability of the land for truck gardening and recommended a shift to such in order to produce a greater acreage income.

In general it was the impression of the writer that the entire matter was one of very minor importance either way, affecting perhaps a dozen farmers to the extent of a few acres each.

Mr. Hickson also called for suggestions from the floor as to other areas on the Yaquina where work might be needed or useful from the standpoint of flood control. None were forthcoming. In response to a direct question Mr. Hickson stated that there was no work of any sort planned for the main channel of the Yaquina River. He also advised that men would be sent out at some future date to make on-the-spot evaluations of cost-benefit ratios for the present Drainage Districts No. 1 and 2 to find whether or not it would be advisable to put them back into proper operating condition.

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