

Engineering News-Record

Lundine Backs Flood Aid Ratio Revision

AUG. 29 1977

Rep. Stanley N. Lundine has added his co-sponsorship to new legislation that would adjust Corps of Engineers' cost-benefit ratios for flood protection work to reflect local economic factors.

"Since I arrived in Congress, I have been advocating a change in the way cost-benefit ratios are computed which would take local economic conditions and potential development into consideration," Lundine said. "This bill would make a major step toward that change."

"The Corps of Engineers is forced to look very narrowly at the benefits which can be derived from any flood protection proposal under the current cost-benefits formula," Lundine continued. "Commercial activity, to the Corps of Engineers, is valid no matter where it takes place in the United States, and therefore it makes little difference to them whether industry moves from a flood-threatened locale. Most communities in this nation — just as we in the Southern Tier — can't afford that altruistic luxury."

The legislation would direct the corps to consider benefits resulting from protection of the "local economic impact area," including both the flood-prone area and the surrounding areas where workers live and where direct suppliers of threatened industries are located.

It would provide a checklist of considerations for corps projects' impact on such things as the loss of income in the area, loss of jobs, erosion of the local tax base, lowered property values and loss of businesses and the loss of borrowing capacities by affected areas.

Negative impacts in the area of social well-being are also to be seriously considered during deliberations, including the income distribution, educational and recreational losses, negative impacts on emergency preparedness, disruption of community growth and development and negative psychological impact. The legislation would demand that the corps study these negative impacts caused by flood protection not being provided.

The legislation would provide the opportunity for funding of flood control projects by local or state units of government in addition to federal funds. In this way, projects which cannot be justified under the corps' criteria for full federal aid could be brought to proper cost-benefit balances with the help of nonfederal money. Projects which local officials feel are vital, yet not within proper benefit-cost ratios, could be completed with local aid.