

\* TIMES-HERALD, Vallejo — Wednesday, May 8, 1985 — 3

# Vallejo City Council wants White Slough levee rebuilt

By DIANNE MANN  
Times-Herald Staff Writer

VALLEJO — The City Council wants to see the White Slough levee rebuilt and costs possibly paid through an assessment district.

That decision, made Tuesday, will be sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in response to a Corps study released in March. The study outlined a number of solutions for flooding problems in White Slough and asked the city to respond with its wishes for the future of the troubled area at Vallejo's northwestern boundary.

Levee breaks in White Slough in 1970, 1977 and 1978 flooded several acres on the north and south sides of state Route 37 between Sonoma Boulevard and Sacramento Street.

Since that time, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission has claimed jurisdiction over the land, since the area is now under water and therefore considered coastal waters.

White Slough is also under the Corps' jurisdiction because it consists of diked bay lands.

Resentment of those agencies' authority in the area, in part, led the council majority to support rebuilding the levee, which would restore parts of the area to its former dry and condition.

The council's decision, which only Councilwoman Barbara Kondylis dissenting, ruled out allowing the area to remain under water and compensating the property owners

by buying their land with state money.

"If we give away the property we're just bending to those regional agencies," said Councilman Sid Berry before moving to rebuild the levee.

"I can't bring myself to reason how a regional government can take away property from someone who has paid taxes on it for years. It's socialistic and shouldn't happen in America," he said.

The council's decision came despite advice from Assistant Planning Director Ann Merideth that "There's very little chance the levee will ever be re-established," under new Corps' regulations.

Merideth recommended the council agree to buy out the property owners, an action which would probably speed up the planned widening of Route 37.

Once BCDC, the Corps and the state Department of Transportation agree on how to proceed with the area, Route 37 improvements could go ahead. A city effort to rebuild the levee will probably delay that agreement, Merideth said.

"The only issue (left if the levee isn't rebuilt) would be) is determining the value of the land," which would probably require lengthy negotiations, Merideth said.

Difficulties of determining the value of the flooded land are what Vice Mayor Bob Keith said makes rebuilding the levee the best option.

"How can you give a value on a piece of property that's under water ... We would be putting an economic

depression on the property owners," Keith said, agreeing with Berry that he's "tired of getting shoved around" by regional agencies like BCDC and the Corps.

There's one simple answer to this. We don't need any thousand-dollar report. We should get out there and rebuild the levee and we won't have any more (flooding) problems," Keith said.

The council majority agreed, but Kondylis said a better solution to the recurring flooding and to securing Route 37 improvements would be to buy out the property owners and not rebuild the levee.

"Route 37 is one of the most dangerous roads in the state and the only way to get (the widening) done expediently is to resolve these issues" by agreeing with the Corps' recommendation not to rebuild the levee, she said.

City efforts to maintain the levee "would leave (property owners and area residents) in limbo for years" while the city and other agencies try to resolve their differences, she said.

The city's decision will now be sent to the Corps, which will initiate a second-phase study of the area. BCDC probably won't take further action on maintaining its White Slough jurisdiction until more information is available, Merideth told the council.

Before the vote, Councilman Tony Intintoli also commented: "I hope the property owners know they will have to pay most of the cost" of repairing the levee.