

THE COURIER-TIMES

MARCH 3, 1932

FLOOD DAMAGE ESTIMATED TO EXCEED \$100,000 IN COUNTY

Rush Repairs to Highways As Flood Waters Recede; Normal Traffic Announced In Most Sections; Detour Arranged While Fill Is Repaired Here; Thousands Watch Flood Waters on Rampage.

With flood waters rapidly disappearing, a check of damaged roads and bridges, highway wash-outs and crumbled dikes was being made in Skagit county, with estimates placing the total close to \$100,000 Thursday.

Bridges at several points were damaged or removed by the raging waters of the Skagit Saturday and Sunday when the breaking dikes and back water sent a yellow flood over nearly 20,000 acres of land and forced many residents to abandon their homes in search of safety on nearby high points of land.

While no point in the county, with the exception of extreme up-river settlements, was isolated for more than a few hours, stage and train service was halted by washed out tracks and inundated highways Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night as the water spread in one section while it receded in another. For the most part, highways were open again Monday.

In the valley proper no loss of life has been reported, and the accident claiming four lives at Diablo, just as the waters threatened, remains the major incident of the highest flood waters since 1921. Stock loss is believed to be less than a total of fifteen head, and of these seven head on the William Westlund farm at Utopia constitute the major damage.

Repairs Started

Repairs to highways in the eastern portion of the county were begun Monday morning, with County Commissioner Hugo Bauman directing from his sick bed at the Wixson hotel, where he was confined with a severe attack of rheumatism and cold, following exposure over the week end.

Early Monday morning County Commissioner Wallace Sharp and County Engineer Robert Knapp visited Bauman and made plans for repairs in this district. Bauman had already arranged for trucks to repair the Township street detour, where automobiles were detouring the washed out fill at the south city limits of Sedro-Woolley.

Bridge Out

Knapp reported the Diobase creek bridge washed out, sixty feet of span and an equal amount of trestle, the forty foot truss over Hanson creek on the river road tipped over, slides on the Van Horn and Faber hills, damage of fifty feet of the west approach of the Jackman creek bridge, and a wash-out on the German Prairie road west of the Samish school, where the bridge over the Samish remained intact.

It is believed the Hanson Creek truss may be restored to service, since it seems not to be seriously damaged. The slides on the Van Horn and Faber hills were not as great as had been reported, Knapp stated. Other points in the highway were in need of repair where bridges had been slightly undermined, and sections of roadway damaged by the flood which came Saturday evening.

Following the slide above Newhalem the Skagit began rising slowly, but the condition was not believed serious until late Friday night, when flood conditions were

approached. Friday night and Saturday morning the water rose at an amazing rate, with lowlands along the river being flooded.

Fill Damaged

Water broke over the pavement between the fill and the bridge south of the city, and the angry flood began cutting away the dirt fill in spite of all efforts to save it. The peak of high water was reached at Sedro-Woolley Sunday morning at 7:45, but on the day previous an alarm had been given to farmers to remove stock from danger points.

Constant rumors of danger to two dams in the Skagit and Baker river power projects resulted in an alarm that one of the dams had broken, and many residents of Hamilton, Lyman, Sedro-Woolley and Mt. Vernon removed to higher ground with emergency rations. It was reported a man coming down the river had given the false alarm, and Lyman was almost deserted by the exodus that followed. Responsible agencies spiked the rumor within an hour, and the bolting residents for the most part returned to their homes.

Dams Are Safe

Consequent investigation disclosed that flood gates on the dams were not opened and that flood waters poured over the tops of the dams. At Baker River before the flood, water was 36 feet below the top, and at the peak of high water flowed nine feet deep over the top of the dam. At Diablo gates were left open until engineers were certain that a flood was imminent, and then closed the gates Friday afternoon. Early Saturday morning the water flowed over the Diablo spillways, when no more water could be retained.

United States engineers here could give no definite statement of the effect of the dams on the flood, but intimated no more than ten per cent of the watershed of the

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river was controlled by the dams, and that they possibly kept the peak of high water down from two to four feet.

The same authorities also explained the fact that while flood waters at Mt. Vernon reached within inches of an all-time record, the peak at Sedro-Woolley was from four to five feet under the record. This was due to the fact that previous floods had removed two curves below Sedro-Woolley and shortened the river's course nearly one half mile. This makes the river almost straight from Burn's bar three miles west, and the effect had been to lower the river bed here nearly four feet.

Dikes Broken

Shortly after noon Sunday the dike south of Burlington gave way and the Great Northern fill broke at 12:45 to release a yellow flood through Varney's slough and Gage's Lake to inundate the section between Burlington, Avon and the Bay View ridge. This closed highways in the district, and with the broken fill at Sedro-Woolley, together with a flooded highway at Blanchard, bridges out on the Wickersham road and slides on both the Samish and Chuckanut highways, isolated all sections for several hours.

Breaking of the dike at Conway relieved the pressure in this district late Sunday afternoon, and a large section in the lower end of the county was covered with water.

Alarm Is Given

The telephone companies responded to the appeal of County Commissioner Hugo Bauman to spread the alarm, while Bauman worked tirelessly Friday night and Saturday after he had been cut off from his home at Rockport. Residents of the Nookachamps district were taken from their homes when back waters filled this section, and the two branches of the creek flowed back on their courses.

Sheriff Charles Fleming, with his deputies, had the aid of the State Highway patrol in removing many to safety, and kept a continuous patrol in all sections to preserve the safety of motorists when water threatened highways and homes.

County Engineer Knapp Wednesday made the first plans for repair of the fill at Sedro-Woolley, and announced the work would be started just as soon as emergency

ies were cared for to assure movement of traffic.

To Repair Fill

A bridge 150 feet long will replace a portion of the fill, and will allow future flood waters to pass without impairing the structure as in the present instance. Knapp estimates 5,000 yards of fill were destroyed by the flood.

Schools in the flood districts were resuming Tuesday and Wednesday, while Sedro-Woolley schools were open Monday, with a short attendance when students from some districts were absent.

Repairs to railway grades were being pressed Wednesday on the top of receding flood waters, while Great Northern trains were brought through Sedro-Woolley, due to the washout below Burlington. Service to upriver points awaited repair to grade and bridges, while railroad men reported grades to have been seriously weakened by the high waters.

Warning is given that heavy loads on flooded portions of highways or damaged bridges will not be allowed until damage is repaired, and this is expected to prevent serious accident due to weakened highway structures.