THOUSANDS OF ACRES FLOODED IN RICH VALLEY

The worst Skagit river flood since 1921 inundated thousands of acres of rich Skagit valley farms over the weekend and left two county towns, Stanwood and Hamilton, standing in water ranging up to six feet deep.

A break in the dike below Conway and the muddy river flooded through town and spreading north over the flats on both sides of the Great Northern railroad tracks and Highway 99 to a point about a mile and a half south of the Mount Vernon city limits.

Fir Island Flooded

Water from the Conway break spread over an estimated 4,500 acres, to a depth ranging from a few inches to several feet.

Although the Fir Island dike did not break, water seeped through and spilled over to flood the western half of the island, one of the richest farm areas in the state. Approximately 2,400 acres were under water today, and it was in this area that a great number of the cattle could not be rescued in time. Damage to berry and seed crops are considered the most serious.

The delta area west of Brown’s Slough was flooded today by a smaller break or leak in the dike, with some 700 acres of farm land affected.

Volunteers Active

Hundreds of volunteer workers have worked in shifts up to 24 hours and longer on the dikes, at the sand pits, driving trucks and feeding and caring for the dike workers and evacuees.

Highway 99 was closed to traffic yesterday afternoon and was under water for four and a half miles, with the spreading water south of town and greatly reduced the pressure on the soggy dikes. The river had dropped almost to the bottom of the dike break by noon.

About 30 houses outside the dike in West Mount Vernon were flooded, including the basements and the floors in many of them. Houseboat residents spurred off of evacuation, however, and life went on as usual, with the "chicken" at one barge, quite a few feet above normal.

A portion of the drawbridge on the West Side bridge across the Skagit river was washed away, and there were times at the crest of the flood when the bridge was felt to sway noticeably, but held fast. The new riprapping on the dike in downtown Mount Vernon came through with flying colors, and the higher level of the dike was credited with preventing serious flooding of business buildings along the riverfront.

At its highest point, the river rose over the new road along the river and a boat on the left was washed against Main Street, where a sandbag parapet held it back. Many merchants in the downtown district have tried to move goods a foot or more above the floor.

Working out of the Elks Club in Mount Vernon, the Conway fire hall (until that was flooded), the McLean Road fire hall and the Burlington fire hall, workers and trucks of sandbags were dispatched to critical points. Sandbags for the Mount Vernon area were filled first at the Be-Bo plant and later, when the dike in that area appeared soft, then at the Nookachamp plant. Sandbags for the area west of Mount Vernon were filled at a pit on Pleasant Ridge and the trucks worked out of the McLean Road fire hall, going to points along the dike from the North Fork bridge to the Riverside bridge.

Sound trucks were donated for the two groups.

The Red Cross also drew from its supply of blankets and cots to set up the evacuation centers and aid evacuated families.

Robert Colton of the Red Cross area office, came into the flood area Saturday and is continuing to assist in directing the evacuation and rehabilitation program which is the Red Cross responsibility.

Job printing with the union label at the Daily Herald.