

Engineers May Blast Salt Water Dike at Fir Island

District Flooded

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Plans to dynamite the salt water dike at Fir Island were being made this morning by the Skagit County engineer's office if the flood waters which ripped a 150-foot hole through the Fresh Water Slough dike yesterday do not slack off.

The dike broke on the slough at a point about a mile and a half south of the Conway bridge at 1:30 p.m.

No loss of human life or livestock has been reported to authorities. This was credited to the quick action by the Fir-Conway residents who rushed to the scene to help evacuate those stranded after the word had spread that the dike had broken.

2,000 Acres Flooded

The county engineers and area farmers estimated that at least 2,000 acres have been covered with over a foot of water even though the flood-swollen Skagit River had dropped from a high point of 23.7 feet yesterday to 18.5 feet at 10:30 this morning at Mount Vernon.

The salt water dike which protects the low-lying farm land from the waters of Puget Sound was acting as a dam bottling up the flood waters and dike officials of District No. 2 and the county engineers were considering blasting that barrier to provide an outlet.

E Emmett Nelson, head of the district, said the fresh water dike broke practically behind Ted Lundeen's back as the boathouse owner and farmer patrolled the dike yesterday only a few hundred yards from his own home which now is surrounded by water.

May Ruin Broccoli

The water is across the Fir Island pavement and probably has ruined the chances of the farmers there harvesting their remaining broccoli crops.

Farmer Bill Brown, who has gone through this before in '32, said the flood has "picked" his ten acres of broccoli. He and his wife Alice cleaned out their basement when they saw the water coming. They and several other families have moved their deep freezers into Conway by truck until the water recedes.

Taken out by rowboat was Mrs. Frank Vervaart and her two sons, Billie, age 1, and Jerry, 2½. Her husband meanwhile was out in the fields helping to collect his frightened dairy herd which lowed loudly and unhappily as the waters arose.

Her rescuers were Vernel Lee, Tom Vansluggern, and Jim Hammack.

Not Frightened

"The children weren't frightened. They stood at the window and watched the water. I guess we'll spend the night at my sister," Mrs. Vervaart said as she looked back at her isolated house on the Mann Road.

Two young Seattle duck hunters found themselves stranded on the Skagit Game Range on the south side of the broken dike and were rescued by rowboat with Game Range Keeper Harte Penttilo pulling the oars. The boat bobbed wildly as it passed the open hole in the dike.

The hunters were Stan Quackebush, 3215 Dose Terrace, and Bill Quillian, 720 Allen Place, both of Seattle. Quillian's main worry was about his car which had been pulled out by a Mount Vernon tow truck from the low

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lying land shortly after the dike broke. Ken Meyers, tow truck driver, hauled every piece of machinery in sight to higher ground.

An on-the-spot inspection of the ruptured dike was made by assistant county engineer H. O. Strombom and Gregory M. Hastings, supervisor of the state department of Conservation and Development.

"I'd estimate that there is a half a million gallons of water a minute coming through right now," he said at 5 p.m. last night "This has been a real eye-opener for me and I intend to declare this area eligible for emergency funds from the state flood control maintenance fund."

Assistant County Engineer W. R. Whitnall noted somewhat wryly that a rabbit or gopher hole at the base of the earth dike probably was the flaw that weakened the dike for the flood waters.

Engineer Strombom said yesterday that the particular area that gave way was scheduled for riprapping next year.