Seepage causing great concern; hundreds of acres reported flooded

By JIM AUSTIN

Exceptionally heavy snow falling the winter, rainfall during the spring and now warm causing run-offs from the snow and rain have left farmers in the river bend area faced with the problem of drainage. Farmers in the area who have been hurt by the spring and now warm weather have contracted with the county with lack of drainage in the area. Total estimate of loss to county with lack of drainage in the area is $10,000.

Paul, a Mount Vernon dairyman, estimates his loss in the neighborhood of $10,000. He has lost about 50 acres of farm land, he said. "About 30 acres of that is in field corn," Paul told the Skagit Valley Herald Thursday. "Some 20 acres of that is in legumes. That's $6,000," he said. And that doesn't take into account the cost of the seed and production costs. Paul said the county has had a drainage district since he can remember but has never had a drainage district." We need a drainage district along the river bend," he said. "With the present dike system we are all right as long as the water is below the 13 foot level. But the water hasn't been that low for at least six weeks." And he predicted it would be another month at least before the water gets down to that level. Above the 13 foot level, he said, seepage from the river is a constant menace to farmers in the area. "It is a health problem to the cows," he said. "The water stands still for so long it becomes stagnant and then the cows drink it and they become sick." But the problem is extending beyond the river bend area, he said. "If there was proper drainage then we wouldn't have the mosquito problem," he said. Paul said last year was bad — he lost several acres of crops then — but this year is worse. "And who knows what next year will be like?"

County Commissioner Arnold Hansen agreed a drainage district could be formed without much difficulty, pointing out that two such districts have already been formed, one in the Sedro-Woolley area and the other in the Britt Slough area. "The normal process is for the commissioners to receive what amounts to an expression of interest from the affected property owners," Hansen said. "Then we schedule public hearings and if we get enough interest — we ask the property owners to agree to underwrite the cost through assessment — then we have the authority to create and operate the district."

Elsewhere in the county, similar problems are evident. Hundreds of acres of hay and young corn were destroyed by June flooding—the greatest loss in that area in years — and serious seepage problems threaten farm land in the Fir Island area.

Paul said he has discussed the problem in the river bend area west of Mount Vernon with Skagit County Engineer Lloyd Johnson and the county assessor and plans to bring it to the county commissioners. "Something has to be done about this annual problem," he said. "There's just no reason for it."

Farming state's biggest business

WASHINGTON (AP) — A scarcity of beef in Europe and tight supplies elsewhere are raising serious questions over the benefits to American consumers as a result of President Nixon removing meat-quota import restrictions for the common market (Common Market) is expected to be down four to six per cent from 1971. At the same time, as in other affluent areas of the world, consumer demand for meat is continuing to rise. Consequently, beef-shy nations—including the United States—have been bypassing the common market, which had been regulated under a 1964 quota formula. Most of the meat is low-quality beef used for hamburger and other manufactured products. Although U.S. officials say they expect the quota system to...
Commissioners seek disaster funds for Grandy Creek areas

By JOHN MITCHAM

Some people reported they heard a roar and felt the ground shake like an earthquake. It happened last Saturday afternoon about 3:40 or 3:45.

"It's a disaster," said County Commissioner Howard Miller. "Thank Heaven our road grader operator wasn't out of there. We'd never have found him, or the grader."

Miller was referring to the slide at Grandy Lake where a whole mountain gave way and slid off into the canyon, filling the upper part of Grandy Lake, and blocked off the county's new million dollar Grandy Lake cutoff to Baker Lake.

Today the county engineer's office was busy making dollar estimates on repairs and a close guess is a quarter million dollars to fix Grandy Creek Road alone, including clearing the slide.

It was wet and raining but everything was calm and quiet Saturday when Bud Meyers, venerable old Skagit River steelhead guide and county road grader operator, drove the grader past Grandy Lake about 20 minutes after 3 p.m. Saturday. He had been working overtime to clear some slides on the Burpee Hill Road, north out of Concrete. "It had been a hectic weekend so far with slides."

The rain kept coming down and everything in the third county commissioner district seemed to be going to hell as far as roads were concerned. "Mud and water were everywhere. But nothing seemed wrong when Meyers passed Grandy Lake."

Ten minutes later, at the top of a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from Grandy Creek Road, a crack in the ground appeared and mud began to ooze. The slide gathered speed and gathered up some small trees. The crack widened and the mountain shivered and huge trees, some as much as five feet through or more topped and joined the jumbled mess. The mud moved faster and the slide area became bigger and bigger. There were witnesses but far away people could feel the shake and some reported a roaring sound.

The slide is tremendous. It is estimated three million board feet of timber, much of it 20 inches in diameter, roared through or more toppled and joined the jumbled mess. The mud moved faster and the slide area became bigger and bigger. There were witnesses but far away people could feel the shake and some reported a roaring sound.

It may have lasted five minutes, no one knows. The entire side of the mountain gave way and the mud avalanche swept everything in its path. The Giant slide let loose Saturday afternoon from a spot on a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from this spot. (Photo by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Department)

The giant slide let loose Saturday afternoon from a spot on a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from this spot. (Photo by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Department)
SCENE OF DEVASTATION—The level area left of center formerly was the swampy upper end of Grandy Lake. At the right in this composite picture the roadbed of Grandy Creek Road is discernible with an estimated seven feet of mud and debris covering it. Broken and jumbled trees are a mile away from the giant slide.

Some people were Miller. "It's a disaster, Miller. He was there, the ground was shaking, filled the county's road, and the country's road. He was there." Miller was out of there.

Today, the cost dollar estimates million dollars to clearing the slide. It was wet and quiet. Saturday when the steelhead fish drove the grader away, after 3 p.m. Saturday.
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and jumbled tree trunks are everywhere, an estimated three million board feet of them.
The giant slide let loose Saturday afternoon from a spot on a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from this spot. (Photo by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Department)

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It may have lasted five minutes, no one knows. The entire side of the mountain gave way and the terrible mud avalanche swept everything in its path. Down the mountain it came, clearing everything down to solid bedrock. It hit the bottom, crossed the road, went into the swampy upper end of Grandy Lake, filled that, and before it stopped the mud climbed upward on the other side of the canyon.

There was more noise as huge trees settled, their branches and roots tipped at crazy angles, and then it was quiet. The rain continued and Grandy Lake was will. The slide had suddenly filled the upper end of the lake and water had to go. It formed a tidal wave and slopped out of the lower end of the lake, much as the water in a bathtub would if a man were to cannonball into one end of the tub.

The water rushed into Grandy Creek but the creekbed couldn't handle it. Between the slide area and Highway 20, the creek went out of its bed and cut into the road badly. Ditches along the road were eroded. The creek ran down the road itself for a long distance and crossed the road. At Highway 20 it went out on the state highway and covered it with water... Washouts on Grandy Creek road were impassable. The water dammed on the lower stretch of the road was so bad, no one even knew about the slide. The county commissioners didn't find out about it until Monday and even then it...
A ROAD WAS HERE—Grandy Creek Road gave way to the forces of rampaging water. This group of observers surveys a particularly deep hole below a slide area where mud trees toppled from Goat Mountain.

POWER OF WILD WATER—The pile of boulders on top of Grandy Creek Road demonstrates the power of the creek as it rushed out of its bed and cut into the roadbed here in washout below the slide area.

(Photos by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Depart—
GRANDY LAKE DEVASTATION—These photos taken Sunday by Harry Sweet, pressman at Skagit Valley Herald, dramatize the ruin of part of the Grandy Lake area last week when a mountainside slid down. At left is the upper part of the lake, now filled with debris, as shown. At right, Sweet did an about turn and photographed the path of the avalanche, showing its point of origin.
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Skagit Valley Farmers are faced with one of
the worst seepage problems in years, according
to many farmers who are estimating the
property damage and loss of crops in many
thousands of dollars.

And they are, to say the least, more than
mildly upset about a situation some say could be
avoided.

Perhaps it is too late to do anything about it
this year—but it surely is not too early to start
thinking about next year.

The problem, according to area farmers, is
the lack of adequate drainage systems along
the Skagit River. When the river stays as high
as it has been in recent weeks, seepage is
bound to be greater than normal.

It would seem to us that Matthew Paul,
Mount Vernon dairyman who estimates his loss
in field corn alone at $6,000—and that doesn't
include 20 acres of pasture he can't use—has a
good point in suggesting the creation of a
drainage district.

Paul's primary concern is in the River Bend
area west of Mount Vernon, but other reports
indicate to us the situation is serious in other
areas of the County as well.

As for the creation of the drainage district,
County Commissioner Arnold Hansen says it is
a relatively simple process.

The commissioners need some indication
that the people affected by the seepage are
interested in the formation of the district. After
all, they are the ones who will have to bear the
burden of cost and administration.

Then they will call a public hearing to
draw all affected property owners in an attempt
to get as wide a range of opinion as possible.

After determining the interest and the
willingness of the people to support such a
district, the commissioners have the power to
create one and assess a levy for its operation.

Obviously, creation of such a district will be
less costly in the long run than the annual loss of
fertile farm land and crops.

We urge first the people in areas now
under water due to the excessive seepage to
push for creation of such drainage districts and
to let the commissioners know such districts are
needed.

And secondly, we urge the commissioners
to move with a minimum of delay in creating the
district.