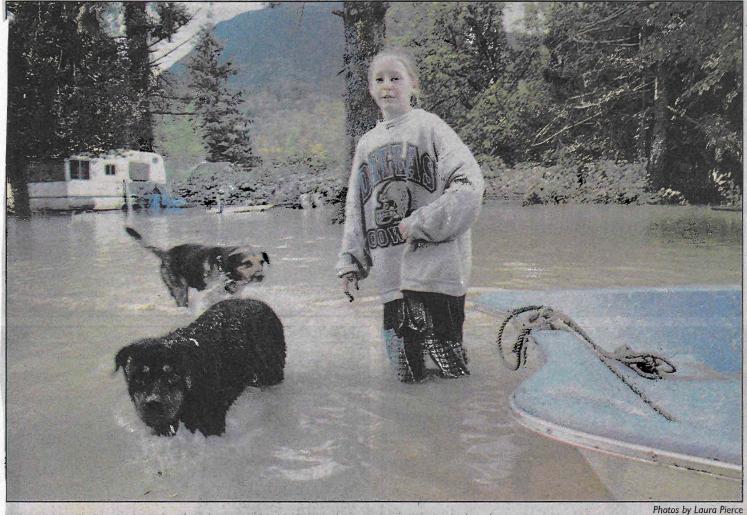


Wednesday, October 29, 2003

SEDRO-WOOLLEY, WASHINGTON

# Flood hardens residents' resolve County



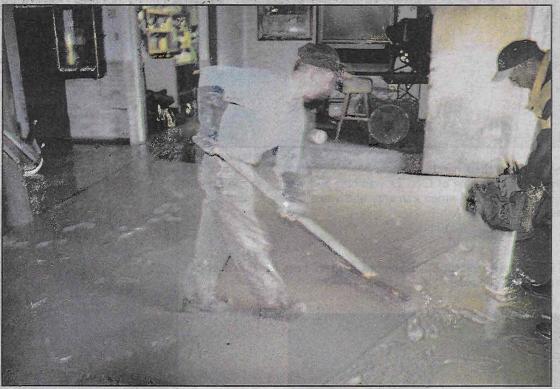
Above: Hamilton resident April Osborne plays with her dogs and a rowboat in her front yard last Wednesday, following a major flood of the Skagit River that swamped her town and flooded her home. Below: Jim Thomasen, manager of Willie's Hi-Lead Tavern in Hamilton, cleans flood silt out of the business, while a television photographer follows him.

#### Many plan to stay where they are

**By Laura Pierce** 

HAMILTON - Jim Thomason said he's seen worse.

Pushing a broom through the gloppy brew of mud and river water that mired itself to the floor of Willie's Hi-Lead



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## needs fed. aid Flood damage extensive

#### **By Laura Pierce**

Officials say federal assistance will be crucial in helping Skagit County — especially its upriver region — recover from last week's record-breaking flood of the Skagit River.

"We absolutely need federal aid - there is no way else to help these people," said Skagit County Commissioner Ted Anderson, speaking Monday.

Anderson, whose district includes the hardest-hit communities of Hamilton and Cape Horn, noted dollars are short for many residents here, when it comes to reclaiming their homes and property from the quagmire of mud and river water that has swamped them.

"The needs are great," he said. "A lot of people in Hamilton also are on the lower end of the financial spectrum. They don't have the resources.

'And Cape Horn on North Shore Drive — it's just devastated."

For that reason, Anderson and other officials in Skagit County are optimistic of their chances of having Skagit County declared a disaster area by the state and then by the federal government.

Those steps are what it will take for the federal Emergency Management Agency to free up funds in response to the damage wreaked by flooding.

Anderson said work was progressing quickly on getting damage assessments to the office of state Gov. Gary Locke.

Tavern last Wednesday, Thomason, manager of the establishment, said it was a matter of time before the tavern opened for business again.

"We'll put driers in here; we'll hose it out — it's repairable," Thomason said.

The Hamilton resident, whose home also was flooded out when the rains turned the Skagit River into a monster last week, said he had no intention of leaving the community he calls home.

"This is an awesome community," he said. "I was raised here; my home's here — this is where I live."

Pausing his conversation to give another heavy push on

the saturated broom, Thoma- of Hamilton, a low point on son, who spent some of his the Skagit River that sustained adult years in other parts of the worst damage last week the country — including the when the rain-swollen Skagit south, where he dealt with River left its banks and flood-Hurricane Hugo — added, ed all but five homes in the "it's yucky, but I've seen town. worse."

Countywide, a total of 95 That kind of thinking homes saw major damage, 13 seemed pervasive in the Town were destroyed and another 78

residences had minor damage. A fair number of those affected homes were located in Hamilton, as well as the Cape Horn community further upriver near Concrete.

"I've been through three floods," said another Hamilton man spotted wading

OVE

"We had the damage-assessment teams going out full and strong," Anderson said, noting the county was attempting to the get the personal-property damage estimates to Locke that day, and would follow up with damage estimates to infrastructure in the county by Thursday.

Officials at Locke's office said the paperwork thus far was in the process of being reviewed.

Anderson said it had been helpful to have Locke in person Thursday, touring some of the county's hardest-hit areas.

### Flood

Continued from page 1 through his flooded front yard last Wednesday morning, as his daughter paddled around the street in a boat and the items like toasters and family dogs chased her playfully.

"I love it up here," the man added, noting he was planning to buy the home in which they were renting.

still," he said. "We're gonna checks made to the church remodel."

homeless by any stretch of the tims only." imagination, with the floodwaters in their home. His fam- time at 826-3307 if you have a ily, he said, was camped out in large furniture item or appliits trailer with all the ameni- ance you're planning to ties.

"We've got everything: from home.

work."

Ron Edwards, pastor at the great. Hamilton First Baptist He's had ample opportunity: of hurting going on. for the past week his church munity, functioning as a Red in damage upriver, that's what Cross shelter and temporary I think." parking area for a multitude of residents camping out in their for affected residents to dump trailers.

have no intention of moving out," Edwards noted Tuesday. "It does amaze me, quite hon- alone. estly. They just love living here. They love the community and anything about it."

But, the pastor noted, there Hamilton community and other flood-hit areas as well. His church has been accepting all manner of donations for area residents, from money al aid — there is no way else and clothing to furniture and to help these people," he said. appliances.

enough in the way of clothing didn't make such a monumendonations, Edwards said items tal impact. like bedding, mattresses, furto be needed by residents.

foot storage containers and blacktop off a road - but

two of them are full, Edwards said, with the third half-full.

"We've still got plenty of room for small household lamps," he said, of the room that's left.

The church is located at 797 Hamilton-Cemetery Rd., Hamilton, Wash. 98255. Edwards said if people are "We're hoping to buy it sending monetary donations, should have written on the He noted they weren't bottom of them: "flood vic-

> Call the church ahead of donate.

Skagit County Commislights, food, generators," he sioner Ted Anderson, who said. "It's just a home away spent most of his waking hours last week evaluating "It's just that the first flood damage in person, said home's gonna take some Monday the needs of people in those affected areas were

"It's a lot of tragedy," he Church, said he's seeing that said. "People need to be aware same kind of resolve as well. in our county that there's a lot

"The needs are great. In my has served as a major pulse estimation, we're probably point for the Hamilton com- going to have over \$3 million

Dumpsters hauled upriver their debris into easily have "A lot of people say they been filled. Anderson said a total of 28 30-yard dumpsters were filled over the weekend

> "It's going to be a monumental amount of tonnage," he said.

Anderson said assistance in are tremendous needs in the the form of federal dollars would be crucial to the damage sustained in this year's disaster.

"We absolutely need feder-

In other areas of Eastern While there seems to be Skagit County, floodwaters

In Sedro-Woolley, floodniture and appliances continue waters did some damage to Riverfront Park — including The church has three 20- actually floating a section of

overall, damage was minimal. under way down there now," sibly mitigate the damage when asked about the damage county, declared a state of for people to use." emergency at its regular It's a waiting game to see if use." meeting last Wednesday.

Mayor Sharon Dillon said the clean-up and repair of Monday. "I'm very proud of their properties. my staff. They pulled together

event.

In Concrete, approximately other facilities.

The record crest of 42.2 learned. feet damaged more property Feetham.

federal dollars will be forth-"We were very lucky," coming to help residents with

"As we understand it, there when pulling was needed." will be FEMA officials com-The flood waters, though ing through and making estihigh, she said, weren't enough mates," Feetham said of the to cause problems at the city Federal Emergency Managesewer plant, which remained ment Agency operations. "I in operation through the don't know in what form relief is going to come."

While residents start the 11 homes saw damage from clean-up of the mud, the the floodwaters, in addition to mayor said he hopes they don't soon forget lessons

"The fact that the flood than the 1990 or 1995 floods, was so heavy up here and according to Mayor Robin didn't do as much damage as was expected below has given "Clean-up operations are us a lot of information to pos-

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The City Council, in keeping Feetham said Thursday. done in the future," Feetham to people's homes and how with other entities across the "We've brought in a dumpster said. "I certainly hope we can they were doing. put this information to good

> Hamilton Mayor Tim Bates, reached at home Monday, seemed to capture the contributed to this article. overall feeling of the region,

"Overall," he said, "we're going to do all right."

Reporter Ruth Richardson

Photo by Gordon Bakke Inundated by floodwaters, the Town of Hamilton is shown in this aerial photo dated Oct. 21. All but five homes were flooded in the community. The deposited mud and debris of the floods will require intense cleanup.



