

THE COURIER-TIMES

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Skagit River Damages Farm Lands and Roads at Utopia

Flood control conditions on the Skagit river are rapidly reaching the emergency state and immediate action is necessary to save thousands of acres of valuable farm land.

During the past week or two, conditions in the Utopia district have rapidly become worse, with many acres of fine farmland, being washed down stream. William Swihart and Betchart farms are the ones having the most severe losses, and they have protested to both the county officials and to the U. S. army engineers, with little or no results.

The road has been washed out again, and the river is cutting into the north bank more rapidly than ever. The farmers blame the logging operators and tow boats for this increased destruction. They say that the log raft, tied across the river, has caused the channel to swing to the north, and that the log tows are constantly snagging on the banks and helping undermine them.

The farmers also claim that a little more work on the bar, would form a channel and relieve the pressure on the north bank, where their farms are located. They also claim that a little work by the snag boat would go a long way to helping the present emergency, but the new snag boat is too big to be able to come up the river. They wonder just what it is for, except to provide a nice home for the crew.

The county commissioners will do nothing to save the land, stating the problem is too great for them, and the U. S. army engineers, have promised to investigate, as they have been doing for forty years.

While this erosion has been going on for years at Utopia, the present situation is the most dangerous that has occurred, and demands some kind of immediate action. The farmers who see their entire life work, washing down stream, with the prospect of losing their homes, are getting desperate, and are demanding something more than a federal investigation and survey.

The river has cut in ten or fifteen feet on the Utopia road by the Betchart and Marchant farms, making it impossible for the school bus to get through. This road, formerly farmland, will have to be moved farther in on more farmland at considerable cost. County Engineer Wallberg, said this morning, that while the county is ready to help with machinery and equipment, the job of controlling the river is too great for it to handle without federal help.

County Commissioner E. C. Carr and an officer of the snag boat visited the Utopia district yesterday. They told the farmers that nothing could be done by the snag boat, which could not get up the river, but advised them to take action, although they could not be officially given permission to do so. The logging operators were instructed to remove their raft of logs.