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River Crew's Work Proves O.K. In Flood

New Rock and Tree Mat Prevents Damage at Skiyou Slough

By AL ARNST

Mud spattered battalions of the county engineer's office are flushed with their first victory in the major battle against the Skagit river, which last week rolled back her banks and went on a brief but record flood rampage.

Too little and too late was not an alibi with the county crews. For several weeks they have been lashing huge trees in place along the Skagit bank section above the Reese farm, east of town, in anticipation of the normally higher waters at this season. This tree mat, together with truckloads of heavy rock being poured on the bank at the critical point above Skiyou slough's mouth, was intended to be the erosion-resisting engineering device on this important river stretch. The plan was that the heavy vegetative mat fend off the river from a direct attack near the slough entrance and that the rock revetment be a secondary defense against tearing waters.

Last Friday's torrential rains precipitated premature test of this engineering theory, which has been regarded with skepticism by some side-line "engineers." The Skagit started climbing a foot an hour and finally topped her banks. Although overflow water entered Skiyou slough, the bank did not gouge out. Witnesses who watch the river's

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rise and saw the debris and logs bob by, claim that the brush mat was instrumental in deflecting the river enough to protect the bank at the slough entrance. Rock in place withstood the current that did hit the bank. Since neither the mat or rock work was completed, the success is noteworthy.

Additional evidence of the effectiveness of the mat and rock work is apparent below the treated section, where new bank sloughing has occurred. The Skagit dropped almost as fast as it came up, six feet overnight from Friday to Saturday. A rise as rapid as this is a severe test of engineering installations.

The county crews now are reinforcing the rock wall above Skiyou slough's entrance and straightening out misplaced tree mats. The brief flood helped show up points where reinforcement will be needed. More large trees have been skidded to the river bank for use in mat construction. The "gooey" mud slows up some of the work, but good progress is being made.

The erosion control work on the Reese place is the action program resulting from the joint planning of the county commissioners, county engineer and county planning commission, with the technical assistance of the Skagit soil conservation district. Two other areas are scheduled for such erosion control treatment.