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Skagit River Poses Threat In Lyman Area

Great Northern Roadbed Endangered; Farms Damaged

Unless corrective steps are taken, Skagit river eventually may change its course at a point near Lyman and flow directly into Minkler lake, located about four miles east of Sedro-Woolley. That is the opinion of river experts who have studied the vagaries of Skagit river at this point for years.

Natural outlet of an overflow from Minkler lake would be along a course leading into Sedro-Woolley, entering this area near the location of Skagit Steel & Iron Works. This would be the natural gravitative course of such an overflow, according to engineering surveys.

"While such an eventuality is hardly probable, it is not at all impossible," County Engineer H. O. Walberg asserted, when questioned recently as to his opinion. "We have this section of the river under observation, of course," he stated. "We have made a survey at a point extending from the Utopia and Skiyou areas in the direction of Lyman, but the survey has not been completed to Lyman."

"We plan to complete this survey, then go ahead with whatever means are at hand to correct the situation. Needless to say, the Skagit river in this general area constitutes a problem of considerable magnitude, and all required work there would cost far in excess of funds available now and supplementary funds from the federal government would be necessary to make thorough control of the river possible.

"Unfortunately," Mr. Walberg added, "it has been indicated that such funds will not be forthcoming, due to wartime conditions. Therefore, we will have to make out the best we can with what we have."

Actual damage near Lyman so far is the destruction of about 20 acres of valuable farm land washed out by the encroaching river. This land was owned by William Sweeten, T. P. Jackson and Alfred Albertine of Lyman and by Geo. Lutterloh, who has had farm acreage washed out by the river at a point about a mile west of Lyman.

Potential danger of the situation may be summed up in the
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threat to Great Northern's roadbed at Lyman and further destruction of valuable farm lands there, coupled with the threat to rich valley land lying between Minkler lake and Sedro-Woolley. In less than two years the river has reduced a 300-foot strip of land between the railroad embankment at Lyman and the original river channel, to a narrow land passage between the two, being now within 25 feet of Great Northern's roadbed.

Great Northern affords rail transit for practically all shipments from Lyman Timber Co., the largest concern of its kind in this area, and for traffic of the Superior Portland Cement company at Concrete, and rail traffic from all of upper Skagit valley.

The river is cutting a new channel to the north about one-eighth mile west of Lyman and evidence of this northward trend in general is borne out by the fact that all sloughs north of the river in this area are filling to overflow point, while those south of the river are drying up, according to Fred Hagen, local fisherman and guide. Hagen has spent a number of years as a fisherman on the river and is well acquainted with the surrounding territory.

A. K. Lisherness, operator of Star service station at Lyman, stated that during the past few years the new channel has attained a width of over 200 feet, when it originally was passable for cars which forded the (then) "slough" to gain access to Day creek ferry there.

Lisherness stated that the general consensus of opinion among river experts at Lyman is that a jetty of pilings set across the mouth of the channel at the point of divergence would stand a good chance of correcting the entire situation by forcing the river back into its old channel and holding it out of the "slough" completely. County Engineer Walberg added that the use of jetties in the Skiyou and Utopia areas has so far proved satisfactory.

All previous work near Lyman has been very successful, it was stated, serving its fundamental purpose of turning the river from the city limits of Lyman, but a new threat has developed at the

point mentioned within the last few years.

At Minkler lake, surface water already is flowing between the lake at Skagit river's new course and local residents expressed the belief that a confluence of the two will result before very long unless something is done. There is relatively little natural earth barrier separating the two at present, they pointed out. Should this barrier be eliminated, the river would include Minkler lake in its new course and egress from the lake would be down the valley towards Sedro-Woolley, it was reminded.

County Commissioner E. C. Carr stated this week that he does not consider at Minkler lake situation "particularly alarming" at this time, but that rapid changes are possible if the river should get out of hand at Ross Island point, below Lyman. At the present time, he indicated, the course at this point would not permit a full carry over into the lake; but he stressed the fact that "flood waters and heavy run-offs this spring could materially alter the picture."

"We have this area under constant observation," Mr. Carr said, "and shall take any steps we consider immediately necessary; however, insufficient flood control funds largely hamper preventive work, and we must deploy our limited funds for currently demanding work."