

SKAGIT RISING FAST UPRIVER; DIKE BREAKS

With the highest river level in many years forecast for tonight—reaching the top of the dikes protecting downtown Mount Vernon, volunteer crews this afternoon were working at top speed bolstering weak points on lower Skagit dikes. At 1 p.m. the river was at the 25.1 level in Mount Vernon, 1.4 feet above the 1949 crest.

A shortage of sacks and workers in some districts hampered the job, but dike strengthening was going ahead at a rapid pace. Dike district 2 was asking for 50 additional workers early this afternoon and other sections were hampered by inability to contact help, due to overtaxed rural phone lines.

The county engineer's office predicted a 28.5 foot level in Mount Vernon by 9 p.m., almost two feet above the November, 1949, crest, and only a break or overflow farther upstream could relieve the pressure sufficiently to reduce the crest.

The engineer's office was particularly concerned about the situation west of Burlington where dikes are weak.

A call went out this afternoon on Burlington lines for volunteers to work on the dikes in that area. They were asked to bring shovels and lanterns or flashlights for work at night, and told to report to the fire hall. The Burlington Legion hall has been designated as an emergency shelter.

In Mount Vernon there was water this afternoon in the Moose hall clubroom, on the river bank, and yards in the west side, outside the dike, were inundated.

The river was up to 38.85 at Concrete this morning and continuing to rise. Rain was still falling upriver at noon, but a cool wave was reported coming in from the north, which might check the river rise later.

The county engineer's office is acting as the coordinating agency and calls for help and offers of aid should be channeled through that office.

Water boiling through a 40-foot gap in the dike on the George Moore farm, on the south bank of the North Fork just below the bridge west of Conway, had covered over 1,000 acres of pastureland on the northwest side of the island west of Fir Island at noon and blocked all but very pressing traffic on the south approach highway to the bridge.

The foaming, churning water, running like a mountain stream from the gap for some 50 yards through farm sheds into the great lake, was dropping two feet where the dike was, and dropping two to three more before reaching the level of the

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Skagit Rising

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standing water.

Slowly-driven farm vehicles, chugging along hub-deep from the bridge, were making it through to the island. Even if the river holds its present level, another three feet of water can be expected on the west side of the island.

Although the river is still two feet short of the top of the dike in most places on the lower part of the river, sandbagging was needed in some spots, and water continued to filter through and threatens another break farther down.

On the South Fork, where trouble is being anticipated tonight, the river was rising only slowly and was still a good foot below the 1949 level. The dropping of the tide after 8 a.m. this morning from the 12-foot high, relieved the situation at the Fir-Conway bridge, where the water fell about two inches before climbing back up again.

Farmers on all three islands were making provisions for stock grazing on low pastures, coaxing and leading them to higher ground. There were apparently no residences stranded, but barns and outbuildings had water in them in some places.

Alternate 99 between Conway and Stanwood was closed to traffic at Milltown, where water was pouring through the dike, not yet completely repaired after an earlier break.

All traffic to the upper Skagit Valley was cut off at Lyman, where the road is under water. Another stretch of road above Marblemount is flooded and the road to Newhalem is closed.

The Samish River was out of its banks at Allen, but the Chuckanut Highway was still open this noon, although the possibility of slides made the portion along the water hazardous. Creeks emptying into the Skagit were bank-full and in some cases overflow-