

FEBRUARY 15, 1951

Slow Runoff Hinders Surveys To Determine Flood Damage

Hampered by the slow runoff of flood waters which still leave thousands of acres inundated in the lower Skagit valley, surveys are now in progress to determine the extent of damage in the disastrous Skagit river flood.

The Soil Conservation service is in the midst of a comprehensive survey of damage to soil, crops, buildings and livestock in the county and representatives of that office are now in the field following up the preliminary aerial survey of the flood areas.

The county agent's office is conducting a checkup on farm damage, particularly livestock and crops, and the county engineer and drainage districts are surveying damage to roads, bridges, dikes and ditches. Jack Deierlein, Red Cross disaster chairman, has appointed committees to survey flood damage and to pass on applications for rehabilitation assistance from that agency.

Incomplete results of the SCS survey plainly show that the cost of this flood will far exceed the 1949 disaster, when an estimated \$306,965 damage was caused by the overflow of Skagit county streams.

The extent of flooding in the Samish area was about the same then as now, according to Austin Summers of the Soil Conservation service, and damage in the Nookachamps and upper Skagit areas is expected to be at least as great to farms. The lower Skagit flood this time was far more serious in area and damage done, with greater cost to dikes, ditches, roads, farm buildings and stock. The runoff has also been very slow, with less than a two-foot in the water level at Conway and water still coming through the North Fork break and the water level is receding there, Summers said, but the scene is one of unbelievable confusion, with huge quantities of logs, stumps, whole trees and other debris littering the fields.

Temporary buildings from the farm labor camp on the Noble Lee farm, one of the hardest hit because it is largely outside the diking district, have been located as far as a mile away and large trees that grew along Dry Slough litter the fields on the Lee and neighboring Tellesbo farms.

The rapidity of the water rise at Conway and on the island prevented the saving of much of the personal property and furniture in homes, and the loss will no doubt be heavy.

In the Hamilton vicinity, there was sufficient warning—through a siren system—to permit most residents to save their mattresses and furniture that would be ruined by water, a Red Cross spokesman reports. Damage there included warped linoleum in the homes and loss of woodpiles in the yards with not too many claims for furniture loss expected.

The Red Cross is still giving out emergency assistance, with applications also coming in for rehabilitation aid.

The area office representative scheduled to arrive yesterday went on to Bellingham after a brief stop here, because the situation was considered more critical there, with more applications for help from persons unable to meet their own needs.

County Agent Vey Valentine is out today surveying farm damage and checking on reports of livestock losses. Although there

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are conflicting reports and many unfounded rumors, it appears that stock losses will total 100 head at least, perhaps considerably more. In the 1949 flood less than a dozen cattle were lost.

The dike below Conway was ripped from top to bottom, with a 40-foot gap torn in the protecting wall. The emergency pumping equipment of diking district 17 is under water and