

# Skagit Hits Crest; Some Flood Danger Persists Over Lowlands

## High Waters Begin To Recede Slowly

Dike workers, engineers, and Skagit County farmers had their fingers crossed this morning as they shoved a collective "thumb" into leaking and soggy dikes along the Skagit River.

The river reached its peak in the Skagit Valley at 5 p.m. yesterday at 25.7 feet at Mount Vernon. Unlike the flood of a week ago the river did not start to drop quickly, but stayed up over 25 feet until 1 a.m. this morning. At 9 a.m. this morning it was 24.7 feet.

Though the dikes protecting low lying farm lands have held together, thanks to the work of hundreds of heroic workers laying sandbags, officials are still worried that the saturated dikes still could give way even though the peak of the river has passed.

### Flood Possible

Associate County Engineer Jack E. Frets put it this way: "Once the river drops to 20 feet we should be fairly safe, but even then a major break in any of the dikes could flood a lot of farm land. A 12-foot tide will start going out a noon and things should be a little better after that, but we probably won't be able to breathe easily until 8 tonight."

The tide at the mouth of the Skagit acts as a dam against the outflow of the flood river, slowing down the flow of water as it passes the patched-up Fresh Water Slough dike break near Ted Lundeen's home on Fir Island.

The reason for the long crest of the river is that the main tributaries of the Skagit, such as the Sauk, Cascade, and Baker rivers, reached their peaks at different times, thereby keeping the Skagit up.

### 34.5 Feet Hit

A high point of 34.5 feet was hit at Concrete Thursday at 10 p.m.

The readings at Concrete then began to drop but as the offshoots of the Skagit reached their high marks the level came back up to 33.74 yesterday at 1 p.m.

At 9 a.m. this morning the Concrete readings were down to 27 feet. There usually is a 12 to 16 hour period before the Concrete readings are reflected in higher or lower water levels in Mount Vernon.

Assistant County Engineer Harold Strombom paid tribute to the work of county residents and servicemen from the Naval Air Station on Whidbey Island in staving off a possible major break in the dikes in the south part of the county.

A work force of 250 sailors and marines from the air station has been toiling in the area to relieve exhausted farmers and school students who have been sandbagging at Fresh Water Slough and Fisher's Slough.

## Sailors Help

A group of 90 sailors was at the Fresh Water slough through the night while 30 more were plugging a threatening break at Fisher's Slough, about 3½ miles above Conway. The Great Northern Railway sent up a crew of 40 from Seattle with a load of rock to re-ballast the roadbed near the South Fork which had high water seeping through it.

Service was temporarily halted on the railway last night and passengers were taken off at Burlington and Stanwood and rerouted by bus. The company reported this morning that all trains were now moving as scheduled.

A group of 25 Coast Guard sailors, commanded by Lieut. James Martin from the Coast Guard Base in Seattle, was standing by today to evacuate personnel in case one of the dikes should melt away before the high water.

Six rescue punts, flat bottom boats, were on trucks at the courthouse in Mount Vernon to where they had been brought by the Coast Guard from Astoria, Ore., to be dispatched as needed.

The Navy sent in four flood lights last night, plus two field kitchens, an ambulance, and numerous trucks to the Conway-Fir Island area. A spokesman from the station said that all liberty had been cancelled on the base and a regular work day was to be maintained today so a force of at least 100 men might be kept at the dike.

## Navy Sends Men

Navy units who sent men included Patrol Squadrons 1, 17, 29 and 57; Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron 112; and other personnel from the air station including the marine detachment.

It was estimated by Engineer Strombom that 67,000 sand bags had been used so far. He noted that the "sand bags" were often filled with mud and dirt pushed up by bulldozers. The county trucks did bring in gravel from the Conway pits as filler material.

The dredge from Seattle, hired by Dike District Two officials for repair work, was still tied up at Whidbey Island, unable to cross the channel in the rough water.

Very little erosion was reported on the Burlington Dike and the Lyman-Hamilton detour was back in service after being washed out Thursday.

Whether or not the lower Skagit Valley would avoid a flood today was still something only time would tell.

But if it does, it can thank the tireless efforts of the servicemen and civilians who worked long hours filling and lugging sandbags to be used in holding back the menacing waters.