

# Seepage causing great concern; hundreds of acres reported flooded

By JIM AUSTIN

Occasionally heavy snow falling the winter, rainfall during the spring and now warm weather causing run-offs from the river bend area faced with what has been termed one of the most serious drainage problems in the county. The problem is there isn't any drainage.

Farmers in the area have reported the county with lack of adequate planning and drainage to prevent the damage.

Total estimate of loss to farmers in the area is not available at this time but preliminary figures are high — a total of a thousand dollars is a conservative estimate.

Henry Paul, a Mount Vernon dairyman, estimates his loss in the neighborhood of \$10,000.

Paul has lost about 50 acres of

farm land," Paul told the Skagit Valley Herald Thursday.

"About 30 acres of that is in field corn."

Paul said he figures it will cost him \$10 per ton to buy enough corn to replace the corn he has lost and at 20 tons to the acre, he estimates his loss at 600 tons.

"That's \$6,000," he said.

And that doesn't take into account the cost of the seed and production costs he added.

In addition he said he has lost some 20 acres of pastures which means 20 acres of green feed and hay he won't get this year. Which translates into more financial loss.

Paul isn't the only farmer in the area who has been hurt by the standing water.

Henry DeGoede 1598 Dunbar Rd., Mount Vernon, estimates he has lost "anywhere from 10 per cent to a third" of his peas along the river bend.

L.C. (Pete) King, field man

for Twin City Foods Inc. of Stanwood, the processor which has contracted for DeGoede's 80 acres, said Wednesday there are "some places we can't get to without bogging down."

Those places will apparently be bypassed, DeGoede said.

Paul said the county has had a dike district since he can remember but has never had a drainage district.

"We need a drainage district along the river bend," he said.

"With the present dike system we are all right as long as the water is below the 13 foot level. But the water hasn't been that low for at least six weeks."

And he predicted it would be another month at least before the water gets down to that level.

Above the 13 foot level, he said, seepage from the river is a constant menace to farmers in the area.

"It is a health problem to the

cows," he said. "The water stands still for so long it becomes stagnant and then the cows drink it and they become sick."

But the problem is extending beyond the river bend area, he said.

"If there was proper drainage then we wouldn't have the mosquito problem," he said.

Paul said last year was bad — he lost several acres of crops then — but this year is worse. "And who knows what next year will be like?"

County Commissioner Arnold Hansen agreed a drainage district could be formed without much difficulty, pointing out that two such districts have already been formed, one in the Sedro-Woolley area and the other in the Britt Slough area.

"The normal process is for the commissioners to receive what amounts to an expression of interest from the affected property owners," Hansen said.

"Then we schedule public hearings and if we get enough interest — we ask the property owners to agree to underwrite the cost through assessment — then we have the authority to create and over see the district."

Elsewhere in the county, similar problems are evident.

Hundreds of acres of hay and young corn were destroyed by June flooding—the greatest loss in that area in years — and serious seepage problems threaten farm land in the Fir Island area.

Paul said he has discussed the problem in the river bend area west of Mount Vernon with Skagit County Engineer Lloyd Johnson and the county assessor and plans to bring it to the county commissioners.

"Something has to be done about this annual problem," he said.

"There's just no reason for it."

## Washington state's biggest business

WASHINGTON, Wash. (AP) — Agriculture contributes more to Washington state's economy than any other business, the director of Washington State University's Agriculture Research Center told small grain, pea and lentil growers at a field day.

James Nielson, speaking at the U.S. Spillman Agronomy

continue its support of research and extension programs at WSU and asked that the university be told of problems Washington growers face.

He said the importance of agricultural production is most graphically illustrated in the percentage of the dollar spent for food. Twenty years ago the average family spent 21 per

## Beef situation called 'tight around world'

WASHINGTON (AP) — A scarcity of beef in Europe and tight supplies elsewhere are raising serious questions over the benefits to American consumers as a result of President Nixon removing meat-quota import restrictions for the remain-

(Common Market) is expected to be down four to six per cent from 1971. At the same time, as in other affluent areas of the world, consumer demand for meat is continuing to rise.

Consequently, beef-shy nations—including the United

States, which had been regulated under a 1964 quota formula. Most of the meat is low-quality beef used for hamburger and other manufactured products.

Although U.S. officials say they expect the quota



swampy upper  
Grandy Creek  
ring it. Broken

and jumbled tree trunks are everywhere, an estimated three million board feet of them. The giant slide let loose Saturday afternoon from a spot on a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from this spot. (Photo by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Department)

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## Commissioners seek disaster funds for Grandy Creek areas

By JOHN MITCHAM

Some people reported they heard a roar and felt the ground shake like an earthquake. It happened last Saturday afternoon about 3:40 or 3:45.

"It's a disaster," said County Commissioner Howard Miller. "Thank Heaven our road grader operator was out of there. We'd never have found him, or the grader. He went through about 10 minutes before it happened."

Miller was referring to the slide at Grandy Lake where a whole mountain gave way and slid off into the canyon, filled the upper part of Grandy Lake, and blocked off the county's new million dollar Grandy Lake cutoff to Baker Lake.

Today the county engineer's office was busy making dollar estimates on repairs and a close guess is a quarter million dollars to fix Grandy Creek Road alone, including clearing the slide.

It was wet and raining but everything was calm and quiet Saturday when Bud Meyers, venerable old Skagit River steelhead guide and county road grader operator, drove the grader past Grandy Lake about 20 minutes after 3 p.m. Saturday. He had been working overtime to clear some slides on the Burpee Hill Road, north out of Concrete. It had been a hectic weekend so far with slides. The rain kept coming down and everything in the third county commissioner district seemed to be going to hell as far as roads were concerned.

Mud and water were everywhere. But nothing seemed wrong when Meyers passed Grandy Lake.

Ten minutes later, at the top of a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from Grandy Creek Road, a crack in the ground appeared and mud began to ooze. The slide gathered speed and gathered up some small trees. The crack widened and the mountain shivered and huge trees, some as much as five feet through or more toppled and

joined the jumbled mess. The mud moved faster as the slide area became bigger and bigger. There were witnesses but far away people could feel the shake and some reported a roaring sound.

It may have lasted five minutes, no one knows. The entire side of the mountain gave way and the mud avalanche swept everything in its path. Down the mountain it came, clearing everything down to bedrock. It hit the bottom, crossed the road, went into the swampy upper end of Grandy lake, filled the lake before it stopped the mud climbed upward on the side of the canyon.

There was more noise as huge trees settled. Branches and roots tipped at crazy angles, and then it was quiet. The rain continued and Grandy Lake water rose. The slide had suddenly filled the upper end of the lake. The water had to go. It formed a tidal wave and out of the lower end of the lake, much as the water in a bathtub would if a man were to cannonball into one end.

The water rushed into Grandy Creek but the creekbed couldn't handle it. Between the slide and Highway 20, the creek went out of its bed and cut the road badly. Ditches along the road were eroded and a creek ran down the road itself for a long distance. At Highway 20 it went out onto the state highway and covered it with water. The Grandy Creek road were impassable. The water on the lower stretch of the road was so bad that even Meyers knew about the slide. The county commissioners didn't find out about it until Monday and even reports were sketchy. County engineers walked the area Monday and Tuesday to survey the scene and take pictures.

The slide is tremendous. It is estimated that three million board feet of timber, much of it from the slide. Actually there were three major slides. The hulking mass split off as it came down the mountain.

County Commissioner William (Bill) Sullivan said, "We'll have to have a timber sale before we can clear the road," and he wasn't kidding entirely.

The cost of repair is devastating. A quarter million dollars? That's only a guess. Where will the county get that kind of money. There's the washout on Day Creek Road too, and between the two there isn't a cent of money in the entire year's Third District budget.

Today the county commissioners hope to appeal to the State Civil Defense Department. Skagit County declared a disaster area, thus making available emergency funds from state and federal sources in such contingencies.

For two days, Saturday and Sunday, men from Sound Power & Light Upper Baker Dam were cut off from the outside world. One resident of the area couldn't get back but said his dog and cat could make out for themselves.

It could have been worse. People could have been killed. But it's bad. The Grandy Creek Road was a controversial project. It was completed in 1969. The U.S. Forest Service helped with the funding. The county

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12 Skagit Valley Herald, Mount Vernon, Washington

Monday, February 8, 1971



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# Devastation—dramatic of gigantic Grandy Creek



**SCENE OF DEVASTATION**—The level area left of center formerly was the swampy upper end of Grandy Lake. At the right in this composite picture the roadbed of Grandy Creek Road is discernible with an estimated seven feet of mud and debris covering it. Broken

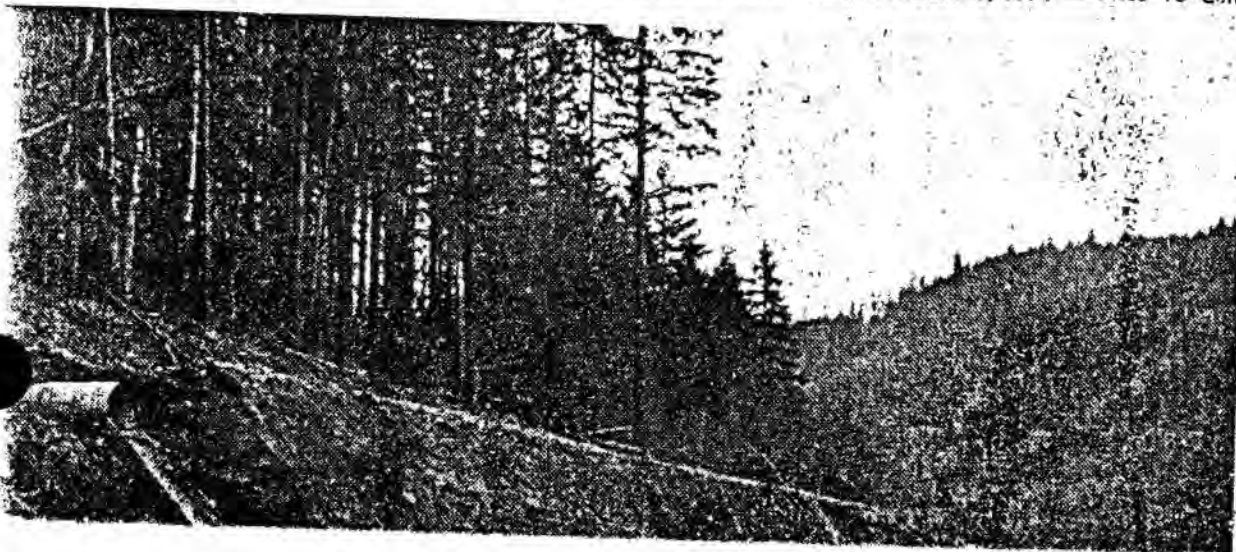
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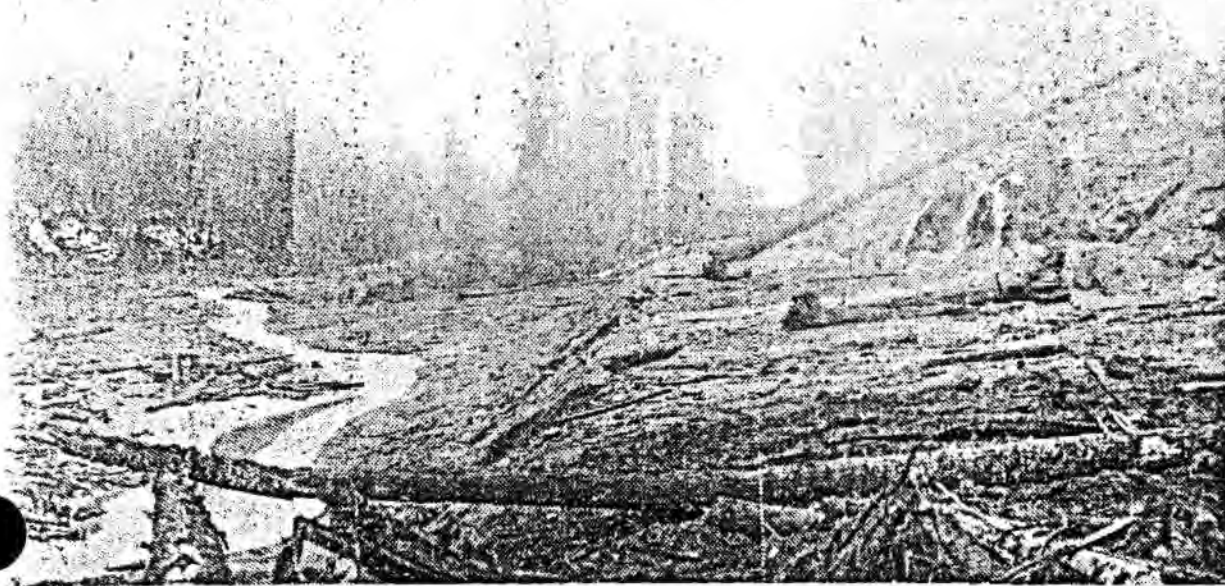
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# dramatic story told Grandy Creek avalanche



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and jumbled tree trunks are everywhere, an estimated three million board feet of them. The giant slide let loose Saturday afternoon from a spot on a ridge on Goat Mountain, a mile away from this spot. (Photo by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Department)

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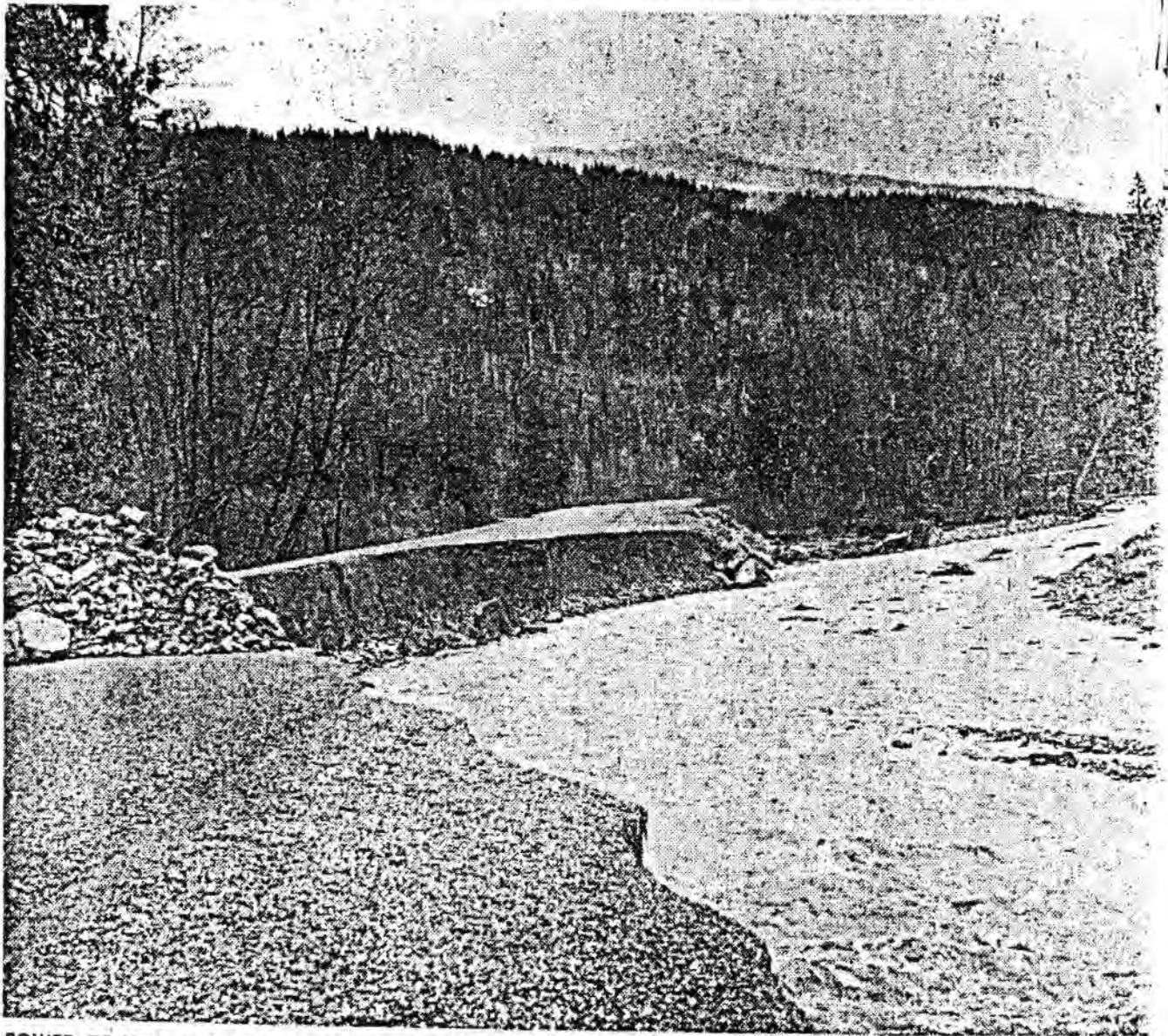
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**A ROAD WAS HERE**—Grandy Creek Road gave way to the forces of rampaging water. This group of observers surveys

a particularly deep hole below a slide area where mud trees toppled from Goat Mountain.



**POWER OF WILD WATER**—The pile of boulders on top of Grandy Creek Road demonstrates the power of the creek as it

rushed out of its bed and cut into the roadbed here in washout below the slide area.

(Photos by Jay Ensley, Skagit County Road Depart-



**GRANDY LAKE DEVASTATION**—These photos taken Sunday by Harry Sweet, pressman at Skagit Valley Herald, dramatize the ruin of part of the Grandy Lake area last week when a mountainside slid down. At left is the upper part of the lake,

now filled with debris, as shown. At right, Sweet did an about turn and photographed the path of the avalanche, showing its point of origin.

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VIEW OF MATTHEW PAUL FARM SHOWING SUBMERGED FIELDS

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## PROBLEMS NOW

Skagit Valley Farmers are faced with one of the worst seepage problems in years, according to many farmers who are estimating the property damage and loss of crops in many thousands of dollars.

And they are, to say the least, more than mildly upset about a situation some say could be avoided.

Perhaps it is too late to do anything about it this year—but it surely is not too early to start thinking about next year.

The problem, according to area farmers, is the lack of adequate drainage systems along the Skagit River. When the river stays as high as it has been in recent weeks, seepage is bound to be greater than normal.

It would seem to us that Matthew Paul, Mount Vernon dairyman who estimates his loss in field corn alone at \$6,000—and that doesn't include 20 acres of pasture he can't use—has a good point in suggesting the creation of a drainage district.

Paul's primary concern is in the River Bend area west of Mount Vernon, but other reports indicate to us the situation is serious in other areas of the County as well.

As for the creation of the drainage district, County Commissioner Arnold Hansen says it is a relatively simple process.

The commissioners need some indication that the people affected by the seepage are interested in the formation of the district. After all, they are the ones who will have to bear the burden of cost and administration.

Then they will call a public hearing to draw all affected property owners in an attempt to get as wide a range of opinion as possible.

After determining the interest and the willingness of the people to support such a district, the commissioners have the power to create one and assess a levy for its operation.

Obviously, creation of such a district will be less costly in the long run than the annual loss of fertile farm land and crops.

We urge first the people in areas now under water due to the excessive seepage to push for creation of such drainage districts and to let the commissioners know such districts are needed.

And secondly, we urge the commissioners to move with a minimum of delay in creating the district.