

More slides pose threat to Soos Creek ecology

By Hal Millen

Two potential earth slides of major proportions opposite each other along Soos Creek kept three different crews working through the day yesterday to alleviate the situation.

The possibility of large masses of earth sliding into and damming the creek is very real, according to spokesmen from several agencies. Water thus impounded could cause a flood of serious proportions.

The problem area lies immediately below the backstretch of Seattle International Raceways east of Kent about 2½ miles up the Soos.

Working to clear a log jam which has seriously eroded the north bank of the creek was a crew from the hydraulics division of the King County Department of Public Works. They were working, however, from the south bank of the creek.

About three-quarters of the way up the north bank, crews from Burlington Northern have been at work daily for two weeks making repairs to trackage which has both slipped downhill and moved sideways.

Directly up the bank, on a bench which carries the racetrack's backstretch east of the S-turn, the most severe slippage of the area has occurred.

Crews employed by the raceway organization were digging a drainage ditch along the north shoulder of the backstretch to carry away excess water from the short distance of hillside leading up to the main level of the track.

Parts of the track's blacktop have sunk noticeably, and one section of shoulder is a series of steps in which the earth has slipped as much as a foot and a half to two feet.

Most of the slippage area on both sides of the Soos between the BN tracks to the north and Black Diamond Road to the south is on eight acres of property owned by Lawrence Lundberg.

One major fissure cuts across the

struction and within a few feet of one corner of his house. The garage has moved about 2½ inches downhill.

One of the victims of the log jam was a suspension bridge below Lundberg's place which provided access to the north bank and supported his domestic water line.

Although the bridge cables were anchored high on the bank, the anchors on the north bank gave way when water flowing around the jam eroded the bank and precipitated the slide. The bridge and water pipe were swept away by the high water.

Bruce Forbes, operations engi-

neer for the county hydraulics division, said that supersaturation of the earth caused the soil to become liquified before it had a chance to drain. The added weight of the water then caused one or more layers of dirt to move upon one another when the bank below had eroded sufficiently to upset the bank's angle of repose.

Although Forbes is not crying "panic," he wants people living in the Soos drainage area to be aware of the very real danger inherent in the situation. No one can say at this point, he said, whether or not the

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Normally docile Soos spreads out

Soos Creek, which feeds water to the fish rearing facilities at Green River Salmon Hatchery, rose an estimated three feet over normal winter flow as a result of last weekend's rains and widely overflowed its banks. It was the highest water since the 1950s, and brought with it the heaviest concentration of silt in modern times, according to Ste-

phen Fallert, hatchery superintendent. Among concerned volunteers who maintained an around-the-clock "de-silting" program at the hatchery for three days were members of the George McPheeters family, whose home is across the creek out of the picture at right.

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slippage has stabilized now that last weekend's heavy rains have abated.

King County police are, however, alerting the residents below the slide area so that they can take steps to move livestock to higher ground if they choose to do so.

"People can usually get to safety if the possibility of a flood is known," Forbes said. "With livestock it's a different matter."

If a slide should occur, one of two things would probably happen, according to Forbes.

Should the earth movement be relatively slow, the creek would probably keep its own channel open through the dirt and debris — and little flooding damage would result.

Should the movement be rapid and massive, however, the creek could be impounded and build up a dangerous head of pressure which, when the earth dam was breached, could send a powerful wall of water down the creek.

If damming should occur, the hydraulics crews would immediately go to work to free the impounded water in

as controlled a manner as possible, Forbes said. Slides from both sides of the creek at once would, of course, compound the problem.

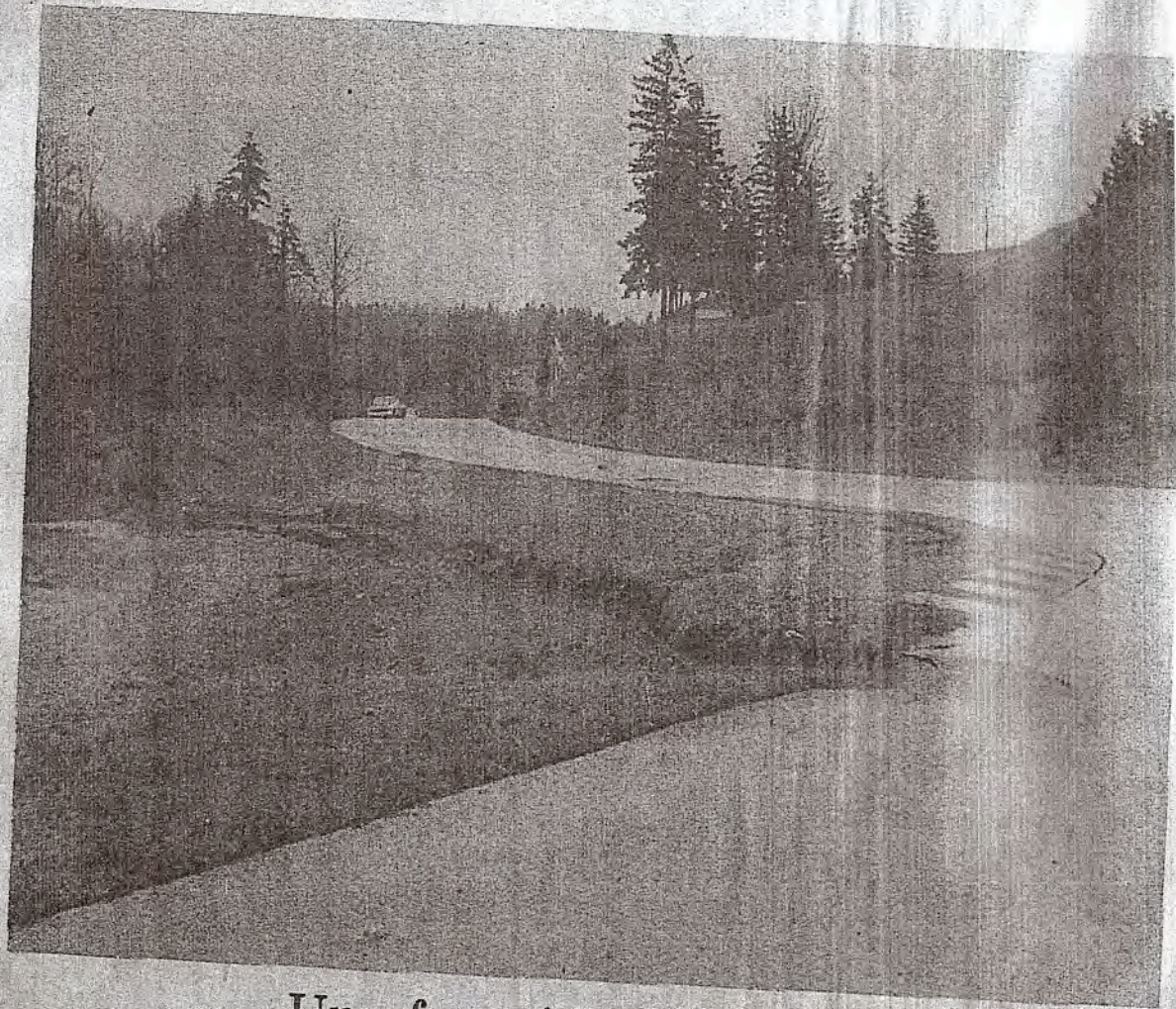
People and livestock are not the only concern of the men working to keep the Soos flowing freely.

Department of Fisheries officials are greatly concerned over the fate of 5½ million fry and 1½ million six-inch salmon being reared at the state hatchery about two miles below the slide area.

Forbes said that the department has men available from its stream improvement division to help at a moment's notice in the event of such a flood.

The hatchery on Soos Creek has already had its share of problems.

Last weekend, only the efforts of a host of volunteer men, women and children "desilting" the tanks in which the fry are being reared averted a disaster. The tiny fish would have been literally forced out of the tanks by the accumulating mud from the excessively murky creek.



Unsafe racing conditions

Earth slippage along the shoulder of the backstretch at Seattle International Raceway east of Kent has etched into the track's asphalt at right foreground and left center. The hillside, supersaturated from recent heavy rains, slipped when a log jam in Soos Creek directly downhill at left caused high water to undercut the hill's natural angle of repose. A Tri-State Construction Co. backhoe is shown in background digging a drainage ditch along the north side

of the raceway's backstretch to divert uphill water from the critical area. The unstable earth poses a potential flood hazard should it give way and slide into and block the Soos. Several homes and the Washington State Salmon Hatchery lie below the unstable area. A section of Burlington Northern railroad tracks could also go in a slide.

—Staff photo by Hal Millen

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Breaking up a log jam on Soos Creek

Men from the hydraulics division, King County Department of Public Works, spent Friday and yesterday clearing a log jam in Soos Creek directly below Seattle International Raceway east of Kent. Here they are stringing a cable from the south bank across to a section of the jam so that a bulldozer can snake logs around the large tree at center and pull them up the bank in foreground. A wide section of the north bank, opposite, has been eroded into the river by the jam-di-

verted creek. Considerable slippage of the hillside above forced Burlington Northern trains to pass the area at five miles an hour. Hydraulics crewmen, from left, are Elmer Rogstad and Oliver Johnson on the near bank and Chris Dowd and Bill Bowman, foreman, on the jam. Bowman slipped and fell into the high-flowing creek Friday and was saved from drowning only by heroic efforts of his companions.

— Staff photo by Hal Millen