

On Sandy River

Property owners seek to control bank erosion

by MARK FLOYD

High water caused by the combination of snow followed by warm rain in the Sandy River watershed last December has resulted in extensive bank erosion along parts of the river.

The erosion has forced a number of property owners west of Sandy to take measures to protect their homes. Three property owners with land just west of Dodge Park have requested development permits from the Clackamas County Hearings Officer to construct protective barriers on their banks.

The three owners are Jim Kitchen of Serban Road, and Dwight Baum and Richard Surface of Marsh Road.

Severest hit was the site belonging to Kitchen who saw high water destroy much of his river bank and nearly his home. Kitchen estimates that the river chewed off 25 feet of the bank on a point just east of his house and 8-10 feet just off his deck. His deck now is almost above the edge of the Sandy River.

"We were more severely hit than the others," Kitchen said. "Our house was actually in danger, so we moved out for a couple of days."

The Kitchens did have some bank reinforcement of rock and timber, but it washed away during the high water. Without that protection, Kitchen is afraid his house might be in the river this winter.

RIPRAPPING

To protect Kitchen's home and the property of the other owners, sponsors of the request are hoping to riprap two of the sites and install jetties on the third. Riprapping involves placing stones on the river bank at an angle and anchoring it several feet below stream level, according to Clackamas County Senior Planner Gary Naylor.

"If it's done right, the riprap can last a long time without maintenance," Naylor said.

Should the Hearings Officer approve the development permits, federal funding for the projects appears to be a certainty, according to District Conservationist for the Soil Conservation

Service Ed Olmsted. Olmsted has been told that the funds have been approved under the Emergency Watershed Protection Act, but are waiting President Carter's signature.

In addition to the three Sandy River sites, property owners in Zigzag and Rhododendron have applied for hearings with the Clackamas County. Those hearings will be held in late August.

The Sandy River area property owners are concerned that additional people requesting hearings may delay the beginning of construction until next year.

To complicate matters, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department has a cutoff date for river construction in late summer. The date, which depends on weather conditions, is set to protect the fall salmon run.

Meanwhile, other property owners in the area are worried that high water this winter could spell destruction to their land and homes. One owner of a site not specified on the request is hopeful that upstream construction of the jetties on the Surface residence will protect his property as well.

"In the last year, I've seen four feet of the bank upriver wash away," Lee Houston said.

"Our main concern is long term stability," he added. "Otherwise we're going to have a loss by constant erosion year by year."

MINIMAL EFFECT

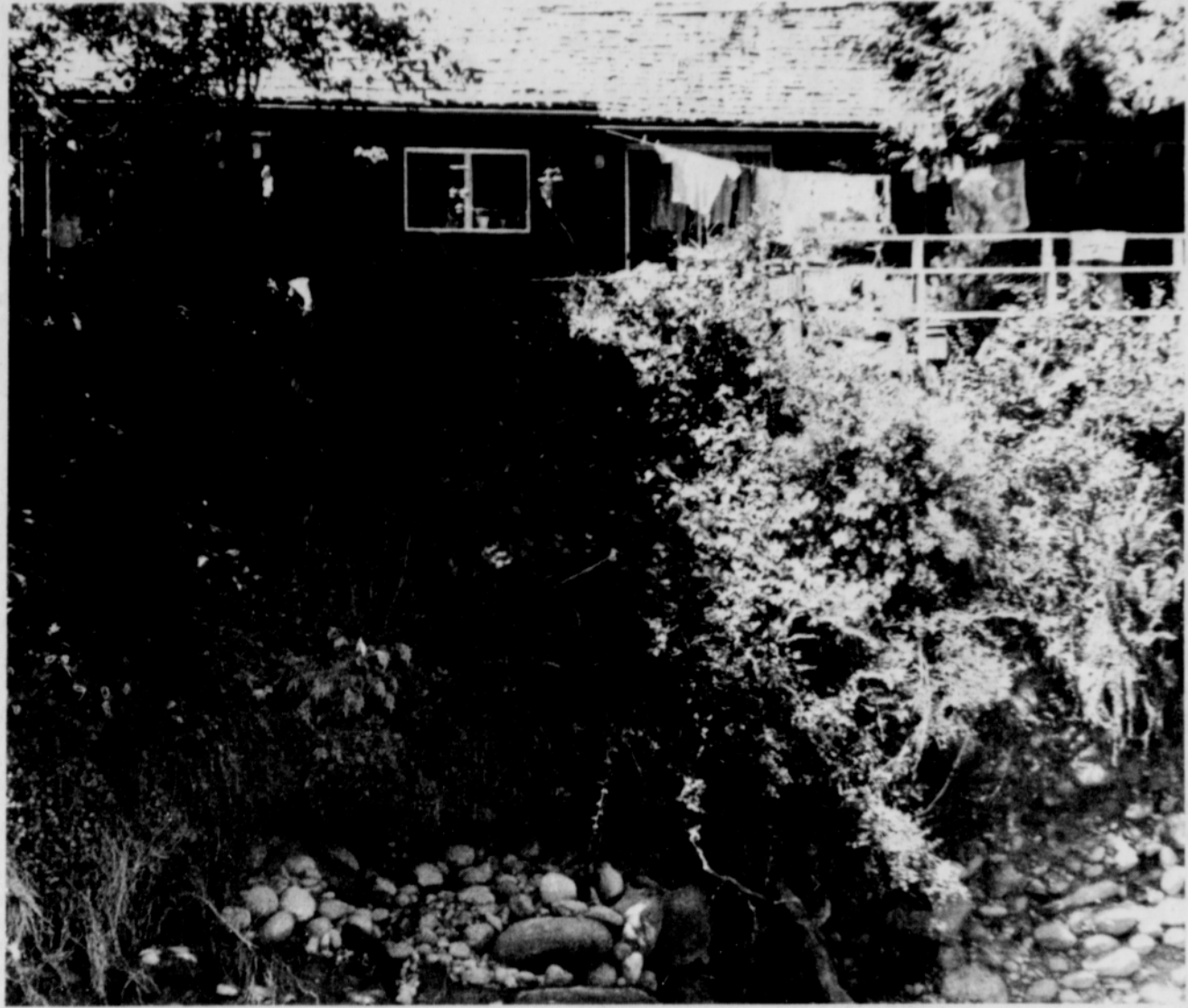
Another obstacle facing the property owners appears to be concern about the downstream effect the construction may have, Olmsted said.

However, he foresees no visible effect on the river from the riprapping.

"If you're going to let people build, you've got to let them protect their investments," he said.

Naylor echoed Olmsted's comments about the minimal effect the construction would have on the river.

"I've been told by engineers that these three modifications are miniscule when considering all of the elements that affect the river," Naylor said. "The impact, if at all, would be



STANDING PERCARIOUSLY on the banks of the Sandy River is the home of former Sandy High basketball coach Jim Kitchen. Last December's high water eroded eight feet off the bank of his property just

below his deck. Kitchen is worried that a good storm this winter might be enough to send his home into the river if he isn't allowed to have a protective device built.

negligible."

"At the same time, they can't absolutely guarantee that there would be no impact," he added.

The final decision rests with the County Hearings Officer. The hearing will be held tonight (July 27) at 7 p.m. in room 4 of the county courthouse.

ONCE IN 8-9 YEARS

The water conditions which characterized the Sandy River last

December occur on the average of every eight or nine years. On the other hand Kitchen said, it could happen again this year.

Appropriately enough, it was Kitchen who first got the ball rolling in applying for federal funds.

"We explored local agencies during the first high water period," he said. "They suggested any help would come from the federal level and that's when

we contacted Sen. Mark Hatfield's office."

Hatfield set them onto the Emergency Watershed Protection Act and since then others have expressed interest in applying for the funds.

"This act has been going on since the 1950's and hardly anyone has applied for funding until now," Olmsted said. "I'm afraid this is really going to open up a can of worms."

Photos by Mark Floyd



JIM KITCHEN is one of three property owners requesting a development permit to build erosion prevention devices. High waters on the Sandy River last December chewed several feet off the bank of Kitchen's property.



REINFORCING THE CONCRETE wall is Lee Houston's way of protecting his home against the Sandy River. Houston's property isn't specified on the

development permit list submitted to Clackamas County, but he said that he doesn't need a permit to reinforce an existing structure.

ASSESSOR EYES IMPROVEMENTS

To Tax Lot 2800, T2S R4E Section 13CA

Property Address: 38916 Proctor Blvd.
Sandy, Oregon 97055

Occupied By: SAFECO TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY
Chris Meyer, Mngr.
Sharon Corse, Asst. Escrow Officer
Jerri Wolfe, Escrow Secretary, Customer Service
Cindy Daniel, Service Representative

Classification: Full Service Title & Escrow
Customer Service
Builders Service

NE 1/4 SW 1/4 SECTION 13 T.2S. R.4E. W.M.
CLACKAMAS COUNTY



THINK SERVICE — THINK SAFECO — 668-5562