

Authorities urge vigilance as North Platte remains high

## More water's on the way

By JOSHUA WOLFSON - Star-Tribune staff writer | Posted: Friday, June 18, 2010



Kyle Broce of Sterling Northern Junior College, left, helps fill sandbags in north Casper Thursday morning. The Casper chapter of the American Red Cross helped organize around 30 contestants and coaches in town for the annual College National Finals Rodeo to fill sandbags at three locations. Water in the North Platte River is at its highest level in years. (Dan Cepeda/Star-Tribune)

Emergency management officials urged people living near the swollen North Platte River to remain vigilant Thursday, despite a recent drop in river flows farther upstream.

Although flooding has so far been limited to sections of the Platte River Parkway, rainy weather could quickly change the situation, they warned.

"People need to realize we have a real potential for danger during the next three weeks," said Natrona County Sheriff's Lt. Mark Sellers.

The National Weather Service in Riverton is forecasting dry conditions for the weekend, followed by possible thunderstorms early next week.

"People should be watching the weather, especially if they live by the river," said Pete Meyers, an administrative analyst for the city of Casper.

The North Platte River has flowed into Seminoe Reservoir, about 70 miles southwest of Casper, at record volumes this month. River volumes into the reservoir dropped earlier this week, giving officials the ability to release less water downstream.

Still, water was continuing to flow over the uncontrolled spillway at Pathfinder Dam on Thursday, and the federal Bureau of Reclamation said the spillway flow should peak around Monday. Water is expected to continue spilling from Pathfinder through the first half of July.

Releases from Gray Reef Dam on Wednesday were 6,000 cubic feet per second and were expected to rise to 6,500 cfs by today.

In Casper, the North Platte could reach flows of 7,000 cfs today -- the highest volume to travel through Casper since snowmelt and series of spring storms combined to fill central Wyoming's reservoir system to capacity. The river typically flows at less than a third of that volume this time of year.

The Natrona County Emergency Management Agency established three sandbag distribution sites in the Casper area Tuesday in anticipation of flooding. As of Thursday morning, more than 1,700 sandbags have been distributed from those sites, Sellers said.

A group from the College National Finals Rodeo spent several hours Thursday filling sandbags for citizens at each of the three distribution sites.

"They volunteered their personal time to come out and do that, and we want to thank them," Sellers said. "That's greatly appreciated."

Staff writer William Browning contributed to this report.

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Want to know more?

The Natrona County Emergency Management Agency has opened an emergency operations center to deal with flood-related issues. People can contact the center's hotline at 235-9555.

More information is also available at [www.natrona.net/flood](http://www.natrona.net/flood) and [www.casperwy.gov](http://www.casperwy.gov).

Sandbags are available at three distribution sites:

- \* The intersection of Johnstone and River Meadow roads in Dempsey Acres.
- \* Cole Creek near the Platte River Bridge.
- \* Near 1250 N. Center St.