# Corp of Engineers hold back water


The North Platte River was bank-to-bank in Bridgeport Monday afternoon, like it is throughout the region. In addition to heavy rainfall, a release of water from Wyoming reservoirs has caused the river to swell to flood stage and above. According to officials, the high water levels should not be a threat to people and Central Nebraska Irrigation is reporting that Lake McConaughy is at 78.4 percent capacity. Photo by Roger Holsinger

**By: RICK WILLIS, Staff Reporter**

Published: Tuesday, June 15, 2010 4:12 AM CDT

Water from recent rains and continued snowmelt is testing the limits of man-made efforts to control its flow.

For now, man is winning.

The federal Bureau of Reclamation, which operates Glendo Reservoir, was scheduled to release 3,800 cubic feet of water per second from the Glendo Reservoir Monday. But due to the rain in Wyoming and Nebraska, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is allowing water to continue to accumulate in the flood pool. Floodwater stored in Glendo Reservoir is released under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Army under the authority of the Flood Control Act of 1944.

In a conference call with state and local officials Monday morning, Glendo management said it would keep the level of water released at the current level of 2,600 cubic feet per second.

“The river is like a yo-yo right now,” said Tom Hayden, the Bridgeport field office supervisor for the State of Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. “It is very hard to predict what will happen.”

But Nebraskans can expect soggy conditions to continue. Hayden said that if all things remain the same, he sees an average 12- to 18-inch rise in the North Platte from the Nebraska state line to Lewellen. But depending on the water released elsewhere in the system, the numbers could change.

“This is a very complicated set of calculations,” Hayden said. “A big problem is backflow, (when water is diverted in the river due to overgrown banks), and how that affects the river.”

The Laramie River is also dumping water into the system at Fort Laramie, Wyo. The river is adding 1,600 cf to the North Platte.

If the region dodges predicted rain, that could help matters, Hayden said. If the water expected to arrive in the form of run-off doesn’t show up, the river could actually stay the same. Hayden’s crew was measuring the river at the state line and Mitchell on Monday.

“The water will take a day to get from Fort Laramie to the state line and a little less than a day from there to get to Mitchell,” Hayden said. “If it would just dry out a little, the river could stay the same.”

The National Weather Service issued a flood warning for Mitchell through mid-week. On Sunday, the river was at 7.0 feet. In 1970 the river was at 7.1 feet.

As of June 13, reservoir data provided by the Bureau of Reclamation for Glendo Reservoir has the reservoir 100 percent full, with 31.5 percent of the flood pool utilized.  Once the flood pool is full, then the reservoir will be released as water comes in.

Gray Reef Reservoir, near Alcova, Wyo., is at 97.7 percent full and listed at two inches below maximum depth.

According to Hayden, “whatever comes out of Grey Reef comes out.”

Regional emergency manager Jim Collins said Wyoming has increased its release of water from Gray Rocks Reservoir, near Douglas, Wyo., to take pressure off of that dam. That, he said, will flood low-lying areas but shouldn’t pose a threat to people.