

Dikes holding in Baggs, but higher water expected

By Tori Adams

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The level of the Little Snake River has dropped in Baggs, but water is still flowing up against the dikes.

Town Clerk Janet Herold said the dikes are holding water back from entering the town. Several hundred feet of dike was built during last year's spring high water, also in May.

The dikes "are again doing their job," Herold said. "Without them, we'd have water in town."

She said the dikes on the northern end of town are holding back about 12 inches of water that otherwise would be running into low areas of town. But that is a lower level than the water Friday, she said.

More water is expected to flow down the Little Snake late this week from snow melting in the Sierra Madre Range.

The National Weather Service has issued a flood watch for the Baggs area from Wednesday morning through Thursday because of higher snowmelt runoff expected Monday and Tuesday.

"Warm temperatures across the mountains of southeast Wyoming early this week ... are expected to cause the Little Snake River from Savery to Baggs to reach and possibly exceed bankfull from Wednesday morning through Thursday afternoon," the flood watch notification says.

Herold said the river has gone up and down in the last two weeks as more or less snow melts off from the large mountain snowpack, which remains at 111 percent of average. "It's kind of been back and forth," she said.

The NWS forecasts a high of 74 degrees in Baggs on Tuesday. Herold said that means the river is likely to rise sometime Wednesday as the runoff reaches the valley.

Jim House of the NWS said high temperatures in the mountains are causing snow to melt faster than usual. "All this melting is going to be a problem," he said. "There's going to be more water in the next couple of days."

While the river gauge at Savery read 5 feet Monday afternoon, the river has been as high as 6.3 feet last week, he said. The "action stage" is 7 feet and the flood stage is 8 feet.

Releases from High Savery Reservoir are also a factor in the high water in Baggs. House said water is being released from the reservoir because it is nearing its capacity, and room is needed for more runoff.