

Douglas preps for possible flooding

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Reporter/Photographer
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Mountain

An alert went out over the police scanner Tuesday morning, asking for help with filling sandbags.

Less than a hour later, 15 people stood spaced around a pile of sand at the County Road and Bridge yard, ready to get their hands dirty. Volunteer firefighters, recent high school graduates and county workers were among the crew.

"I don't know how many we'll fill, we haven't been told. I guess we'll just keep going until they say stop," city worker Chris Cannon said with a laugh.

As three state reservoirs – the Seminoe, Pathfinder and Alcova – reach their capacities following a stretch of rainy days in Wyoming, the Bureau of Reclamation announced they would be releasing as much as 4,900 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water down the North Platte River.



Jody Harmon (from left), Morgan Casperson, Shelby Fitzhugh and Joy Cox fill bags with sand June 15 at the County Road and Bridge yard in preparation of the North Platte River rising during the next week. They were among several other volunteers from both city and county departments to spend Tuesday preparing sand bags.

"They told us they would gradually increase the outflow up to about 7,000 cfs," Converse County Emergency Manager Russ Dalgarn said. "By the time it gets to us, if everything stays status quo, it would raise our level a couple thousand over what we currently have."

The river sits at about 11,000 cfs through the lower end of Converse, he added.

Still, Dalgarn said he didn't anticipate a drastic change in the water level here, but that it could rise by one to two feet.

"I really don't anticipate it rising more than one foot, though," he said. "We're just in preparation mode now, trying to help out."

Converse County Emergency Management has issued a warning for increased water flow down the North Platte for the next four to five days. CCEM warned that high water levels may impair septic systems functionality and contaminate wells along the river.

The following actions were advised:

- Move animals to higher ground.
- Sandbagging around homes if a one-foot rise in river levels will impact the home.
- Boil drinking water for three minutes if well contamination is suspected.

- Relocated hazardous chemicals (pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides) to higher ground.

Interim City Administrator Forrest Neuerburg said the city will be posting signs at Bob Williamson and Riverside parks cautioning citizens of the dangerous water levels.

"We just want to advise the public that they shouldn't play in the river. It's potentially a hazard," Neuerburg said.

Sheriff's deputies spent Tuesday talking with landowners of river property throughout the county. If a landowner is concerned about their land structures, they can get sandbags at the County Road and Bridge yard.

Many Glendo State Park campgrounds and facilities have been closed until further notice. Flooding has necessitated the closure of the following facilities: Elkhorn campground and boat ramp, Bennett Hill campground and boat ramp, Waters Point campground, Colter Bay campground, Sagebrush campground, Indian Point campground and boat ramp, Broken Arrow campground, Burnt Wagon campground, Muddy Bay camping area and a partial closure of Sandy Beach campground.

Currently, the following campgrounds still have sites available: Red Hills, Reno Cove, Custer Cove, Whiskey Gulch campground, Shelter Point campground, Two Moon campground and part of Sandy Beach.

Boat ramps are still open at Reno Cove, Whiskey Gulch and Glendo Marina, and boaters are urged to use caution and to be on the lookout for submerged trees and other debris.

State Park officials say it's likely that due to the limited camping space available, and expected rising water levels, the majority of the park will be closed prior to the weekend.