

North Platte near flood stage in Casper

JOSHUA WOLFSON Star-Tribune staff writer | Posted: Wednesday, June 23, 2010

CASPER — Water lapped against sandbags piled behind the Tate Pumphouse on Tuesday as the North Platte River continued to rise in Casper.

A fast-moving thunderstorm dropped more than an inch of rain in parts of Natrona County, but authorities weren't aware of any significant changes on the river. The National Weather Service in Riverton issued two tornado warnings, but as of 5 p.m. hadn't been able to verify any reports of twisters touching down in the area, said meteorologist Roger Smith.

The North Platte came within a foot of flood stage after federal officials released more water into the river to make room in Seminoe Reservoir, about 70 miles upstream of Casper.

In anticipation of the storm, the Bureau of Reclamation on Tuesday increased river flows by only 250 cubic feet per second — half of what was originally planned. The remainder was expected to be released overnight.

The river continued to cause light flooding along sections of the Platte River Parkway. It submerged part of the pumphouse's parking lot and drew a steady stream of onlookers, many of whom stopped to take pictures.

Water also seeped into the basements of some homes along the river thanks to the higher-than-normal water table, said Natrona County Sheriff's Lt. Mark Sellers.

The North Platte's system of reservoirs remains at or near capacity thanks to a cool, wet spring. With no place for additional water, authorities warn that rainstorms could fill the already swollen river with even more water.

Dry, sunny weather is expected for Natrona County today, according to the National Weather Service.

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