

HISTORIC FLOOD

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To ease up on some of the hard-working efforts, Roseau County lent a sand-bag filler machine that handles 12 bags at a time, drawing gratitude from volunteers and Koochiching County officials.

As of Tuesday, about 100,000 sandbags have been filled, and 6,000 bags loaned to the Kabetogma area have been returned, Jespersen said.

Local sports teams, church groups, area businesses and several individuals volunteered to fill and tie sandbags, with ages ranging from the very young to the elderly lending a hand.

Local lumber stores and other business offered their trucks, trailers and staff to help deliver sandbags from east to west in Koochiching County.

Derek Mason, patrol agent in charge, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, said agents were sent to City Beach and Loman all through the last weekend to assist with sandbagging “or whatever was needed, but they weren’t needed. We have volunteered our manpower to assist the sheriff and International Falls Police Department if they need us.”

Use caution

A “no wake zone” from 300 yards from all shorelines in the county is being enforced in an effort to slow wakes from topping sandbagged levies. Area residents requested Jespersen to end personal watercraft usage on the Littlefork river



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Volunteers help build up a sandbag dike behind the North Koochiching Area Sanitary District facility Monday. Officials at NKASD declared a sandbag emergency to prevent any influx of water into the bottom of the new treatment plant. Executive Director Tim “Chopper” McBride said should water seep in, it could be “catastrophic,” either slowing down the plant’s operations or shutting it down completely.

as “gawkers” were driving close to shorelines.

The sheriff urged people residing in flooded areas to call the Law Enforcement Center at 283-4416 if they are stranded and need medication or food. And he encouraged people to check on their neighbors in the flooded areas.

Aside from personal residences, sandbagging has also taken place at the Koochiching Area Sanitary Sewer treatment plant along Rainy River and at the Boise paper mill.

Tim “Chopper” McBride, executive director of the plant, told The Journal Monday, prior to emergency sandbagging, that a Hercu-

lean effort occurred over the weekend as staff worked for 72 hours to reinforce, raise, and later raise again, a berm to keep Rainy River out of the new part of the plant.

Had water seeped in, McBride said it would have been “absolutely devastating for the whole city. I praise everyone who assisted in this.”

McBride urged area residents to use as little water possible to avoid adding more water to the pipes causing drains to back up.

So far, International Falls Mayor Bob Anderson reported, the city’s water treatment plant is holding its own, but that could

change should the Rainy River continue to rise.

Anderson also said about 20 inches of water is on the floor of Boise’s turbine plant. Should that be closed down, it would reduce flow by about 15-percent.

“As of today, we have water on the powerhouse floor but we are not at the point of shutting down generators,” Lori Lyman, Boise public affairs manager, told The Journal Monday.

Ranier Mayor Dennis Wagner and county officials urged people to be aware of the possible contamination of wells as individual sewer treatment systems fill with water.

On Monday, county

Impacted roads

The following roads are impacted by flooding, according to the Koochiching County Engineer Joe Sutherland:

- Ranier area: Water is topping County Highway 46, County Road 20.
- International Falls: County Highway 332, still open but water is on the highway.
- Loman: Highway 11 is closed at the Black River, County Highway 32, and Loman as water depths are now at about 3-feet over the road. A detour is about 130 miles on Highways 71 and 72, or about 75 miles on Highway 11 in Ontario. However, Highway 11 in Ontario has also sustained damage. County Highway 32 is not closed yet, but may soon be as water comes over the road. About 12 residences are using boats to navigate from one side of the flood to the other. County Highway 1 is closed with a washout, County Road 101 at wend end of Black River Road is washing out. Town Road 207 and 397 on the Littlefork River are experiencing flooding. Tall fork lift trucks are being used to haul pallets of filled sandbags to flooded homes.
- Birchdale: County Raod 88 has water over it and is closed; County Road 86 has been washed out, an alternative route of County Road 101 is also having flood damage; County Road 85 Franz Jevne Public River Aces has water over it and is closed to through traffic.
- Big Falls: County Highway 30 has water over it, structures have had flooded basements and the Big Falls City Hall has been damaged; County Highway 42 has water over it.
- Northome: County Road 27 has water over it, with about a 20-foot section washed out, closing it for a day. Three residences are n the north side of the flooded area; County Road 54 has water over it and an area has washed out, closing it for one day. There are a couple residences n the east side of the flooded area.

Board Chairman Rob Ecklund squelched rumors that the National Guard had been brought in, noting that individual members had come to assist in sandbagging efforts.

Local officials urge area residents experiencing damage to document it by taking photos and notes should private property receive state or federal financial assistance.

In addition, local governments are documenting public infrastructure damaged by the flooding to use as financial assistance is

sought.

Across the river, officials in Fort Frances report all beaches in the city are closed until further notice. The town and the Northwestern Health Unit are taking the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of the public.

And, officials noted, the Ontario side of the lakes and rivers are experiencing simiar difficulty. Grim said the community of Rainy River is concerned about it hospital and public infrastructure.

SUPPORT

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about clean up and financial recovery for the department.

“We work on a small budget and this is really going to hurt us,” he said, mentioning the hundreds of gallons of gas used to pump water from the ditch and the equipment rented to continue the effort. Hundreds of dollars of plastic has been used to line the sandbags.

“A large part of our budget for the whole year has been used right here,” he said.

Prior to the tour, Dayton and the other officials met Tuesday following the second emergency morning briefing, when all county staff and others in the community get and give details. Koochiching County Emergency Management Director Luke Waller was also in attendance and on Tuesday connected the group via telephone to Roy Holmes, Northeast Minnesota Regional Program

coordinator, who encouraged emergency staff to contact St. Louis County and other areas that have experienced flooding and recovery efforts.

Holmes Tuesday told the group to be prepared for the long haul, because the lake is expected to continue rising and flooding issues on the river will remain for a while.

“This is more of a marathon than a sprint,” Holmes said from experience with other floods in the state.

Earlier in the meeting, Lee Grim, a member of the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Board of Control, provided predictions that Rainy Lake will not crest for another two weeks.

On Monday, 8th District Congressman Rick Nolan met with area officials and pledged to help. Nolan toured the flooding, took a canoe across the water at Loman and helped sandbag Monday.

“I wanted to see firsthand what’s going on,” Nolan said. He said he would work with Dayton



STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

Gov. Mark Dayton shakes Megan Dueck’s hand, thanking her for helping with the sandbagging effort at City Beach Tuesday.

and the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to what help could be provided.

Several officials noted the need for new volunteers as those who have helped sandbag are getting weary. Red Cross staff reminded the emergency staff that people experiencing flood-

ing are frustrated and may need assistance by local resources.

Northern Minnesota Region Red Cross volunteer John Decker has worked at all kinds of disasters across the nation. On Monday, he said providing assistance in Borderland truly drives the point of

helping people home.

Dayton told the county board Tuesday legislation just passed this session may be used for the first time to provide assistance to Borderland and southern counties damaged in the same rain deluge.

“We won’t go away,” Dayton said of the state’s

assistance. Once the loss is totaled and deemed eligible, he said he will seek a declaration from Pres. Barack Obama for federal assistance.

Soren Olesen of Birchdale told the group as they waited for Dayton’s arrival that he took a canoe, a car, a canoe and another car to get from Birchdale to the meeting at the courthouse in International Falls.

Dill said his home on Crane Lake is about one day from sandbagging, but he reiterated the financial loss experienced at resorts on Rainy and Kabetogama lakes, and said the “crisis” is also being experienced from Lake of the Woods to Grand Marais. Not only are many resorts damaged from flooding and high winds, but they are losing customers who may never return.

As he headed to International Falls on U.S. Highway 53, Dill told Dayton he saw many vehicles pulling boats heading south in what appears to be a “mass exodus from the resort communities.”

A black and white photograph of Paul and Karen Bergstrom on their wedding day. Paul is wearing a tuxedo and Karen is wearing a wedding dress.

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50th Wedding Anniversary

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A cartoon illustration of a smiling sun with a face, wearing sunglasses.

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