

Voters will decide

Board wants seven members

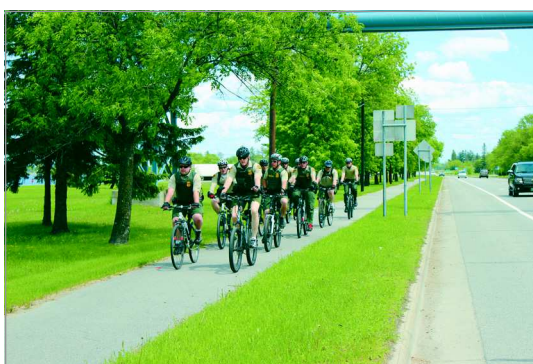
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Tour de Falls

Border Patrol agents use bikes to patrol

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The Journal

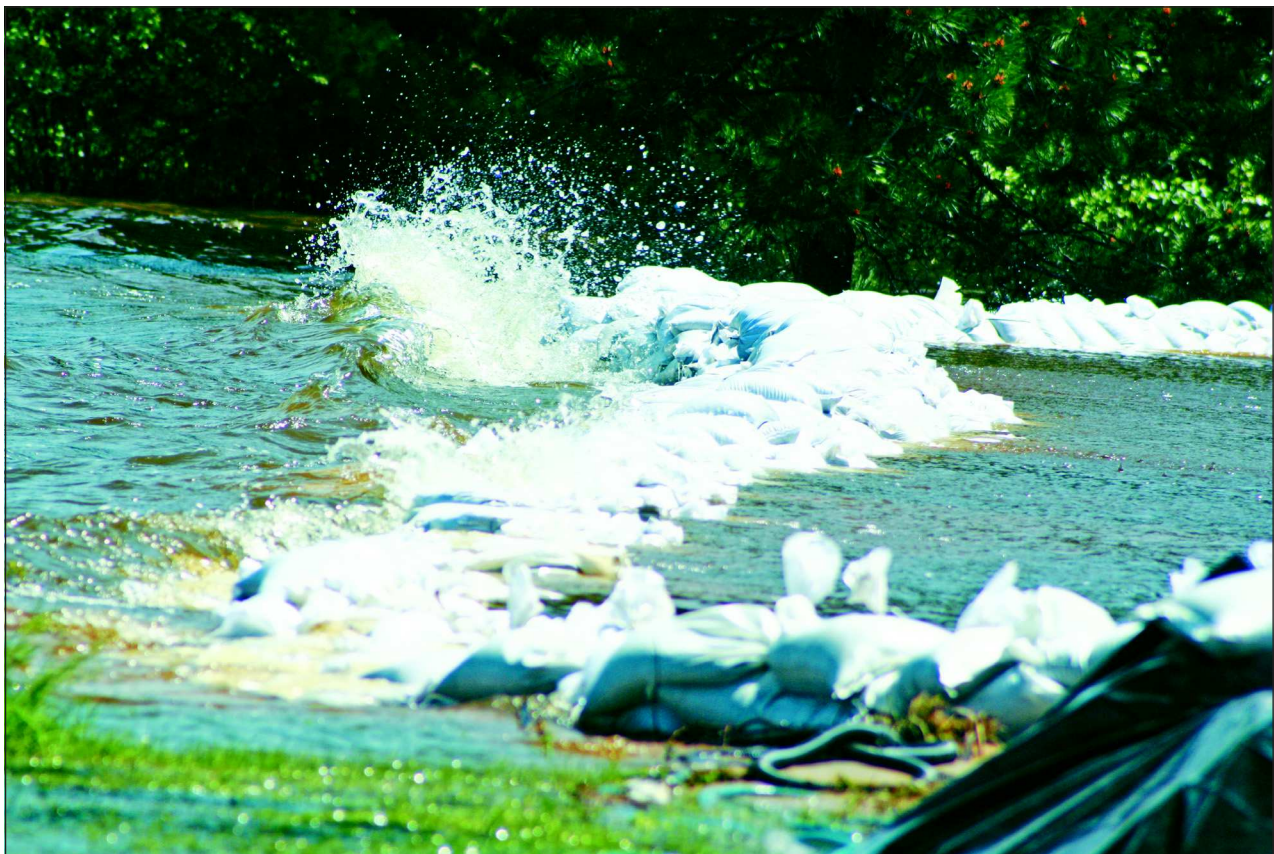


Saturday, June 21, 2014

International Falls, Minnesota

www.ifallsjournal.com

\$1



Wednesday's wind creates waves threatening a wall of sandbags around a home near City Beach. With more rain on the way, residents are moving quickly to build up and reinforce sandbag barriers.

STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Disaster's wake

Home, resort owners fear threat of rising waters

BY EMILY GEDDE

Staff Writer

Cherrie Belanger seized the opportunity this week to relax with a cup of coffee.

In the back room of the Coffee Landing, Belanger described the week of anguish she, her family and neighbors have been through.

Belanger, her husband and two of their children, live along Rainy River near Pelland Junction and Sunday was forced to evacuate because of rising waters.

"I want to stay in denial forever," she said. "I never thought the water would get this high."

Nobody did.

For the first time in 85 years, Rainy River is as high as its ever been, surpassing the level of the historic 1950 flood. And it could get higher.

"There's a lot of damage," Belanger said of her home and the area surrounding it. "It's heart-breaking."

The real-life nightmare started last Thursday as waters began creeping up the river bank into the Belanger's yard. That morning, Belanger said there was little worry because the family has seen the water rise in the four years they've owned the home.

"With the spring thaw, we were used to the water coming up," she said.

Then things got worse.

By Friday evening, water had made its way into the house's basement and sump pumps had a difficult time keeping up. It was time to start stacking sandbags.

"We started putting bags around the sewer area - that was the most important thing at that point," Belanger said. "We moved on to protecting the house afterward, and the water just kept coming and coming."

Saturday morning, water had taken over the sewer area and was



Jerrod Shermoen grabs a sandbag from Kathleen Kolu as the two work to protect Kolu's Rainy Lake home near City Beach Wednesday.



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

Volunteers sandbag to protect the water and sewer lines at Island View Lodge Thursday. Owner Trella Opp said if the lake level rises another 13-16 inches as predicted, they're in "big trouble."

increasing in the basement. Volunteers gathered at the Belanger's property to offer their help stacking sandbags.

MORE INFORMATION FOR MORE PHOTOS, TURN TO PAGE B10 OR VISIT WWW.IFALLSJOURNAL.SMUGMUG.COM.

Damage to A7 ➤

Sandbagging goes on; Guard here to help

BY LAUREL BEAGER

Editor

Koochiching and St. Louis counties are among 35 counties included in Gov. Mark Dayton's declaration of a state of emergency Thursday following recent storms and flooding.

The governor also directed the Minnesota National Guard to send 100 soldiers to Koochiching County to help in storm affected areas. The soldiers came to Borderland Thursday.

The executive order makes a wide range of state resources available and engages state agencies in response efforts.

County Board Chairman Rob Ecklund called the declaration good news.

"What I know it means is when all counties are lumped in, it will help trigger a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) response for relief," he said. "What percentage of that relief we will get I don't know."

He said county officials and staff have been documenting expenses and damage to report to state and federal relief sources. For example, he said the county had spent \$80,000 as of Thursday in the purchase of sandbags and had just ordered another 200,000 bags at \$7,500 for 50,000 bags. "It's adding up," he said.

As a result of the governor's emergency declaration, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) is fully activating the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). The SEOC has been partially activated this week in response to flood and storm-related conditions across northern and southern Minnesota.

"We're ramping up our efforts to help communities across the state that are dealing with storm damage and high water due to the recent heavy rains," Kris Eide, HSEM Director, said. "The state's emergency operations center is in contact with emergency managers in the affected areas and we are coordinating the state's response as directed by the governor's State of Emergency."

A full activation of the SEOC occurs when there are significant impacts from an event over several or large areas of the state. Storms that have caused flooding and other damage began on June 11 and are continuing; the National Weather Service is predicting additional rain for regions that are saturated or are experiencing rising river and lake levels.

State agencies are now in the SEOC to closely monitor conditions around the state and respond to resource requests from local emergency managers.

Counties in the state of emergency include; Beltrami, Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Faribault, Freeborn, Goodhue, Grant, Hubbard, Jackson, Lake of the Woods, Le Sueur, Lyon, Koochiching, McLeod, Morrison, Mower, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Olmsted, Otter Tail, Pipestone,



STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

Matt DeWolfe, Lake of the Woods Board of Control, discusses with local officials his estimate that Rainy Lake will rise from 14 to 16 inches in the next seven days.

Ramsey, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Roseau, Saint Louis, Scott, Sibley, Steele, Todd, and Waseca.

The science

Meanwhile, Matt DeWolfe, Lake of the Woods Control Board, predicted Wednesday the level of Rainy Lake could rise nearly 16 inches. He said it was based on precipitation forecasts and inflow and outflow data and stressed the science is imperfect and could be less or more than the nearly 16 inch estimation.

He said without rain, the lake could peak in 10-14 days and be back within the rule curve in several weeks. However, he acknowledged rain in the five-day forecast. He is expected to provide prediction data on a daily basis to county officials.

Rich Moy, a member of the International Joint Commission, has been touring flooded areas in Borderland on both sides of the border. He said he viewed a number of houses in Rainy River, Ontario, being threatened by the flooding river, as elsewhere in the region.

"The best news I've heard so far is the Rainy River is starting to drop, the two forks (Littlefork and Bigfork rivers) are starting to come down," he said Thursday. "It's really contingent upon what rains are in the future."

"The best thing about the river going down is that Boise is very concerned about their turbines," he said. "With the river going down they might have a little more protection."

An experiment earlier in the week that closed two gates at the international dam for two hours was successful in lowering the river behind the dam and protecting the paper mill turbines.

He and DeWolfe emphasized the experiment lowered the river quickly and substantially, but impacted Rainy Lake very slightly. They stressed should the turbines quit operating, it would greatly reduce the ability to move water out of Rainy Lake.

But Moy said that technique may not be needed now as the levels of the Littlefork, Bigfork and Rainy rivers appear to be dropping back into a safety

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