

RELENTLESS STORMS

City prepares for historic flooding



The Keystone Dam releases water into the Arkansas River on Wednesday. It's possible the amount of water being released could increase Thursday. TOM GILBERT/Tulsa World

Levee commissioner wary of rising Arkansas River

By Kelly Bostian
Tulsa World

Tulsa County's levee commissioner had a succinct description for his feelings on floods and river levels mid-day Wednesday: "tired and worried."

Todd Kilpatrick has lobbied five years for improvements to the 20 miles of what he calls outdated levees built in 1945 to protect Sand Springs and west Tulsa from floods, and he has faced resistance.

"It's been like trying to sell lifejackets in the desert," he said. "It's hard to sell flood pro-

tection when people look at the Arkansas and it's an ebb-and-flow sand box."

Every time the river rises he can't sleep at night, and the Arkansas River has been anything but a sand box for some time.

"Going on 16 days straight," he said. "You get sleep when you can."

With releases from Keystone Dam increased to 207,000 cubic feet per second Wednesday afternoon and storms and more rain in the forecast, Kilpatrick sees potential for trouble in

» See Levees, page A6



A storm that spawned a tornado near Okemah moves to the northeast of Okmulgee on Wednesday evening. JOSEPH RUSHMORE FOR THE TULSA WORLD

MORE STORM COVERAGE INSIDE

KEYSTONE DAM QUESTIONS

Major questions about the water release at Keystone Dam are answered. **A3**

RISING WATERS HIT METRO

Residents, businesses take action as waters of the Arkansas River keep rising. **A6**

TORNADOES STRIKE AGAIN

Okemah, parts of northeastern Oklahoma hit by more tornadoes. **A7**

BY KEVIN CANFIELD • TULSA WORLD

Tulsa-area officials are preparing for flooding equal to Tulsa's 1986 flood of record but cautioned Wednesday night that they do not necessarily expect the waters to rise to that level.

Mayor G.T. Bynum said that because there are "just too many variables involved" in predicting water levels along the Arkansas River, the decision was made to "prepare for the worst, hope for the best."

"This does not mean that we have any information, or necessarily a guarantee or expectation that we will get there," Bynum said at a news conference at Tulsa Police headquarters. "We would much rather everyone in town know what they need to do to prepare for the worst flood in the history of our city and have it not be as bad and have that be a relief than constantly be trying to catch up with (water flow) rates that fluctuate so much."

The flood of record occurred on Oct. 5, 1986, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released 307,000 cubic feet of water per second from Keystone Dam. The release rate Wednesday had been expected to increase to 215,000, according to the Corps, but Wednesday night it was 207,000 cubic feet per second, according to the Corps' website.

Dave Williams, chief of hydrology and hydraulic engineering section for the Tulsa District Corps, said it is possible the flow from Keystone Dam could be increased Thursday morning when the situation is reassessed.

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Tulsa-area forecast: Rain remains a possibility for weekend, but chances low

Thursday: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 86. South wind 10 to 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Thursday night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 71. South wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Friday: A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly sunny, with a high near 86. South wind 10 to 20 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Friday night: A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly

cloudy, with a low around 70. South wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Saturday: A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly sunny, with a high near 85. South wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Saturday night: A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 70. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

Sunday: A 20% chance of show-

ers and thunderstorms before 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 86. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

Sunday night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 69. South wind around 10 mph.

Monday: Partly sunny, with a high near 87. South wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Source: National Weather Service, Tulsa

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