

Woldt: River will rise

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 19 September 2013 14:18 -

Area lakes to re-fill faster than expected

Many of us have relatives in areas hit hard by flooding in neighboring Colorado.

The devastation caused by heavy rain and fueled by torrents of water, funneled through narrow canyons and steep mountains, won't happen here.

But there's no doubt the Platte River in Nebraska will swell this week as it carries runoff from flooding in Colorado, according to Dawson County emergency management director Brian Woldt.

"They're saying it could be in the 50-year flood range," Woldt said.

A 50-year flood means there's a 2% probability that flooding at the same level will happen again in 50 years.

Woldt said officials are estimating the river by Cozad will rise to 8.3 feet which will be 1.8 feet above flood stage.

National Weather Service officials have issued flood warnings for the South Platte River near Roscoe and North Platte and for the north channel of the Platte River by Brady.

By Friday, Woldt said Brady could experience moderate flooding. Gothenburg and Cozad could see higher river flow by Saturday.

Woldt advised residents with property along the Platte River to monitor conditions and to make

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preparations to move animals and property along the river to higher ground if necessary.

“It’s difficult to say what could happen because the water is filling a dry creek bottom from west of Sterling (CO) to North Platte and the river is low right now,” he said Monday. “The flood wave still has to travel 500 miles.”

Woldt said the bulk of the water is coming down the south channel of the Platte.

He noted that the American Red Cross sent an emergency response vehicle to North Platte to take food and water to where it’s needed.

ERVs from Omaha and Lincoln left Monday morning to help Colorado flood victims, Woldt said.

Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District officials said Central intends to divert as much water as possible into their supply canal which will help re-fill lakes that were drawn down to help complete the irrigation season.

As a result, lake levels at Jeffrey, Midway and Johnson lakes will rise much faster than originally expected.

CNPP&ID public relations coordinator Jeff Buettner said water in excess of Central’s diversion capabilities will be passed down the Platte River.

Buettner added that flows in the South Platte River cannot be stored in Lake McConaughy which is on the North Platte River.

River conditions and forecasts provided by the National Weather Service can be accessed at <http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=gid>).

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Red Cross officials remind residents not to drive vehicles into areas where water covers roadways and to stay out of flood waters.

Officials said the velocity of the floodwater will be faster than usual and water can contain sewage, debris, bacteria and more.

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