

Wagner

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has also been very involved with the planning," Farabee said.

Also Friday, VA will celebrate the first anniversary of the Wagner outpatient clinic, Redmond said.

At 3 p.m., "Grandfather's Breath," the diversity wheel sculpture near the clinic, will be dedicated. This sculpture was erected near the clinic last fall.

The sculpture was created by artist Steven Chrisjohn Sr. and is intended to promote the healing aspects of nature, Redmond said. It is for all veterans and the community to enjoy.

Following the brief dedication, everyone is invited for light refreshments and clinic tours.

Farabee hopes the stand down and the clinic tours will provide veterans with greater awareness of the benefits to which they are entitled.

The stand down will feature booths or tables with information on various services, such as housing, Farabee said.

"We will have people from the VA regional office with the ability to file claims for the veterans," he said. "We will also have a representative from the state veterans home in Hot Springs to provide information."

Others on hand include Monica Wepking from the Department of Social Services and representatives from the Rural Office of Community Services (ROCS) in Lake Andes, Farabee said.

Friday's stand down includes assistance for homeless veterans, who may fall through the cracks, Farabee said.

"What you and I consider homeless individuals, they wouldn't consider themselves as that," he said. "They may be living with a friend or family members, so they don't consider themselves homeless."

Friday's stand down provides a powerful tool for reaching many veterans who don't realize they

are missing out on their benefits, Farabee said.

"There are a lot of veterans who are unaware of what is actually available to them," he said. "As the Gregory County and Charles Mix County veterans service officer, I have written several articles for the county newspapers, and I still run into people that are not aware we have persons they can talk to and find out the benefits they have earned."

Friday's tour of the Wagner VA outpatient clinic will also raise awareness of outreach services for veterans, Farabee said. The clinic serves around 400 veterans from a 10-county service area, and the number keeps growing, he said.

Many veterans remain unaware of the clinic even after its year of operation, Farabee said.

"When they come to my office and they want to get enrolled in VA health care, I tell them what is available as far as where to go for treatment," he said. "Invariably, they prefer to go to the clinic in Wagner rather than the 2- or 3-hour drive to Sioux Falls."

The veterans who choose the Wagner clinic are not sacrificing care, Farabee said.

"They can get most things done at Wagner as they can at

Sioux Falls, except for specialty care," he said. "People can decide for themselves where they would like to go for their treatment — that is the big thing."

For veterans who must receive treatment in Sioux Falls, Farabee continues arranging van rides through the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) transportation network.

The service runs a van out of Burke for Gregory County and out of Lake Andes for Charles Mix County, Farabee said. However, the van has transported veterans from other counties as well, he said.

"The big problem is drivers. It's just difficult to recruit drivers," he said. "There are so many hoops that drivers have to go through, that it's discouraging to some people."

"We have lost drivers from both (Charles Mix and Gregory counties) because we are calling them constantly, and the route has burned them out."

Still, Farabee remains determined to serve all veterans. Friday's stand down and clinic tours provide a powerful tool toward achieving that goal, he said.

"We are reaching as many veterans as we can about what is available for them," he said.

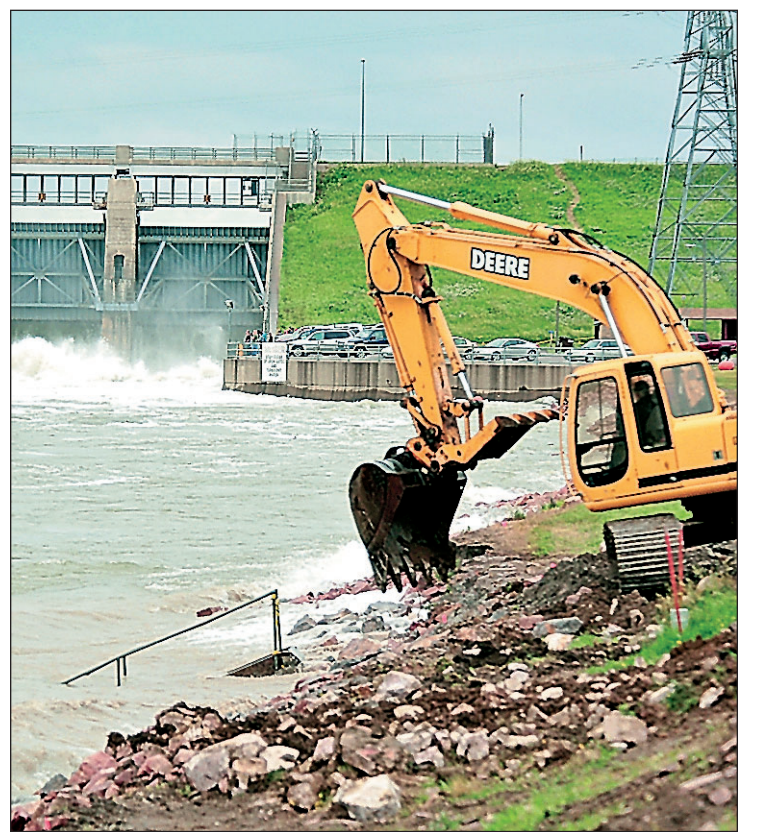
Lake

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"You go down there, and it just doesn't seem real," he said. "It is weird seeing this, and it will be just as weird when the water goes down to see what is left. (Facilities) were not designed for this extreme event and we hope they weather this just fine, because they are great facilities. You just can't snap your fingers to re-create these facilities because it does take time and money."

Through it all, Ledbetter said the Corps first priority has been public safety, and that remains the same today.

"We ask everyone to practice safety, whether you are driving along the training wall, at the fishing wall, walking along the areas, swimming — whatever you may be doing, just practice personal safety," he said. "Be more cognizant of your surroundings than you would be typically."



Work along the Missouri River is being done to help stabilize the shoreline and prevent erosion as releases from Gavins Point increase to 160,000 cubic feet per inch today (Thursday). Here riffraff is being pulled closer to the bank as the dam erupts in the background.

JAMES CIMBUREK/P&D

Water

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Goodmanson added that the sewage has had no impact on Yankton's actions.

"The current treatment process and procedures are more than adequate, and we have no concerns with the safety of the product we put out," he said. "We are meeting 100 percent of our state and federal standards in both treatment and distribution. The water continues to be safe."

One area of concern is whether trihalomethanes (THMs) will exceed the amount specified in drinking water standards. Trihalomethanes occur when natural organic material, such as the decaying vegetation or insects commonly found in the river, reacts with chlorine used to treat the water. State authorities monitor their presence in drinking water supplies to make sure the levels fall under the threshold set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

In 2007-2008, Yankton's water supply had THM levels that frequently exceeded the federal guidelines. The situation has since improved.

"The state Department of Environment and Natural Resources is seeing higher THM levels with the high flows up and down the Missouri River," Goodmanson said. "We just received our last THM results, and we are still in compliance. We will be testing again in August. The high flows do stir up some very strong organics that react with the chlorine to cause THMs. The well water should help."

Because well water has gone through a natural filtration process, it typically has fewer organic materials in it.

As far as precautions taken to protect the city's water treatment facilities, a sandbag wall has been erected around the intake structure below Water Treatment Plant #1.

At the city's wastewater treatment plant on the east side of Riverside Park, staff have rebuilt some valves that could be used to bypass the final disinfection stage if high river levels require it. According to Goodmanson, the ultraviolet disinfection building, which is the lowest point in the wastewater treatment process, would be bypassed. Instead, a temporary chlorine injection system would be set up to add chlorine to the stand-by clarifier.

With flows set to reach 160,000 cubic feet per second at Gavins Point Dam today (Thursday), floodwaters are expected to begin to encroach on the wastewater treatment facility.

"We continue to monitor the wastewater treatment plant," Goodmanson said. "We are right on the edge, but I think we will be OK."

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