

# FLOOD

From Page 1A

structures that back up water, the governor said. The aggravated flooding affects both roads and private property, he said. Unlike the song title, there's no "Muskrat Love" in this case. To help battle the muskrats, the state Game, Fish and Parks department has revised the issuance of hunting licenses, Rounds said. The public can obtain permits at the local level rather than through the state, he said.

James River flooding has also created problems with hay bales that may eventually become stuck under bridges, Rounds said.

In some areas, the "Big Jim" has spilled out of its banks so much that its bends are no longer visible from the sky, Dravland said.

"You look at the Jim River, and it's straightened out," he said.

Friday morning's flight to Yankton ran into low clouds that didn't provide a good view of the James River valley, Rounds said. However, he witnessed incredible flooding during his Thursday flight over three eastern South Dakota rivers.

"We flew ... over the James River, and it was huge," he said. "The Vermillion River was very large, and the Big Sioux was prominent."

The entire eastern half of the state has seen flooding, Rounds said.

"There are areas with more water than land," he said. "There are counties where half the roads are under water. There may be one spot (of flooding) that covers miles of roads."

The March pulse has been canceled for the Missouri River, Rounds said. The James River could use a pulse to clean out its confluence, and the Corps may be asked to help clean out the channel, he said.

The flooding has created problems for some first responders, the governor said.

"We are asking township officials to keep county emergency managers advised of any road closures that could affect response to emergency services, like fires and medical," he said.

In response to a Clay County incident, Rounds warned against driving around or removing barricades on flooded roads.

"To take down barricades (is) a very dangerous practice," he said.

The cooler weather has slowed down flooding and eased ice jams, Rounds said. "We are in an El Nino pattern, which is a cooler, wetter weather pattern. Our wetter months are still coming," he said.



Dangel

Despite the flooding, South Dakota shouldn't have to worry about a spike in West Nile cases, the governor said. He noted the Culex tarsalis, that transmits the disease, is a dry-weather mosquito.

During Friday's interview with the Press & Dakotan, Dravland noted Dangel's contributions as a member of the state's Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT). Dangel has worked with disaster-recovery teams at Aberdeen and Eagle Butte.

Dangel later said the IMAT experience has benefited him in dealing with local emergencies. "It has given us a lot of real-world experience that we would not otherwise have had," he said. "Absolutely, there is nothing better than the real-life lessons we learned."

In a separate interview, Dangel said Yankton County is bracing for a critical weekend.

"We are watching with great anticipation during the next 48 hours," he said. "We are seeing lowland flooding. Highway 81 is OK, but we have a section of Highway 46 that is closed (near Lesterville). We are seeing flooding at Jamesville Colony and Stone Church (roads)."

The James River gauge near Scotland remained steady Friday afternoon at 19.55 feet, Dangel said. The river is projected to crest at 19.7 feet early today (Saturday), he said.

"It's in the process of cresting at Scotland now," he said.

"That doesn't mean downstream that we won't see water levels rise for a few days. But what it means is that we won't expect any more big jumps."

The Vermillion River may have seen its worst, but the James River should remain flooded for an extended period, Dangel said.

"With the James River, it's as high as it was expecting to go. It will stay there quite a while, and it will recede slower than it rose," he said.

At Thursday noon, the Vermillion River near Wakonda stood at 17.2 feet. The National Weather Service (NWS) predicts the river will continue to fall, dropping below the flood stage of 14 feet by Thursday.

The Vermillion River near Vermillion was at 26 feet Thursday morning, compared to the flood stage of 21 feet. The NWS said the river is expected to rise to 26.2 feet.

Many rivers in southeast South Dakota have crested, said NWS meteorologist Todd Heitkamp of Sioux Falls.

"Along those same lines, I would not be surprised that

some areas in the southeast expect a secondary crest, Saturday or Sunday, but not anywhere close to the primary readings in those areas," he said.

"Right now, we have had the ideal conditions during the last three or four days. We had warmer weather midweek, followed by a cool spell, to allow a lot of rivers to start behaving across eastern South Dakota."

This week's cold front and wind gusts of 35 mph will give way today (Saturday) to temperatures of 35 to 45 degrees with lighter winds of 10 to 15 mph, Heitkamp said. The mercury should reach 45 to 55 degrees Sunday, he said.

"Weather-wise, we don't expect any additional precipitation over the weekend," he said. "The weather has allowed a lot of existing snow melt to slow, and the inflow into rivers has slowed."

Even if the "Big Jim" falls just short of the record 20.5 feet near Scotland, this year is one for the books, Dangel said.

"If it doesn't set a record, it's one of the top five years," he said.

## FEMA Officials Arrive In Pierre

By The Associated Press

About 70 officials with the Federal Emergency Management Agency are setting up shop in Pierre. They will handle administrative duties related to presidential disaster declarations issued for South Dakota after a Christmas blizzard and a January ice storm.

FEMA spokesman Phil Wernisch says the joint field office set up in Pierre is not open to the public. Staff will be processing the damage claims of local governments.

Wernisch says the office could be open for up to three months.

Aberdeen residents are being asked to conserve water

and move their sump pump hoses outside to help relieve problems with the city's sanitary sewer system.

With high water in the area, the system has been handling about 14.5 million gallons per day — five times greater than normal.

That increases the likelihood that sewers will back up into home basements or that untreated sewage will be released into Moccasin Creek.

City officials in Sioux Falls earlier were forced to release 500,000 gallons of untreated wastewater into the Big Sioux River to keep that city's sanitary sewer system from backing up into basements after floodwaters flowed into the system.

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## ART

From Page 1A

but having different artists creating sculptures that change all the time, so it's always something new and fresh," she said.

Hunhoff said she and the RiverWalk Committee — which includes Michelle Kolda, Lisa Schieve and Bridgit Kasch — are excited that the idea is now becoming a reality.

"We can't wait," Katie Hunhoff said. "The next couple months are going to be even more exciting because the sculptures are actually going to be placed downtown in May."

"They're going to be there for one year, and at the end of that year we'll have an auction and a big celebration, and then we'll be bringing new ones in," she said.

She added that the RiverWalk project will be a good way of "bringing the community together."

"We really want to beautify downtown and bring more people out there so it's even more alive than it already is," she said.

During his presentation, Bernie Hunhoff spoke of an observation by University of South Dakota English professor John Milton.

"He used to lament that South Dakota didn't have enough artists and writers who were really interpreting the culture and showing off our culture and our beauty. ... I don't think John spent enough time in Yankton," Hunhoff said. "We've always been lucky here. We've always had artists who have done such a good job."

RiverWalk is an extension of that, he said.

"It's been a lot of work, but it's going to be so good for Yankton," Hunhoff said.

Sponsors of RiverWalk include Yankton Area Arts, Avera Sacred Hospital, First Dakota National Bank, Hy-Vee, CorTrust Bank and Historic Downtown Yankton.

For more information, contact 665-3636, e-mail riverwalk@yanktonsd.com or visit www.YanktonRiverWalk.org.

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