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Dakota Dunes Residents Moving Back In After Flood

DAKOTA DUNES (AP) — Many residents of Dakota Dunes who were forced by Missouri River flooding to leave their homes this summer are moving back in, though some are being forced to wait.

About half of the community's 2,500 residents were told to leave their homes in early summer when the river began leaving its banks

because of record water releases from river dams due to excessive spring snowmelt and rains. Levees were built to hold back the water, and water levels have fallen enough to allow residents to move back.

"Sixteen weeks away from the home, it's quite an experience."

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Officially, Yankton Flooding Is Over ...

But Cleanup, Recovery Work Far From Done

BY DEREK BARTOS
derek.bartos@yankton.net

For the first time in months, the city of Yankton can "breathe easy again," according to a Yankton County emergency official.

With water levels dropping, the National Weather Service has canceled its flood warning for the Missouri River at Yankton.

"It's real good news," said Paul Scherschligt, Yankton County Emergency Management director. "We still have some lower level flooding on the James River, but it's all kind of going down, and that's a good sign for the coming fall. I'm just glad things are going back in the other direction and going back to the way it was before May 28."

The announcement came Monday after the river level measured 19.9 feet — slightly below the flood stage of 20.0 feet — at the city's automated gauge located just west of the Meridian bridge.

"We've got the flood stage defined at 20 feet for the Missouri River at Yankton gauge because that is basically where we start seeing significant amounts of the pasture land and some of the camping and recreational areas along that stretch of the river being inundated," said Mike Gillispie, hydrologist for the National Weather Service in Sioux Falls.

Now that the river is below 20 feet, affected areas should begin to see some relief, Gillispie said.

"The camping areas or boat docks may not be open yet, but conditions are going to be improving steadily over the next couple of weeks," he said.

Gillispie said the situation will also be helped by the decrease in releases from Gavins Point Dam during the next few weeks, as the Corps is scheduled to lower discharges by 5,000 cfs every other day until it reaches its fall target flow of 40,000 cfs on Oct. 6. As of today (Tuesday), releases are down to 80,000 cfs.

"The river levels are going to continue to fall each day they will be cutting back releases," he said. "You can expect to see a few tenths of a foot drop every day as they stairstep down over the next two weeks."

With the flood warning now canceled, Scherschligt said his agency will shift from response mode to recovery mode.

"We've been kind of in that mode anyway with people starting to remove sandbags and with FEMA in town last week to help with individual assistance," he said. "Things are slowly turning around and getting better."

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PAUL SCHERSCHLIGT

Road Wreck



COURTESY PHOTO

This photo shows the damage to 431st Avenue — commonly referred to as "Stone Church Road" — in 2010 where it crosses the James River in northwest Yankton County. The road is flooded over most years, and residents in the area recently appealed to the Yankton County Commission to do something to alleviate closure of the road for long stretches of the spring and summer.

James River Flooding Has Torn Up County Road

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

A quiet James River crossing in northwest Yankton County has created a loud outcry among local residents who want to see improvements along the roadway.

At a recent Yankton County Commission meeting, users of 431st Avenue — commonly referred to as "Stone Church Road" — where it crosses the James River said the now-annual closure of the road due to flooding has left them frustrated and feeling neglected.

"It seems to us that we're on the tail end of Yankton County and our tax dollars don't seem to count as much as other places in the county," Jody Kludt told the commission. "For the people in our community, that is a major road. It's not just affecting my family, but it affects our school, the busing and the town of Menno. If you live on the south side of the river, to go get groceries is a long way and we want to support our small town."

She said a nearby gravel road is not always passable and residents have to take long detours to get to Menno. If an emergency occurs, ambulance or fire trucks would also be hindered by the

closed road, Kludt added.

"It could be a life-threatening situation, and it seems like we're being put on the back burner because it doesn't matter what goes on along that part of the river," she said. "We feel like we've been very patient with Yankton County on this. It has been going on for years. We're tired of it."

Yankton County Highway Superintendent Alan Sorensen said the three-quarters of a mile stretch of road that crosses the James River was closed March

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Contract Legislation Still Has 'Wrinkles'

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
shauna.marlette@yankton.net

When the South Dakota Legislature enacted groundbreaking reform of public access to open records in 2009, it "turned open record access on its head," said State Rep. Bernie Hunhoff (D-District 18).

And yet questions about access and wording of the law were expected.

"When we (passed) the open records laws SDCL 1-27-1), we



Hunhoff

shouldn't be open records." The issue up for debate is should a school administrator's contract be public record. In the

knew that there would be some wrinkles that would have to be ironed out," Hunhoff said. "We are going to be dealing with a lot of things like this, where we are looking at what should and shouldn't be open records."

Aug. 27 edition of the *Press and Dakotan*, the paper documented its attempt to access local administrator's contracts with eight South Dakota school districts: Yankton, Mitchell, Brookings, Sioux Falls, Vermillion, Gayville-Volin, Bon Homme and Irene-Wakonda.

The *Press and Dakotan* has received all contracts requested, with the exception of the Sioux Falls School District which, citing

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CUTTING LOOSE

Mount Marty College president Dr. Joseph Benoit (with scissors) cuts the red ribbon officially dedicating the refurbished Marian Auditorium Monday afternoon. The project includes new carpeting and seating for the facility. Monday's ribbon-cutting is part of a series of activities hosted by MMC to kick off its 75th anniversary celebration. A one-man play on Bishop Martin Marty, played by Lenny Koupal, was presented at Marian Monday night. (Kelly Hertz/P&D)

PUBLIC MEETING

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