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Three times for High water levels downstream in Towner

June 13, 2013

By KIM FUNDINGSLAND - Staff Writer (kfundingsland@minotdailynews.com), Minot Daily News

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TOWNER From a weather perspective, this year has been anything but normal. Temperatures ranged well below normal this spring. That led to some of the latest melting of lake and river ice in recorded history. Then the rains came. Lots of rain.

Today much of the Souris River basin downstream from Minot, particularly in the Towner area, remains under water in what some residents of the region are referring to as their third flood of the year.

"The first flood was when the Corps opened up the dams to create storage space," said Vern Kongsliie, of Towner. "The second was a little too much runoff and now we are in the third one from a rain event. Here we go again. First man-made, then snowmelt and now rainfall."

Article Photos



Kim Fundingsland/MDN



Estimates are that the Souris River has been flowing at approximately 7,000 cubic feet per second in the Towner region in recent days. Flooding occurs in some areas there from as little as 300 to 500 cfs. Recent height measurements put the Souris at Towner at 56.6 feet. The National Weather Service lists major flood stage at Towner as 56 feet.

Farmers and ranchers along the Souris in the Towner area rely on a rising river to flood their hay meadows in early spring. When the water recedes it leaves behind near perfect conditions for hay to grow and flourish. However, too much water for too long means no production from the land.

"There's quite a few issues here," acknowledged Kongsliie.

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"Mother Nature is number one. You can't do much with her. She's the boss, but something should be done with the way the Canadian dams and Lake Darling are being operated. They are extending the flood out. From an agricultural point of view, we can't take that."

Kongslie is among a concerned group that is in the process of forming a Mouse River Basin Preservation Coalition. The coalition hopes to draw attention to their flooding issues and, eventually, find a resolution.




"It's a complicated issue and not an easy one to resolve," said Kongslie. "It's going to take some dollars to get it done. This is not just a simple flood. There's a lot of issues, damages and inconveniences. Our hay crop is gone and a lot of farmland along the river too. I don't think the people in control understand we have different issues here downstream."



When water was released through Lake Darling Dam earlier this year in an effort to lower the reservoir prior to the spring melt, it caused Souris River ice to raise and break up downstream from Minot. In some places near Towner large ice chunks took out fencing that had to be replaced following the 2011 flood. Low-lying hay meadows went under water.

"It's hard to come up with a plan that will please everybody. We understand that," said Kongslie. "Those flooded out should be compensated for it. We're looking at operational changes. We'll have more flooding in the future as Minot expands. More pavement means more runoff. We feel we've probably been forgotten here."

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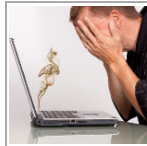
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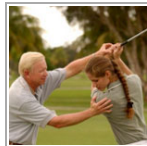
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