

# **FLOOD WATCH 2017: Grafton's optimism waning as flood waters continue to rise**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
May 4 2017 12:01 PM





**GRAFTON** - It cannot be stated enough during flood season - Grafton is still open for business - however, the businesses remaining open are becoming fewer in number.

Grafton Mayor Rick Eberlin, who took the post from former Grafton Mayor Tom Thompson Tuesday evening, said the projected crest in Grafton continues to rise and become postponed. Currently, he said Grafton's river level is at 28.5 feet, which causes most of the western part of the village to be too inundated for normal business, although detours are in place for anyone who has plans in Grafton.

"Commercial vehicles going toward the western side of Grafton are off limits," Eberlin said. "We don't have much going on in the west end of town at all."

Businesses opened on that side of town include Aeries Winery, Grafton Winery, the Grafton Pub and Third Chute. Eberlin said Aeries Winery even has a wedding planned this weekend, adding as of Wednesday, May 3, all reservations and plans at those businesses were still as scheduled. He said patrons may use flood detours to access those places.

The east end of Grafton, which is located on higher ground, is also open, Eberlin said. From the entrance to Grafton to its main intersection of Highway 100 and Route 3, main roads are accessible and businesses are opened.

Another issue for people traveling to Grafton is the closure of the River Road, which occurred yesterday around noon. Originally the entire road from Alton to Grafton was closed, however former Grafton Mayor Tom Thompson was able to convince the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to allow usage from Clifton Terrace in Godfrey to Grafton, Eberlin said.

Also, Highway 100 is closed at the boy's home in Grafton. To reach Pere Marquette State Park, motorists are advised to take a detour through Powerline Road, which is located on the hills of Grafton and branches from Otterville Road.

Knotty by Nature, a wood-working shop operated by Dan Bechtold, was forced to evacuate earlier today, Eberlin said. Several volunteers from across the village, including Eberlin, rushed to help him clear his materials and tools from the shop amid the rising waters. Eberlin said a generous volunteer from Bunker Hill has since volunteered the use of his truck and trailer via social media to assist with businesses needing help during the flood.

Flooding is a fact of life living in Grafton. When the waters begin their rise on Monday, Hawg Pit owner Steve Kasten had moved most of his business from its location using a group of friends and storage equipment. In an earlier interview with Riverbender.com, Kasten said he built his business to be easily moved from the path of rising waters. His is usually the first business in Grafton to close during flood season.

Eberlin, who said he has seen Grafton flood since 1973, said the only thing different about this current flood is an astounding amount of driftwood coming with the deluge. Eberlin said the village put out a call for volunteers for when the water finally recedes specifically to clean the drift wood currently sloshing against homes and businesses.

Because of the anticipated mess and the constantly shifting flood crest predictions, Eberlin has postponed his annual catfish fishing tournament once slated for May 14. He said river levels are predicted to be as high as 21 feet during that event given current figures.

While Grafton is welcoming volunteers for the post-deluge cleaning effort, Eberlin said people should not come to Grafton if they do not have a reason. He said the Grafton

Police Department is working hard to maintain the roads and ensure motorist safety, so the Village of Grafton is sincerely asking anyone coming just to view the floodwaters to please abstain from doing so, unless they have other business in Grafton.