

FLOOD WATCH 2017: Alton Public Works continues to monitor flood water downtown

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The Alton Public Works staff members are closely watching a Muscle Wall constructed across from Ardent Mills and in front of Morrison's in Downtown Alton.

So far, the wall is working and doing what it is supposed to do: holding back the flood water, Alton Public Works Director Bob Barnhart said.

Barnhart said the projected crest now by the U.S. Geological Service is 35.0 for Alton at 1 p.m. on Friday, May 5. The listing now shows the crest is at 33.99 as of 2 p.m. Thursday, May 4. Flood stage is 21 feet. Major flooding in Alton is set at 34 feet, so it should top that today sometime.

The projection of 35.0 feet on Friday would position this flood crest in Alton as the sixth highest in history. The largest historic crest is 42.72 feet on Aug. 1, 1993. Other top readings are 36.90 on June 18, 1844, 36.89 feet on April 28, 1973, 35.80 feet on Jan. 1, 2016, and 35.10 feet on May 22, 1995.

The 33.99 feet crest tops 34.20 crest on Oct. 9, 1986, to rank No. 7 in history. Three were crests of 33.2 feet on May 1, 1983, 33.08 feet on June 30, 2008, and 32.44 feet on Dec. 8, 1982.

"As long as we can keep up with the seepage of the backside of the wall we should be in good shape," Barnhart said. "We are going to continue to do things the way we have in the past few years. The only difference is we separated the sanitary sewer system and have different locations to be concerned with. We try to discharge water over the wall and stay ahead of the water that seeps in the backside."

Morrison's, the building at the end of State Street, still has some clearance on its floor and appears in good shape to date, Barnhart said.

Many of the Alton businesses are pumping water, but remain open.

Barnhart's Public Works' staff has used a new Muscle Wall around the path of flooding. The new Muscle Wall started with assistance from 400 sandbags and 700 were in reserve from the start.

The Madison County Emergency Management Agency lent Alton its sandbagging machine and 1,000 sandbags were filled up.

The portable plastic barricades in the Muscle Wall are positioned in segments, much in the same fashion as side-by-side Lego blocks, Barnhart said. The cost of the wall is an estimated \$100 a foot or \$20,000 for all presently held by the city and are reusable.

The plastic barriers will not be effective against flooding rising above 36 feet, Barnhart said.

Concrete blocks and sandbags will then have to be utilized and may resemble what happened in December 2015 to January 2016 when the 1,000-long flood wall was constructed.

“We will monitor the elevations on the muscle wall and if we have to come in here and change our game plan and install Jersey barriers to increase the elevation of the wall, we will,” Barnhart said. “We constructed this away from buildings so we could get behind it if needed and build up. If things increase much more, we will have to begin building a wall down the alley of the CVB. Everything is going to plan right now. We will continue to watch the wall on a daily basis.”





[Cory Davenport also contributed to this story.](#)