

River should reach flood stage by today

By **Vershal Hogan (Contact)** | The Natchez Democrat

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VIDALIA — The Mississippi River is expected to reach flood stage by the end of the day.

Flood stage for the Natchez-Vidalia pass is 48 feet above gauge zero, and this morning it is expected to stand at 47.80 feet.

The National Weather Service's Lower Mississippi River Forecast Center in Slidell has forecast the river will reach flood stage sometime after noon.

As of late Sunday, the NWS forecast was for the river to ultimately crest May 20 at 51 feet.

NWS hydrologists have said that the water level is a normal spring rise accompanied by rain.



Photo by Hannah Reel

Boaters drive past a home in the flooded waters off of Minorca Drive in Vidalia.

“We are getting some storm complexes that come through and seem to dump a lot of rain on Arkansas and northern Louisiana,” NWS Meteorologist Joanne Culin said.

Those storm complexes can dump between one and two inches of rain, Culin said.

“We have been seeing those for a good portion of a week now, and we still have some rain in the forecast,” she said.

In the low-lying areas of Concordia Parish between the old and new levee system such as Deer Park and Minorca, the water has been rising for a while.

But late last week, Isle of Capri Casino workers started making sandbags at the boat’s location in Natchez Under-the-Hill in anticipation of the rising water.

When the river reaches 50 feet, water begins to rise onto Silver Street Under-the-Hill.

At 51 feet, the casino has to move the boat from the Silver Street side to the D.A. Biglane Street side of Under-the-Hill.

By 52.5 feet Silver Street has to be closed, and by 53.5 feet rising water impacts the sewer service Under-the-Hill.

At 54 feet, the city closes D.A. Biglane Street.

At 54 feet, the water also begins to back through the drainage system and into the street on the Vidalia riverfront, a problem city officials said will eventually be remedied with the installation of a back flap on the drainage system’s riverside exit

In 2008, the river rose to its second-highest recorded crest, it reached a level of 56.97 feet.

Gauge zero at the Natchez-Vidalia pass is set at 17.28 feet above sea level, meaning that the water actually stands at 65.28 feet above sea level when it reaches flood stage.