

Conservator Hacks: Flood-casting



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By Jane Dalley, CSP Conservator

Spring will soon be upon us and every year around this time, the province of Manitoba begins issuing the first of many flood forecasts for the province.

The first forecast of the year can be found at [Manitoba February Flood Forecast](#) . It made the news last week as the live news conference that accompanied its release made mention of major flooding along the Red River as well as high water levels on the Assiniboine and Souris rivers.

Before you start up the sandbag machine, take a deep breath and remember that this forecast is the first of many, and is based on unfavourable weather conditions. Elsewhere, the forecast states that in the Red River basin, *normal weather* will bring about a high risk of major flooding within the Red River valley (i.e. property damages and economic impacts). *Unfavourable weather* could lead to a high risk of major flooding within the Red River Valley, and put the Floodway in operation. If the weather is *favourable*, minor flooding is expected.

There is a lot that can and will happen between now and when the rivers are reaching their peak, some of it depending on the weather and some of it within our control. Since it is hard to predict the weather, it makes sense to prepare for a worst situation that can be brought on by heavy snow, spring rains, a sudden rise in temperature, stream blockages, dam/dike failures, ice jams and poor drainage.



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Preparation involves avoiding the hazard, minimizing its effects, or planning to survive the inevitable. The first step is to learn as much about the situation as possible. Fortunately, Manitoba is a very well prepared province when it comes to flooding.

The Province of Manitoba has developed an extensive system of prevention, mitigation and response programs to deal with flood hazards, particularly in southern Manitoba. The Flood Information page (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/flooding/preparations.html>) contains links for a flood information line and numerous informational documents on preparing for a flood, evacuation and flood recovery. These are intended for rural inhabitants as well as urban dwellers, with sections on dealing with livestock and crops that could assist rural museums, especially those with livestock.

The Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) oversees and coordinates emergency preparedness in the Province. Their website has a plethora of useful information on flood issues, training and preparing a personal emergency kit. (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/emo/>)

If it looks like there may be flooding in your area, contact your RM or your town/city council to see what they are doing to prepare, and find out how you can be part of the plan. Your heritage institution can play a valuable role as a flood information hub and gathering place for the community. In the meantime, follow the Province's flood forecast.

If you have any questions or concerns about flooding and your museum, please contact me at conservator@museumsmanitoba.com.