

## High water increases risk on Sauk, Mississippi rivers

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*Matt Coleman prepares to do a front flip Friday while kayaking the Mississippi River. The water levels of the river are currently at the highest peak after recent storms. / Stacy Thacker, sthacker@stcloudtimes.com*

How has high water affected your recreational activities? [Place your vote here](#). Results will be on Thursday's Opinion page.

The Mississippi and Sauk rivers are reaching peak water levels after a wet spring and recent storms.

Outdoor recreation professionals are encouraging people to be careful when going out on the river. Some are urging people to stay off rivers altogether for the time being.

“(The Mississippi River) is not a place for a leisurely stroll,” said Ivan Bartha, St. Cloud State University's coordinator for experiential programs.

Bartha said he would encourage people not to go on rivers until currents slow.

The Mississippi River was flowing at 24,700 cubic feet per second Tuesday in St. Cloud, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The DNR classifies anything above 9,000 cubic feet per second as “high.”

The river's crest was 8.4 feet Tuesday in St. Cloud, up about 2 feet from last week. It floods when its crest gets above 9 feet.

The Sauk River's crest was 5.02 feet Tuesday in St. Cloud, almost a foot below flood stage.

Both rivers are close to reaching their crests, according to the National Weather Service. The levels are expected to taper within the next week.

Dan Meer, owner of Clear Waters Outfitting Co. in Clearwater, said his company is running trips on a limited basis.

He said he's discouraging kids from making the trip.

“If you get small children in these currents,” he said, “they may not be able to swim to shore.”

Outdoor professionals are encouraging rivergoers to wear life jackets and make sure they're comfortable before heading onto the water.

“People need to prepare properly,” Bartha said. “They need to not overestimate their ability level, and they really need to think about where they're going to go.”

For information on rivers across the state, visit: <http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=mpx>.