

### River Ice Dam Mitigated by Gunnison County Public Works and Emergency Management:

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> several reports of significant ice buildup and increases in water levels were reported on stretches of the Gunnison River around Dos Rios Island. With the potential for additional sudden increases in river levels both upstream and downstream of the ice jam, both Gunnison County Emergency Management and Public Works began surveying the ice dam and affected areas. The Dos Rios Island ice dam had formed on the main channel (east channel) which forced more water to divert to the narrower channel causing rising river levels on the west side of Dos Rios Island. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Gunnison County Public Works and Emergency Management worked together to mechanically break up portions of the ice dam. While not always successful, this action resulted in the water levels dropping significantly and rapidly. Surveillance of the areas on each side of the island downstream of the mitigated area have not shown any other blockages.

The Gunnison Valley has experienced prolonged colder and subzero temperatures this winter, which can lead to ice buildup occurrences on creeks and rivers. When an ice dam (or jam) forms, changes in water levels can occur upstream of the blockage as water collects behind the it. If the blockage releases suddenly, a surge of water and possibly debris such as downed trees, branches etc. could be sent downstream. Residents in the affected areas should always be aware of and prepared for quickly changing river conditions. Changing conditions could require evacuations on short notice, and residents are urged to remove valuable items, whether property, vehicles, furniture, or livestock to higher ground or upper levels of buildings, particularly in those areas that have experienced flooding in the past.

Gunnison County residents should all be signed up for Gunnison Regional Alerts which is the emergency notification system that emergency personnel will use to notify residents of potential dangers, evacuations, etc. Register your cell phone number with Gunnison Regional Alerts at <https://gunnison.genasys.com/portal/en/register> or scan the QR code to register for emergency notifications in your area. For more information or to report rapidly changing river conditions contact Gunnison County Emergency Management at 970-641-2481. For emergencies, call dispatch at 970-641-8200 Ext 1, or 9-1-1.



QR Code for Gunnison Regional Alerts registration website.

For information on flood insurance, contact your insurance agent or depending on your residence location the City of Gunnison Floodplain Manager at 970-641-8151, or Gunnison County Floodplain Manager at 970-641-0360. For residents living in flood-prone areas, remember that there is a 30-day waiting period for flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program.



Map showing Dos Rios Island and the approximate location of the ice dam.



Photo: Gunnison County Public Works using a backhoe to carefully break up the ice dam. The equipment was also used to scoop ice and move larger pieces of thick ice slabs onto the riverbank.