

A U.S. Geological stream gauge on Lodgepole Creek has recorded the highest flows in more than 30 years as a result of snowmelt from a recent snow storm.

The high water caused numerous county road closings, as well as the closing of parts of Nebraska Highway 30, east of Bushnell. The Kimball County sheriff's office has reported bridges under water and washed-out roads.

The gauge, which is located on Lodgepole Creek at Bushnell, about 50 miles west of Sidney, measured a peak flow volume of 960 cubic feet per second (cfs) late on the evening of March 5.

Higher peak flows haven't been measured since 1981, when the peak reached about 9,390 cfs during a major flood event. The peak water level of approximately 5.5 feet, also measured on March 5, and the peak flow are the 12th highest on record for the gauge.

The average annual discharge in 68 years of records is 8.3 cfs.

One cubic foot per second is equivalent to the volume of about 7.5 gallon jugs of water flowing by in one second.

Lodgepole Creek, a tributary of the South Platte River, flows into Oliver Reservoir. Rod Horn, general manager at the South Platte Natural Resources District (NRD), which manages the reservoir, said the reservoir has gone from about one-fifth full to almost full as a result of the snowmelt. When full, the reservoir holds about 2,680 acre-feet.

The USGS Lodgepole Creek stream gauge has been recording water-level and flow data since 1932, with a 10-year gap from 1992-2003. The all-time high peak-flow measurement was 16,500 cfs on Sept. 15, 1950.

The gauge was one of four stream gauges targeted for shutdown during the 2013 sequestration but continued to run because of support from the South Platte NRD.