

Low water plagues those who boat on Rock River

(Published Friday, July 22, 2005)

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It's a little funny. Or maybe a little infuriating.

Boaters couldn't get on the Rock River for much of last year because the river stormed over its banks and spent a long stretch of the summer well above flood stage.

This year, well, you know the story.

"It's definitely putting a damper on it," said Erik Samuelsen, co-owner of Rock River Marina near Edgerton.

"People are breaking equipment out there because of the low water levels."

The Rock River stood at 2.68 feet Wednesday at the Afton height gauge before Thursday's 2.3 inches of rain fell in the Janesville area. The rain put the river level at just less than 3 feet this morning at Afton .

The river was over 10 feet-which is a foot higher than flood stage-for part of last summer.

"From one extreme to the other," Samuelsen said earlier this week. "We would just like some consistency."

River height is a concern for recreational boaters, but it's an even more pressing matter for boaters who tow five-level human pyramids.

"It's affecting us to a certain degree," said Joel Shapiro , Rock Aqua Jays president.

The Aqua Jays were held off their Traxler Park stretch of water for much of last season.

"Last year at this time, we were concerned about having too much water," Shapiro said.

"We're at the opposite end of the spectrum."

It's too early to tell if the drought could affect ski shows or the show ski national championships slated for Aug. 13-15, Shapiro said.

The water at Traxler Park is higher than water in some spots. At Monterey Park on Wednesday, a smelly mud peninsula stretched almost entirely across the river.

Low Rock River levels are sending some boaters elsewhere, Samuelsen said.

"I hear some customers are just going to other bodies of water that are holding the water," he said.

Samuelsen stressed that the river is still boatable. But he advised boaters to stay near the middle of the river and Lake Koshkonong , lest their propellers should pay the price.

"It's good for the repair end of our business, but certainly not good for our customers," he said.

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