

Record Flooding in Dane County

Alysen Tierney (USA)

Key words: Land management; Young surveyor; groundwater, flooding

SUMMARY

The Western portion of Dane County, Wisconsin, USA experienced historic rainfall in August 2018. In some areas over a foot of rain fell in 24 hours, which far exceeds a “100-year” rain event. Rural and urban areas were greatly affected by the overflowing rivers and lakes.

Damages were estimated at \$154 million and one person lost their life from the August 20-21, 2018 floods. It took \$2.2 million to clean debris from the roads. Bridges on State Highways were completely destroyed, lakes were overflowing, and water was surging from storm drains for weeks after.

Not only has excess rain damaged property and life from the flash floods, but groundwater has increased more than ten feet in some areas of Dane County, and is at record levels. Farmland is turning into lakes, and lakes are flooding houses. In 2019, nearly 1 in 10 acres was not planted. There are still fields underwater in 2019, causing millions in agriculture production loss. The rain is still coming; as of August 2019, Dane County has experienced eight inches of rain above the average.

The County is taking action to improve flooding resiliency and has put multi-year stormwater plans in place. They are pumping and dredging lakes to improve water flow. Converting row crops into permanent vegetation to reduce runoff. They are better prepared by educating first responders and providing the necessary tools. Residents are being taught how to protect their properties even if they are not in an identified floodplain. A study is ongoing to identify potential flooding risk properties that do not fall within a designated FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) floodplain. Dane County is adapting to the changing climate and preparing for the future. The weather is not what it used to be.

Record Flooding in Dane County (10594)
Alysen Tierney (USA)

FIG Working Week 2020
Smart surveyors for land and water management
Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 10–14 May 2020