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News Release

March 25, 2011	Joyce Williamson	605-394-3219	jewillia@usgs.gov
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Editors: A photograph of the James River at Huron is available online. The photograph shows USGS Hydrologic Technicians Tyler Meyer and Jesse Rigge documenting the river stage and ensuring that the streamgage at the James River at Huron, SD is working properly. A streamflow measurement of 17,500 cubic feet per second was made during the site visit.

Near-Record River Levels in Eastern South Dakota

Many rivers are near all time maximum depths as the snow melts and runoff continues in much of eastern South Dakota, according to real-time U.S. Geological Survey streamgage data.

The near-record water levels, or stages, are breaking peak stages from 2010. The river stages at many streamgage sites along the James River are within 0.5 foot of the record and have crested or are still rising. The James River near Forestburg has set a new streamflow record at approximately 27,000 cubic feet per second and is within 0.4 foot of the peak stage set in 1997.

“Each year the severe flooding is a little different than the previous time,” said Joyce Williamson, USGS hydrologist. “These differences can be caused by the time of year, how wet the area was prior to the flooding, and whether the flooding is caused by an intense rainfall event, slow or rapid snowmelt, and the combination of all of these conditions. So although the river stage may be higher or lower this year, other local conditions may make this flood not as bad or maybe worse than a previous flood.”

Recent river stages for some of the streamgages of interest are listed in the table provided.

The role of the USGS is to ensure accurate streamflow and river stage data to the various National, State, and local agencies that then use this data for their forecasts and decision making. For the latest and most accurate streamflow data for South Dakota, visit the real-time streamflow web page.

Links to graphics that allow for comparison of the current river stage to historical peaks and to the National Weather Service flood stage are available on the USGS WaterWatch web page for South Dakota or through links on the USGS South Dakota flood web page.

Click here for more information on USGS flood-related activities.

For more than 125 years, the USGS has monitored flow in selected streams and rivers across the U.S. The USGS collects data from more than 7,700 streamgages, most of which provide real-time data that is transmitted every hour. The information is routinely used for water supply and management, monitoring floods and droughts, bridge and road design, determination of flood risk, and for many recreational activities.

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Streamgage	2011 Peak Stage as of 8:00 a.m. CDT, March 25 (provisional) (feet)	2010 Stage (feet)	1997 Stage (feet)	Other years (feet)
06476000 James River at Huron	20.02	19.72	21.28	18.14 (2001)
06477000 James River near Forestburg	20.24	19.14	20.61	18.93 (2007)
06478000 James River near Mitchell	24.90	25.11	--	25.33 (2001)
06479525 Big Sioux River near Castlewood	12.30	11.98	12.87	12.27 (2001)
06480000 Big Sioux River near Brookings	13.06	13.66	13.02	14.77 (1969) 13.70 (1984)
06481000 Big Sioux River near Dell Rapids	15.63	16.29	15.54	16.47 (1969) 16.02 (2007)
06482020 Big Sioux River at North Cliff Ave.	21.41	21.57	23.11	27.45 (1969) 25.40 (1984)

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