

City of Atchison declares water emergency

(KAIR)--A water emergency is declared in Atchison, as the City works toward conservation due to record low Missouri River levels.

The Atchison City Commission, Thursday, held a special meeting, unanimously adopting the resolution to make the emergency declaration.

A release explains that for several days, the City of Atchison “has been relying solely on a lesser-capacity auxiliary pump to draw from the river as the river level has dropped below the primary intake, and remains at that lower level, resulting in the need for emergency conservation measures to be taken.”

The release clarifies that “all industries and businesses that are affected by these measures have been contacted directly [through] a tiered protocol based on water consumption.”

That follows the City, on Tuesday, implementing mandatory water conservation efforts, which have now been lifted. The release explains that while no mandatory measures are in place for those not directly contacted, including residential households, “any voluntary conservation efforts that can be taken while maintaining health, hygiene and safety are encouraged.”

The release does warn that “further emergency conservation measures for lower-tier customers are possible, depending on the potential circumstances”, such as pump malfunctions or an extended period of low river flow.

The release cites ice jams, reportedly 60 miles in length and located upstream, as the primary cause of the current low river level.

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, which manages the Missouri River, is anticipating that warmer temperatures will alleviate the situation, but the unexpected movement of ice jams, once they break lose, make reliable forecasting difficult.