

Public Works Department

To: Mayor Stocks and Members of the Common Council

From: Andrew M. Beyer, P.E., Public Works Director

Date: April 21, 2026

Subject: April 2026 Rain Event and Flood Response Efforts

Background

The City of Watertown experienced a significant rainfall event on April 14, 2026, with approximately 3 inches of rain falling within a short duration throughout the community. Significant rain events also occurred both prior to and following the April 14th storm, contributing to already saturated conditions in portions of the watershed.

The intensity of the April 14th storm exceeded the capacity of the stormwater system in several areas, resulting in widespread surface flooding.

In addition to surface flooding, the Rock River, along with local creeks and streams, has reached flood stage. River levels continue to be closely monitored.

Preparedness and Response

Prior to the storm event, the Street Division proactively cleared storm sewer inlets and culverts in anticipation of forecasted rainfall to maximize system capacity.

As the storm developed and reports of flooding were received, the City activated a coordinated response involving the Police Department, Fire Department, and Street Division. Crews placed barricades, closed flooded roadways, and responded to immediate public safety concerns.

During the event, the wastewater collection system experienced elevated flows consistent with heavy rainfall conditions. Wastewater Treatment Plant staff monitored conditions closely and made operational adjustments as needed to manage increased flows while maintaining system operations.

Following the event, the City's Emergency Management team began meeting and continues to coordinate response efforts across departments. These efforts include ongoing situational assessment, resource coordination, and communication.

The City has also been in contact with the dam operator to ensure that all feasible measures are being taken to manage river flows and minimize downstream impacts.

Current Conditions and Ongoing Efforts

Surface flooding of City streets largely receded shortly after rainfall ended as runoff conditions subsided and the storm sewer system was able to convey flows.

River and stream levels remain elevated, and staff continues to monitor conditions closely.

City staff is compiling reports and data related to reported private property impacts to help document the overall extent of the event. This information will support ongoing coordination and potential future assistance efforts, as appropriate.

Public Communication and Safety

Public safety remains the City's top priority. While surface flooding on City streets largely receded shortly after rainfall ended, river and stream flooding conditions remain ongoing as the Rock River and local creeks and streams remain at flood stage.

Residents are reminded to avoid flooded areas, including riverbanks, low-lying stream crossings, and any posted or barricaded areas. Road closures and barricades should be strictly observed for public safety.

The City will continue to monitor river and stream conditions closely and provide updates as conditions change.