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Benton County tracks giant ice jam thanks to volunteer drone pilot

by Shannon Moudy
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Mike Madorin flies his drone over the Cedar River Monday. He helped emergency officials keep tabs on a giant ice jam four miles upriver.

VINTON, Iowa - (CBS2/Fox28) — As waters rose across the Corridor Monday, Benton County emergency manager Scott Hansen had his sights set on a potential problem four miles north.

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A giant ice jam was spotted upriver from Vinton; Hansen needed to keep track of as it moved toward town.

“The Weather Service, in conjunction with the river forecast center, they like to know about ice jams on mainstem rivers because it can have an effect on the flow and the height during, especially during floods,” Hansen says. “They wanted to get a good handle on where it was and what it may or may not be doing.”

The only problem: he couldn't really get eyes on it.

t really drive to. It's all river bottom, flood plain in that area, there

47°

50°

63°

However, Hansen has a local standby they call in for situations just like this.

"I've got a lot of hours on it," says Mike Madorin. He's the resident flight expert and drone owner who has spent the last couple years flying for fun and to help out the city.

Madorin captured the entire view of the jam on his drone.

"This one between Mt. Auburn and Vinton was approximately two-and-a-half miles," he says of the massive sheet of ice.

He posted the video on his Facebook page and managed to spread the word online, hoping to warn people downriver of what may be coming.

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He's no stranger to helping out: the city has called on him for other floods, fires, and even to survey tornado damage. It's allowed him to take a hobby and make it a public service.

"Trying to help out the community as much as I can," Madorin says. "We're tightly-knit."

The aerial view allowed Hansen to determine there's no immediate risk to Vinton and he hopes the jam will break up before moving through.

"As far as I'm concerned it can stay there 'til the water goes down," Hansen chuckles. "That'd even be a better scenario."

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