

January thaw, spring rains could create more difficulty

Flooding survey begins on island

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**By Katherine Obradovich
of the Journal**

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DES MOINES — Federal officials are beginning a comprehensive engineering study in Louisa County to decide how to prevent future flood damage.

Prevention is urgent because weather authorities are predicting a 40 percent chance that next year's rainfall will be the worst in 40 years.

That, on top of already satu-

rated grounds, could make the usual thaw in January and spring rains a disaster, Dr. Duane Shinn of Iowa State University told the governor's flood recovery task force this morning.

Officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and state officials met in Louisa County earlier this week to discuss the study.

David Miller of the state emergency management agency said the study involves Muscatine Island, where about 200 homes are located in four unincorporated developments.

The main problem is drainage, he said. "It's groundwater that has saturated the area and has come up into the homes," he said.

The goal is to decide how to drain the area so people can get back in their homes and make repairs, and also to prepare for the possibility of worse flooding next spring.

The area is unusual because it is not in a flood plain — it sits behind a 500-year-flood protected levee, he said.

A FEMA preliminary engineer likely will be on site this

week. Then, an engineering team will arrive next week to explore drainage problems.

The county already has placed culverts in the roads in the area to allow water to flow south, out of the area, Miller said. The problem is, silt from the flood waters has filled the ditches and driveways have blocked the water flow.

Some of those culverts need to be repositioned and engineers need to determine how to stabilize them in the sandy soil, he said. In addition, the study will recommend whether the area needs a permanent pumping station and whether it should remain in the levee district.

FEMA is paying the cost of the study, but the repairs will require state funds of 10 to 50 percent, depending on the work that is needed, he said.

In addition to the engineering study, FEMA community outreach officials will be going door-to-door in the area and opening an assistance center at Kilpeck Church to make sure residents are getting the help they need. Officials will check on whether people need help applying for disaster assistance or need to apply for more aid because of additional flooding.