

# Tens Of Thousands Of Wheat Acres Flooded, Expert Says

**LITTLE ROCK, ARK.**

**F**armers along the Arkansas River, its tributaries and other rivers on the eastern side of the state are waiting nervously for the floodwater covering their wheat to drain away.

"They definitely didn't need this," said Dr. Jason Kelley, extension wheat agronomist with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "I'm sure the (flooded) acreage numbers are much greater than we envisioned last week when the rain started – tens of thousand of acres I'm sure."

He said the flooding will be an economic hardship on some farmers counting on the crop. The flooding will likely reduce yields in some fields and may kill the crop in other fields, depending on how long the water stays on the fields. Additionally, all the money farmers have invested in the crop could be lost.

In Prairie County Monday, Hank Chaney watched a mobile home floating down the rain-swollen White River. Chaney, county extension agent with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said other homeowners were watching water creep closer to their homes.

Some of the county's farmers are upset and worried that if the water doesn't come down fast enough, they'll be in trouble on their wheat contract, Chaney said. "The price looks so good, and they were hoping to sell at that price, but if the water doesn't come off soon enough, they'll have trouble coming up with the wheat to fulfill their contract obligations.

"Last year, we had a freeze, and now we have flooding," Chaney said.

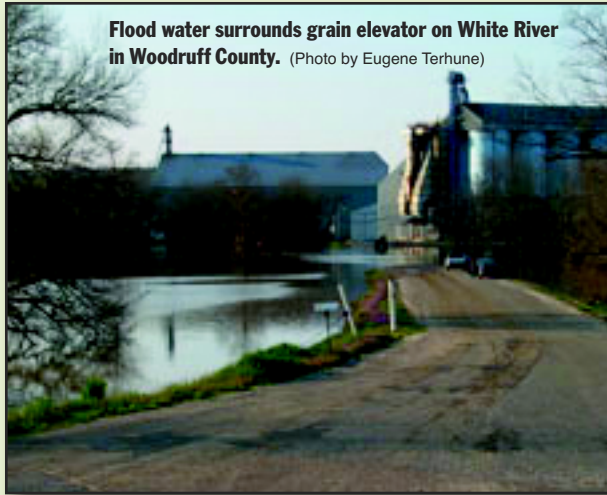
Jackson County farmers are in the same situation.

"I've gotten several calls this morning and last week from farmers wanting to know how many days water can stand on wheat before their wheat is seriously hurt or destroyed," said Randy Chlapecka, Jackson County extension agent. He said it's hard to give them an answer because there are so many variables involved.

He said several thousand acres of wheat are under water along the White River.

Chlapecka figures if water has only been standing on wheat two or three days, the wheat will probably recover. Other wheat has been covered four to six days, "and we don't expect good things."

Besides the prospect of a crop loss or yield losses, farmers have considerable money tied up in their crops. In the fall, they spent money



**Flood water surrounds grain elevator on White River in Woodruff County.** (Photo by Eugene Terhune)

on pre-plant fertilizer, seed and land preparation. Most farmers have already applied at least half of their spring nitrogen fertilizer.

"There was a lot optimism at planting because of high commodity prices," Chlapecka said. Now, instead of a profitable crop, he said, they're looking at substantial losses.

"I'm sure we'll get through it. You know resilient farmers are," he said.

Woodruff County Agent Eugene Terhune says farmers face an additional problem.

"Even when the water goes down, there's so much debris that has floated over those fields that it'll take farmers a lot of work to get fields ready to plant soybeans and other crops," he said. △