



Enterprise photo by Angela Schneider

A Park County Road Department worker hammers together framing for the Bailey bridge being built over the Ninth Street Island Bridge, Monday. While earlier it was thought the tem-

porary structure wouldn't be completed for a week or more, authorities are now expecting to have it up in a matter of days.

## Ninth Street Island

# Temp bridge taking shape

By Peter Vandergrift  
Enterprise Staff Writer

With a replacement Bailey bridge nearing completion over the swollen Yellowstone River, thoughts turn to what will happen in the long term on the river crossing and who will pay the bill.

On Thursday afternoon, surging water began to undermine the fourth piling from the north, causing the bridge to sag and become too dangerous for travel.

Crews began constructing a temporary Bailey bridge Saturday and could be finished as soon as Tuesday, allowing residents to re-enter their homes and those with stranded vehicles to drive them back from the island.

Park County Sheriff Allan Lutes said the weight limit on the Bailey bridge is 6,000 pounds.

The bridge was closed Thursday to vehicles. After escorting some people off the island across the sagging structure, state engineers closed it even to foot traffic, stranding more than two dozen people, including 6-and-a-half-month old Jacob Gartside.

Baby Jacob's parents had left him with the child's grandfather while they were at work, but they had no idea the bridge would become impassable, separating them from their child.

"It's scary," said Nick Gartside Friday.

On Friday afternoon, a Department of Natural



Theresa Alexander ties sandbags at Park Clinic, Friday. Alexander, who works in the marketing department for the Livingston Healthcare Foundation, was one of about 15 volunteers sandbagging at the site. There are worries that if the bridge goes down and dams the river, the clinic could be flooded.

Resources and Conservation helicopter landed on Ninth street Island, loaded up 16 residents, including Jacob and his grandfather, and flew them off the island, according to Bob Fry of the Montana Department of Emergency Services.

Officials said now that they have a more accurate count, 20 residents remain on Ninth Street and Siebeck islands.

A second helicopter trip rescued pets.

On Thursday afternoon, the Park County Commission declared the Yellowstone an emergency zone, enacting a

two-mill emergency fund that will raise more than \$68,000 to pay for emergency personnel and erection of the temporary bridge.

The mills will be reflected on Park County property taxes, but state revenue officials were not sure if the mills would be reflected on residents November property tax statements or 2009 statements.

The cost so far is estimated in the tens of thousands of dollars. No exact figure could be given by Park County Auditor Don Holland.

Most officials agree the

costs will burn through the \$68,000 quickly, which will then force the state to begin picking up the tab, Fry said.

A representative from the Federal Emergency Management Agency was in town Sunday assessing the danger at the bridge site, but it is uncertain if federal funds would be available, he said.

County Commissioner Jim Durgan said he assumes the bridge will need to be replaced, which could take years and millions of dollars.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks closed the Yellowstone River from Carter's Bridge to Highway 89 South until further notice because of the danger the sagging bridge poses to boaters.

The closure has forced the organizers of Primal Quest, a nationally televised 550-mile endurance race, to make other arrangements for the kayak section of the race, which was slated to go from Emigrant to Otter Creek in Big Timber.

Instead, said organizer Bill Davis, teams will start the kayak portion of the race at Carbella Fishing Access and float to Carter's Bridge, where they will mount bikes and ride through Livingston, beginning Wednesday.

The next public meeting on the bridge situation is set for 1 p.m. Tuesday, at the corner of Ninth Street and River Drive.

The public information contacts are Patrick Lonergan at 599-7881 and Sandi Marlow at 223-6168.