

Barrel checks delayed as Kentucky distillery cleans up flood

BY BRUCE SCHREINER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Signs of renewal are underway at the Buffalo Trace Distillery in Kentucky since floodwaters that inundated the whiskey-making campus receded. But executives say the painstaking task of inspecting any bourbon barrels touched by the high water will take time.

The historic distillery has resumed shipping spirits and hopes to reopen its bottling operation in the coming days, Jake Wenz, CEO and president of the Sazerac Co. and the distillery, said Friday. The campus could reopen to visitors soon on a limited basis but for now is closed to guests through Sunday.

“Restoration of this National Historic Landmark is our top priority to ensure a quick return to making quality, award-winning whiskey and welcoming guests from around the world,” Wenz said in a release.

The Frankfort, Kentucky-based distillery — which produces some of the most sought-after bourbon brands — was inundated by floodwaters from the nearby Kentucky River after days of downpours overfilled rivers to near-record levels across parts of the Bluegrass State.

Now that the murky floodwaters are gone, the cleanup at Buffalo Trace is progressing. Teams of engineers and restoration experts have been

assessing damage in the buildings that were flooded.

The overall amount of damage is still being determined, the distillery said.

Those damage assessments include some of the barrels filled with aging whiskey. Bourbon gets its flavor and golden brown color during aging. Workers were able to move some barrels of bourbon to upper floors of storage warehouses before the prolonged rains produced the flooding.

Inspections of any barrels touched by the flood began Thursday and will continue until each is carefully assessed, a process that could take several weeks to complete, the distillery said. It hasn't said how many barrels were affected

but said it doesn't expect any meaningful loss of inventory.

“This is a very involved process, including both barrel inspection as well as a rigorous quality testing that we do with all of our products,” said Harlen Wheatley, master distiller at Buffalo Trace.

Based on its experience from previous floods, the distillery is “confident in our process” and that it successfully recovered the barrels affected by the flood, Wheatley said. The distillery has markers of several high-water marks from previous floods inside its buildings.

“A lot of heart and soul goes into every product we make, which is why our team is dedicated to testing with heavy scrutiny each barrel possi-

bly affected by floodwaters to ensure there are no issues,” he said.

Crews started cleaning up the distillery's visitor center, where the flood reached the first floor. During repairs, the distillery said it plans to reopen a modified version of its visitor center as soon as possible.

As a first step, the distillery plans to operate a modified retail hub from its visitor check-in center. Access will be via an email reservation system offered first to people who had tours interrupted by the flooding.

Buffalo Trace Distillery is owned by Sazerac and its popular bourbons include the Buffalo Trace, Eagle Rare and W.L. Weller brands.

FEED

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common practice. Its purpose was to enforce moral standards and maintain social order. Today, almost nothing is shameful because most standards have been discarded.

Members of Congress, who voted for spending and programs that are

now being exposed as unnecessary and wasteful, should have shame heaped upon them. This would include “earmarks,” which is spending by members for favored projects that have not gone through the proper budgetary process. Public shaming might force members to be more responsible with the power and purse they have been given and put the country's interest

ahead of their personal interests, which include re-election.

As I have repeatedly argued, every Cabinet agency and most government programs have been established by a charter or legislative authority. If agencies and programs are achieving their purposes and goals

and their work can't be done less expensively and more efficiently by the private sector, we keep them. If not, we get rid of them. DOGE has begun that process. Simply firing people won't fully solve the problem. The value and success of these entities must be examined for

their cost and efficiency. The ones that are not performing must be shut down, otherwise a new Congress and a new administration could fire them up again and we will be back where we started.

An unhappy tax day to all who pay income taxes.

Readers may email Cal Thomas at tcaeditors@tribpub.com.

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The LaRue County Water District #1 will be accepting sealed bids for a **2024 Chevrolet Silverado K1500 RS**, 4WD, approximately 23,000 miles, VIN # 2GCUDEED1R1184767. The 2024 Chevrolet Silverado K1500 RS will be sold as is.

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Phone: 859.351.9849

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