

Sonoma County Flood Damage Estimated At \$155M

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The county and at least two cities have declared local emergencies. A Local Assistance Center is now open in Guerneville.

SONOMA COUNTY, CA — Days of heavy rains and flooding along the Russian River have caused an estimated \$155 million in damage across Sonoma County, officials said Saturday. Properties affected include 1,900 homes — 1,760 with major damage — and 578 businesses, according to county estimates. “This is a heartbreaking time for our community,” said Fifth District Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, whose district was hit hardest by the flooding. “We appreciate everyone’s patience as we all work together to help our community recover. We’ve done it before and we can do it again.”

Once the floodwaters receded Friday, county staff began conducting damage assessments on the estimated 2,600 properties inundated by flooding.

Emergency crews and elected officials also flew over the area, documenting the flooded area.

Initial assessments estimate \$155 million in damages countywide, according to a news release from the county on Saturday.

On Tuesday, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors made a local emergency proclamation and requested assistance from the state. Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday declared a State of Emergency, which allows for state funds and resources to help the flooded and damaged communities recover and repair damaged infrastructure.

The river reached its crest Wednesday night at 45.4 feet. Flood stage is 32 feet at the Guerneville Bridge. Guerneville was the hardest hit river community, while parts of Sebastopol were flooded by an overflowing Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Elsewhere in the county, the Healdsburg City Council is expected Monday night to approve an emergency declaration that was issued last week by City Manager David Mickaelian. The city’s water reclamation facility sustained several feet of flooding overnight Feb. 26; the facility will need to be deep-cleaned and any damaged equipment or infrastructure repaired or replaced, city staff said.

Badger Park, Railroad Park and Fitch Mountain Open Space Preserve were closed because of storm damage, with assessment of other possibly damaged city of Healdsburg facilities and property continuing.

The city of Santa Rosa proclaimed the existence of a local state of emergency as of Feb. 28. During the recent atmospheric river weather event, the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Plant was impacted by localized flooding and sewer flow rates coming into the plant were higher than ever recorded, placing strain on the system, city officials said.

Current emergency and recovery information is available at Socoemergency.org.

Residents of Guerneville and other lower Russian River communities began returning to their properties Friday.

A Local Assistance Center for county residents opened Sunday at noon to serve as a one-stop location for the community to access government, nonprofit and private resource providers. The center is located in the former Bank of America building at 16390 Main St. in Guerneville. The hours for the center are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily through at least Saturday, March 9.

Government agencies and nonprofits are represented at the center, and all county residents can access services regardless of immigration status, according to a Sonoma County spokeswoman.

County departments at the center include Permit Sonoma, to provide over-the-counter permits for some repairs and to begin the permit process for structural work and building safety, according to a release from Sonoma County spokeswoman Briana Khan.

In addition, the county's human services department is taking applications for CalFresh food benefits and Medi-Cal.

The county's health services department has representatives from animal services, environmental health, and behavioral Health to provide mental health support and referral.

The Sonoma County Community Development Commission will support other housing needs.

California state agencies on hand include the Department of Motor Vehicles (Monday-Saturday) for those needing identification or driver licenses.

The state department of insurance is available (Monday-Saturday) to provide insurance support and the Contractors State Licensing Board will provide contracting support and resources.

Nonprofits, including United Policyholders (Wednesday-Thursday), American Red Cross, and The Salvation Army are providing additional resources and support to local residents.

The assistance center also has information on topics related to the flood including debris drop-off locations for non-hazardous waste, and dates and times for hazardous waste drop offs as well as important health and safety information.