



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO/OEM
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of:
May 19, 2020
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director
Contact Info: Kelly Hubbard, Director, Office of Emergency Management
SUBJECT: **Re-Ratification Proclamation of Local Emergencies related to the Thomas
Fire/Storm Incident**

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: NA

Recommended Actions:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Adopt a Resolution re-ratifying the Proclamations of Local Emergencies related to the Thomas Fire/Storm Incident that exist in Santa Barbara County pursuant to Government Code Section 8630(c); and
- b) Direct the Office of Emergency Management to return within 60 days for re-ratification of the Emergency until such time that the response and recovery conditions dictate otherwise; and
- c) Determine the above actions are not a "Project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, because the actions consist of organizational or administrative activities of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

The resolution before the Board is a re-ratification of the Proclamations of Local Emergencies related to the Thomas Fire/Storm Incident.

The Thomas Fire began in Ventura County on December 4, 2017, and shortly thereafter spread to the County of Santa Barbara. The Thomas Fire, until this fire season, was the largest wildfire in the history of California and caused power outages, widespread damage and destruction, extensive smoke and ash, and created hazardous air quality. Mandatory and voluntary evacuations were ordered. Due to the Thomas Fire Emergency, the County of Santa Barbara declared a local emergency which was ratified and re-ratified by the Board of Supervisors as required by California law.

Subsequently, in early January 2018, a significant storm was predicted to occur on January 9 that had the potential to threaten life and property in areas adjacent to the recently burned areas of the Thomas Fire along the south coast of Santa Barbara County. The County of Santa Barbara declared an additional local emergency on January 8th in preparation of the storm which was ratified by the Board of Supervisors as required by California law.

On January 9, 2018 the County of Santa Barbara experienced a 200 year rainfall event over one of the recently burned watersheds in the Thomas Fire burn area which caused massive mud and debris flows immediately leading to 23 deaths, further destruction and damage of public and private property, closure of state and local highways and roads, and displacement of residents and businesses.

The President and Governor Brown consolidated the Thomas Fire and Storm Incidents under one emergency. This resolution (Attachment A) re-ratifies the combined Proclamation of Local Emergency.

Effective January 1, 2019, Government Code Section 8630(c) has been amended to extend the required re-ratification period from 30 days to 60 days.

This resolution was last renewed on March 24, 2020 and is due to be renewed by May 23, 2020. Staff is assessing the continued need for this resolution and will likely terminate after this renewal.

Background

On December 4, 2017, at 1825 hours, the Thomas Fire began burning in Ventura County. The first impact to Santa Barbara County was extensive power fluctuations and outages affecting over 83,000 customers across the South County of Santa Barbara. Periodic power outages continued for many days as a result of burn damage to the electric transmission lines.

On December 5, 2017, Governor Brown declared a State of Emergency for the County of Ventura for the Thomas Fire, and on December 7, 2017, the Governor added the County of Santa Barbara to the State of Emergency.

On December 7, 2017, the first mandatory evacuation orders and evacuation warnings were issued for portions of the County. Extensive smoke and ash created hazardous air quality, which led to the closure of most South County schools on December 7th and 8th. Many schools remained closed and recessed early into their holiday break.

On December 8, 2017, the President proclaimed a Presidential Declaration of Emergency for the Counties of Santa Barbara and Ventura. The Presidential Declaration included support for response activities of the federal, state and local government.

On December 8, 2017, when the Board of Supervisors was not in session, the County Executive Officer, as the Director of Emergency Services, proclaimed a local emergency in order to utilize all resources necessary to respond to the damage caused by the local emergency and receive any needed funding through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) and any other funding for both State and Federal funds that may be available. The proclamation was ratified by the Board of Supervisors on December 12, 2017, and covered the Santa Barbara County Operational Area including other jurisdictions.

On December 20, 2017, the Santa Barbara County Health Officer and Public Health Director declared a Local Health Emergency and Order Prohibiting the Endangerment of the Community through the Unsafe Removal, Transport, and Disposal of Fire Debris. This Local Health Emergency was re-ratified within each fourteen days in accordance with Health and Safety Code, section 101080 until Governor Brown waived the requirement on January 12, 2018.

On December 21, 2017 the County and allied agencies began to formally prepare for the potential of debris flows below the Thomas Burn area. Staff engaged with the USFS Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) team and the CAL FIRE Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT).

On January 2, 2018, the President declared a Major Disaster for the State of California, as a result of wildfires, including the Thomas Fire.

On January 7, 2018, mandatory evacuation orders and evacuation warnings were issued for portions of the County due to the anticipated storm.

On January 8, 2018, when the Board of Supervisors was not in session, the Director of Emergency Services of the County of Santa Barbara proclaimed the existence of a local emergency within Santa Barbara County as a result of the forecasted storm. The proclamation was ratified by the Board of Supervisors on January 9, 2018.

On January 9, 2018, when the Thomas Fire was only 92% contained, the County of Santa Barbara experienced an extreme rain event that resulted in several massive debris flows below the recent Thomas Fire burn scar. The debris flows caused 23 people to perish. In addition, there were many injuries and destruction of property, transportation conveyances were compromised and resulted in displacement of residents and businesses.

On January 11, 2018, FEMA granted the State's request for expanded federal disaster aid for the debris flow that occurred as a result of the Thomas Fire. The Presidential Major Disaster Declaration was amended to include flooding, mudflows, and debris flows directly related to the compromised watershed as a result of wildfires and to include individual assistance.

On January 12, 2018, the Thomas Fire was 100% contained having burnt 281,893 acres in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. It burned significant portions of Santa Barbara County's critical watershed and damaged or destroyed over 80 structures in Santa Barbara County.

On January 12, 2018, Governor Brown issued Executive Order B-46-18 to further assist recovery efforts related to the Thomas Fire and subsequent mudslides.

On January 27, 2018, full repopulation occurred.

On February 8, 2018, the Boil Water Notice for Montecito Water District's customers was lifted.

On February 28, 2018, new storm activity caused an evacuation of approximately 21,000 people in the debris flow risk areas. Fire, law enforcement, public works and Emergency Operations Center personnel were activated during the storm. Full repopulation occurred on March 2, 2018.

Between February 3 and March 5, 2018, County, numerous State and Federal agencies, and nonprofits provided assistance to 255 impacted families at the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).

On March 5, 2018, timed with the closure of the DRC, the County opened the Montecito Center for Preparedness, Recovery, and Rebuilding (MCPRR) in Montecito and the Small Business Association opened a Disaster Loan Outreach Center (DLOC) at Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara. The DLOC closed on March 16, 2018.

On March 5, 2018, the County launched a Materials Exchange website to assist the public, facilitate the sharing of material deposited by the debris flows, and limit the amount of debris going into the local landfills. The website is located at <http://sbcountymaterialexchange.com>.

On March 12, 2018, new storm activity caused an evacuation of approximately 5,000 people in the debris flow risk areas. Fire, law enforcement, public works and Emergency Operations Center personnel were activated during the storm. Full repopulation occurred on March 13, 2018.

On March 19, 2018, new storm activity caused an evacuation of approximately 21,000 people in the debris flow risk areas. Fire, law enforcement, public works and emergency operations center personnel were activated during the storm. Full repopulation occurred on March 22, 2018.

As of April 16, 2018, all 11 debris basins had been cleared and 328,013 cubic yards of debris removed (100% complete). An additional 65,307 cubic yards of material has been removed from creeks (100% complete) and 93,313 cubic yards of material from public right of ways.

June 5, 2018 County staff presented to the Board of Supervisors the Recovery Strategic Plan to guide the recovery process. This plan is updated as needed.

On August 28, 2018, the Board of Supervisors approved submissions of projects for the "Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program". These projects will further efforts to protect the community from future storms that could yield mud and debris flows due to the Thomas Fire.

On August 30, 2018, the Montecito Center for Preparedness, Recovery, and Rebuilding closed. Non-government organizations continue to provide services such as disaster case management, behavioral wellness, and other services to the community. County services have transitioned back to administrative departments. To continue to provide needed support to the community, the Board of Supervisors on August 28, 2018 approved funding to augment Community Outreach Liaison and disaster recovery efforts under the Office of Emergency Management. Staff is working on filling the position.

On September 20, 2018, the "Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow After-Action Report and Improvement Plan", a written report and oral presentation from Hagerty Consulting, Inc., was presented to agency

stakeholders. The review identified areas of “strength” and “considerations for improvement” based on lessons learned from the County’s response to the Thomas Fire of December 2017 and the ensuing 1/9 Debris Flow of January 9, 2018. The After Action Report went before the Board of Supervisors for final approval on October 16, 2018. The report included an improvement plan that will guide the County moving forward on needed actions to take to improve its EOC response to disasters.

In October and December 2018, a total of six Community meetings were held in Carpinteria, Montecito and Embarcadero (west of Goleta) to ensure the communities have a clear understanding of this winter’s storm season preparations and what actions they needed to take to stay safe from a debris flow. One of the meetings in Carpinteria was conducted entirely in Spanish.

In December 2018, the interactive Debris Flow Risk map that is posted at ReadySBC.org was updated after a comprehensive analysis by a consultant hired by the County and funded 75% by FEMA Hazardous Mitigation Grant.

The 2018-19 winter storm season has delivered several significant storms that have required the Flood Control District to clean out debris that was deposited from minor debris flows. The County has asked the State for continuing CDAA funding to support clean-up actions to ensure that the basins are maintained at full capacity. Further, these storms have required the convening of the Storm Risk Decision Team (SRDT) as well as staffing the EOC with OEM personnel during the peak periods of the storms. The SRDT is a group of governmental emergency response stakeholders that is activated when the National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts the arrival of a high intensity rain-producing storm potentially capable of causing life-threatening debris flows in Santa Barbara County. Its purpose is to discuss and analyze information, including the most recent NWS forecast. The key stakeholders are: Santa Barbara County Fire, Santa Barbara City Fire, Santa Barbara City Police, Montecito Fire District, Carpinteria-Summerland Fire, California Highway Patrol, and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office’s Operations Branch.

On January 15, 2019, an 8-hour evacuation was issued and response resources were repositioned after a storm was forecasted to produce rain rates that could trigger a debris flow. No damaged was reported from that storm’s rainfall. Two days later, January 17, a storm forecasted to have rain rates below debris flow thresholds rapidly developed into a stronger storm. The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning that alerted that the impending storm was capable of causing debris flows. Residents were advised to shelter in place. This storm caused approximately 30,000 cubic yards of debris in the debris basins, which requires removal at a cost of approximately .5 to 1 million dollars in transportation fees. The County will, once again, ask the State for continuing CDAA funding to support clean-up actions to ensure that the basins are maintained at full capacity.

On February 1, 2019, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff issued an evacuation order for residents living in debris flow risk areas due to a forecasted storm. 3,600 people were affected by this evacuation order. The Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center was activated to its second highest level for the duration of evacuation order and fire and law enforcement resources were repositioned. This storm system produced numerous meteorological hazards including a Flash Flood Warning and a Tornado Warning, all necessitating bilingual mass public alerting. Debris flows and flooding did impact the County and first responder resources responded to numerous incidents. Debris basins received significant amounts of debris requiring major clean-out efforts. Roads were closed due to mud. Highway 101 was shutdown in both directions for over 6 hours. The Union Pacific Railroad issued a temporary track closure due to a washout in Carpinteria. Southern California Gas reduced pressure in a pipeline in anticipation of

debris flows threatening their high pressure gas line. 2,033 electrical utility customers experienced power outages. Four frontier T-1 lines failed causing limited radio communications for emergency responders. Highway 154 remained closed until March 1, 2019 due to a clogged culvert from a debris flow from the Whittier fire burn area.

On February 21, 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency in 21 counties, including Santa Barbara. This proclamation was in response to extensive winter storms producing snowfall, high winds, dangerous flash flooding, erosion, widespread power outages, mud and debris flows, and takes the position that the magnitude of these conditions and associated damage caused by winter storms are likely beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of a single local government.

March 5 to 6, 2019, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff issued an evacuation order for 3,600 residents living in debris flow risk areas due to a forecasted storm. The Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center was activated to its second highest level for the duration of evacuation order and fire and law enforcement resources were prepositioned. Public Works resources were deployed.

On April 11, 2019, the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management hosted a 2018-2019 winter storm closeout meeting with the Storm Risk Decision Team. This meeting featured presentations and analysis from the U.S. Forest Service, the National Weather Service's Los Angeles/Oxnard office, and member agencies of the Storm Risk Decision Team. Future analysis and reporting from the U.S. Forest Service is expected in August 2019, which is the end of the regrowth season and will most accurately summarize the vegetation regrowth in Thomas Fire burn areas. The Montecito Fire District has committed to securing the funding and overseeing the creation of an updated hazard map for the 2019-2020 winter season.

The 2018-2019 winter rainstorms have eliminated conditions meriting a drought emergency in the County. On March 19, 2019, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors proclaimed that conditions of extreme peril warranting the Proclamation of Local Emergency Caused by Drought Conditions no longer exists. However, Jameson, Gibraltar, and Cachuma reservoirs continue to be impacted by the recent fires. Sediment and carbon accumulation in the Jameson and Gibraltar reservoirs from the Thomas fire continue to affect water quality making the water difficult to treat. Sediment reduces the capacity of the reservoirs.

The Community Wellness Team (comprised of over 13 organizational providers) continues to provide a spectrum of behavioral health, spiritual, and emotional wellness services within the community in response to the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow, as well as the ongoing resiliency needs within our community. HOPE 805 crisis counselors, funded through FEMA to the Department of Behavioral Wellness, has held a key role on the Community Wellness Team. With funding ending, HOPE 805 disbanded as of April 26, 2019. HOPE 805 provided multiple community presentations and resources that support community resiliency. HOPE 805 disseminated thousands of door hangers listing available support information and a reminder that it may take 3-5 years for a community to recover from a natural disaster. The HOPE 805 team alone recorded over 20,000 mental health-related interactions with people in the community in need of varying degrees of mental health support. The Community Wellness Team remains available to assist with linkage to mental health services and Disaster Case Management financial assistance.

Santa Barbara County received notice that FEMA had closed its federal event for the December 2017 California Wildfires and Debris Flow (FEMA-4353-CA-DR) event on January 31, 2018. It also informed that though CalOES kept this event open longer, it had also closed the CDAA (CDAA-2017-12) incident period, effective February 12, 2019. This means that any subsequent emergency protective measures and response costs and/or infrastructure damage relating to debris flows after February 12, 2019 within Santa Barbara County will not be reimbursable under the CDAA-2017-12 event.

County staff continue to work with the community to help with rebuilding efforts and routinely update damage assessment information and inspect structures. As of April 29, 2020, 116 structures remained red tagged, 128 remained yellow tagged, and 487 remained green tagged as a direct result of both the Thomas Fire and January 9, 2018 Storm. An interactive map of tagged structures is located at ReadySBC.org.

County staff and the Montecito Fire District also worked with scientists, public safety, and weather professionals to prepare for the upcoming winter season. Field surveys of vegetative regrowth, analytics on how the watersheds and watercourses preformed last winter season, and reviews related to recent nets additions were all assessed. This information combined to help assess potential evacuation thresholds and recommendations for this winter. This information became available in late November and planning occurred to share this new information with the affected public through community outreach and public meetings.

On the morning of December 5, 2019, Santa Barbara County OEM published the new interactive *Thomas Fire Storm Impact Considerations Map* on ReadySBC.org, replacing the interactive *Thomas Fire Debris Flow Risk Map* originally published in December 2018. That same evening, representatives from multiple public-safety oriented County Departments as well as several local emergency response partner agencies conducted a community meeting for residents of Montecito. This community meeting provided attendees with a status update on the Thomas Fire burn scar, a thorough review and discussion of the new interactive map, preparedness messages from public safety officials, and a question and answer session. This event was live streamed on social media, aired on CSBTV, and published on the County's YouTube account "CSBTV20."

Fiscal Analysis:

The fiscal impact of efforts in support of this incident continue and will be reported to the Board in the future.

Special Instructions:

Direct Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the minute order to: Office of Emergency Management,
Attn: Sonia Thompson, Department Business Specialist

Attachments:

Attachment A: Resolution

Authored by:

John D. Saucedo, Emergency Manager