

# General Public Comment

Honorable Supervisors,



I want to express my most sincere appreciation to the County of Santa Barbara for their tremendous support for Tepusquet Community, both during and after the extraordinary storm event that occurred between January 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Many thanks to our agencies and representatives in order of appearance:

Santa Barbara County Public Works Department came to our rescue as soon as they could gain access to Tepusquet Canyon. Andy O'Brien and I have been in close contact throughout, so I could describe different conditions residents had reported. Andy directed his team to clear and/or repair roads, washouts, mudslides and culverts. They also had to dredge a small section of the creek that was undermining Tepusquet Road. The county road's teams are working diligently to make repairs and Andy assured me they will continue to improve conditions until issues are resolved. Andy called me this morning to provide information about residents that have been trapped on Autumn Road for two weeks. Like Colson, that road is access to the LPNF and is supposed to be maintained by the USFS.

My deepest praise goes to Santa Barbara County Fire Marshal, Rob Hazard, who I contacted immediately after learning the USFS would be unable to make repairs to Colson Canyon, in a timely manner. Rob put me in touch with Deputy Fire Chief of Operations, Anthony Stornetta, who assured me they would help residents who were blocked from using private and/or public access roads. SBCF cleared many private access roads for residents who were land locked. Most impressively, SBCF went above and beyond anything we expected by addressing the major disaster facing residents in Colson Canyon who were unable to gain access to Tepusquet Road. Colson Canyon Creek was a raging torrent that deposited boulders the size of cars and gouged out channels that were over 10-feet deep and 20 feet wide! (See attached photos). Our outstanding fire team was able to create a single lane that could be accessed by quad-runners or 4-wheel drive vehicles. This was a Godsend because that very day we had a medical emergency that would have required air transport out of Colson, if it hadn't been for our brave SBC Fire Captain, Vince Larocco. He came to the rescue to transport the resident to the ambulance waiting on Tepusquet..., on his quad! Thank you, Vince! We don't know what we would do without our dedicated professionals at Santa Barbara County Fire. They deserve a Congressional Medal of Honor for continuously going above and beyond the call of duty and level of responsibility!

We are delighted to have Bob Nelson as our county supervisor. Neighbors reached out to him, he listened to our concerns then, visited Tepusquet and Colson Canyon on three different occasions. He met with residents, took a tour and got a first-hand look at the destruction in our community. After seeing Colson Canyon, he immediately contacted Congressman Salud Carbajal and the USFS. He persuaded the forest service to get their equipment out to Colson to help with road repairs.

Supervisor Nelson and his assistant, Aaron Hanke contacted me on several occasions to get updates on conditions and provide important information. Bob not only responded to residents in Tepusquet but also reached out to one of our local Facebook members, who lives across Tepusquet on 166. This person has been landlocked for two weeks. Words cannot begin to express how appreciative we are and how reassuring it is to have Bob Nelson as our supervisor.

Supervisor Nelson enlisted the support of Congressman, Salud Carbajal who was gracious enough to make time in his extremely busy schedule to review the major damage to Colson Canyon Road. He met with several residents, listened to their concerns and discussed the importance of making Colson Canyon more fire and flood resilient. Then, Salud and Bob left to review other regions in the area and attend a FEMA meeting. We are truly grateful to our congressman.

Brittany Heaton has been a wonderful advocate for Tepusquet for years. In addition to asking if I received the [readysbc.org](http://readysbc.org) and COSB notices, re Disaster Relief, she mentioned setting up an LAC meeting at our local Blochman School. She patiently answered my questions and provided information that I could share with Tepusquet and our greater community.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to reassure us that you have our safety and best interests at heart.

Most Sincerely,

Renee O'Neill