



**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: County Executive Office
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: February 7, 2023
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 45 Minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director(s)
Contact Info: Terri Maus-Nisich, Assistant County Executive Officer, 568-3400
Kelsey Buttitta, Communications Manager/PIO, 568-3400
SUBJECT: **Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Five Year Recovery Update**

DocuSigned by:

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County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form:

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions: That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file a video presentation and report from staff on the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Five Year Recovery Update; and
- b) Determine that the proposed actions are administrative activities that do not involve commitment to any specific project, and are therefore not a project as defined by State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Sections 15378 (b)(5).

Summary Text:

The County is currently recovering from the historic rainfall that occurred in early January 2023, including removing debris from our debris basins, addressing road destruction, assisting residents and businesses with damage from flooding, and other repair and recovery activities. While the destruction is significant, no lives were lost.

In the last five years, much has occurred to rebuild, repair and strengthen our resiliency in areas affected by the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow of 2018. This report – planned and largely prepared before the January 2023 storm disaster - is on the agenda to receive and file a report and video presentation on the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Five Year Recovery Update.

Our community and County government will never forget the tragedy of the Thomas Fire, which began on December 4, 2017, and the debris flow that followed in Montecito on January 9, 2018. The report illustrates the progress by the County, Flood Control District, and critical community partners in facilitating whole community recovery following the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow. Some actions have been completed while longer-term projects are still underway.

These efforts have enabled us to withstand the latest January 2023 storm emergency, and we are continuing to utilize the concepts, actions and learnings from the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Recovery Strategic Plan to inform and guide our current recovery efforts.

Discussion

This video update and report illustrates the work that has taken place in the past five years following the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow disasters.

The County's recovery efforts over the last five years have been guided by the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Recovery Strategic Plan, presented to the Board of Supervisors in June 2018. The plan focused on meeting the medium and long-term needs of residents as they recovered and ensuring ongoing safety and security of County residents. The County's recovery objectives included:

1. Identifying the issues that are important to the recovery of Montecito and developing a plan to solve those issues.
2. Ensuring the public was provided information on the County's efforts in support of Montecito's recovery through all means available.
3. Engaging the public and elected officials to determine the best solutions for recovery.
4. Utilizing private and public partnerships in recovery efforts.
5. Working with non-profits to aid where government services are not able or where they need enhancement.
6. Continuing to prepare the communities for future storms and evacuations utilizing the best data possible.
7. Developing plans and strategies to address the following issues:
 - a. Storm preparation and evacuation for the first 5 years following the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow.
 - b. Long-term mitigation efforts for future fires and storms.
 - c. Rebuilding process for the different categories of damaged and destroyed properties.
 - d. Communication strategies.

The County's and the Flood Control District's approach to the 1/9 Debris Flow effort emphasizes mitigating hazards/risks and associated safety concerns, educating the community on future storm or debris flow, minimizing future risks and addressing the community's need to rebuild quickly. As neighborhoods

recovered from the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow tragedy, the immediate goal was to help the community move forward by bringing together the collective resources of local government, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy and community groups to make strategic, inclusive decisions and create a more resilient Montecito. The concept of resilience – increasing the community’s ability to withstand a future natural disaster and recovery more quickly – played a central role in the recovery. The recovery process will go through short-, mid-range and long-term recovery processes while maintaining the same guiding principles throughout.

Central to the County of Santa Barbara’s role in the recovery effort was the development of the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Disaster Recovery Strategic Plan. This plan is comprised of eight strategic areas of focus to guide the various efforts. The attached report and the accompanying video show how the County and Flood Control District worked to satisfy the eight pillars.

1. Storm Preparation and Evacuation – The County developed an updated storm readiness plan for future years to address environmental changes and incorporated new data to ensure public safety.
2. Long Term Flood Control Mitigation – The development of long-term mitigation plans implemented by the Flood Control District, including several projects from the expansion of debris basins, the brand-new debris basin at Randall Road, revised cleanout plans, and replacing drainages.
3. Private Property Rebuilding – Extensive work has taken place to bring community members back into their homes. Planning and Development created the “Rebuilding Montecito” website providing resources to the community and an interactive map, to help property owners through the permitting process. The like-for-like ordinance amendment gave property owners a viable option for a streamlined permitting process.
4. Debris on Private Property – The sorting and clearing of debris on private property by County and community partners.
5. Financial Impacts and Economic Recovery – A comprehensive plan was developed to secure funding for additional hazard mitigation projects and facilitate long-term economic prosperity in the community.
6. Infrastructure Repair and Modifications – The infrastructure of Montecito (non-flood control including water, sanitary, natural gas, electrical, cable, cellular and roads sustained damage from the disaster. In the past five years extensive work was done to rebuild infrastructure. This includes everything from roads, bridges, and walkways to a Black Hawk helicopter.
7. Natural and Cultural Resources – Proactively worked with stakeholders to protect the natural and cultural resources on a case-by-case basis.
8. Community Engagement – The Montecito Center was a resource for the community during this challenging time. It connected those most impacted by the disaster with supportive services and resources. It helped guide those impacted through often complex government systems. The Community Wellness Team created in response still exist today.

The Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Five Year Recovery Update report and video will expand and detail out the progress that has been made in these eight strategic areas.

Performance Measure:

N/A

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Contract Renewals and Performance Outcomes: N/A

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Select_Budgeted No impacts with the filing of this report

Fiscal Analysis: N/A

Key Contract Risks: N/A

Staffing Impacts: N/A

Legal Positions:

FTEs:

Special Instructions:

Attachments:

Attachment A – Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow 5-Year Recovery Update Report

Attachment B – Video Presentation

Authored by:

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cc: