

SANTA CLARA

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INDIAN PUEBLO

ESPANOLA, NEW MEXICO
87532
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

To: Santa Clara Pueblo Community

From; Governor J. Michael Chavarria and James F. Baca, Incident Commander

Date; July 3, 2024

Ref: Santa Clara Creek Flooding

In the late afternoon and throughout the evening hours of June 20, 2024 the Pueblo received close to 8 inches of rain in the upper canyon. Unfortunately, we experienced a flash flooding event very similar to the events of 2012 and 2013. A wall of water approximately 6 – 8 feet high came down from the canyon through the Pueblo and into the Rio Grande. The aftermath of this event has caused the Pueblo to close access to the lower and upper canyon to all community members and general public at this time.

Tribal Sheriff Donald Suazo, has locked the gates at Puye and on the lower canyon at the first cattle guard. This is for the safety of all to ensure no one is harmed so please respect these closures.

There are several places where damage is substantial and there are no longer any roads. There are areas within the upper canyon where landslides have occurred and have the potential to re-occur. As like in years prior, due to the current condition of the canyon, there is always a potential a small rain event can cause a flash flood.

This event did cause damage to the Rio Grande Irrigation and the Santa Clara Creek Irrigation systems. Crews from the Pueblo were able to clear the damage to the Rio Grande Irrigation system. With continued sediment flows continuing from the Canyon, it may be some time before water will flow in the Canyon Irrigation System. Please know we are working diligently to restore water to the Canyon Irrigation System and respectfully seek your patience.

Due to this unfortunate flood event, the Tribal Council on June 21, 2024 did declare a “State of Emergency”, Resolution No. 2024-041 (attached). This action has authorized the Tribal Administration through the Tribal Administrator’s to temporarily assign program staff and resources to respond and perform all the necessary activities and functions related to this State of Emergency Declaration.

Through this Resolution, the Tribal Council has authorized the Pueblo’s Office of Emergency Management Director, Mr. James Baca to direct, control, and coordinate all emergency response, recovery, and mitigation actions, with internal departments and external federal and state cooperating agencies.

As Governor, I have continued and began external outreach and communications with both Senator Heinrich and Senator Lujan to include Representative Leger. Including calls to the White House, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Michael Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works – United States Army Corps of Engineers USACE), Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland, FEMA Region 6 Administrator Tony Robinson, BIA Southwest Regional Director Patricia Mattingly and BIA Northern Pueblos Agency Superintendent Shannon McKeena, State of New Mexico Governor Lujan-Grisham to include various Non-Governmental Organizations and Philanthropic communities we have worked with seeking emergency technical assistance and funding.

An aerial reconnaissance flight was conducted on Monday June 24th. The purpose of this flight was to perform a visual assessment of the potential damages to the road, culverts and associated infrastructure. However, those photos are deceiving and do not accurately or effectively reflect the damages. So, we continue to explore all avenues to assist the Pueblo with creating a temporary road into the upper canyon to perform an on-the-ground assessment of damages.

The USACE came out last week Friday June 28th to assist with performing an on the ground reconnaissance of the damages from the low water crossing at the Check station up to 2nd pond. They could not proceed much further as the roads are severely damaged and the route is inaccessible, due to the landslides and debris flows. The purpose of this request is seeking technical expertise and assistance to prepare a Technical Assistance Report that would aid the Tribal Council, by making an informed decision of Declaring a “Major Disaster – Presidential Disaster Declaration”.

The State of New Mexico, Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and the National Guard staff were also requested to come assist with performing an initial reconnaissance. The request was to provide their technical expertise to determine and creating an initial damage report of sediment removal from behind the low water crossing at the check station, to include associated work estimates of creating a temporary road to include the associated materials and time to complete that work. The assessment was conducted on Monday July 1st. James Baca and his Incident Command team is in further communication and working to complete the draft reconnaissance report. Once the draft report is completed it will be shared with Tribal Council.

The purpose and reason on making these requests is to assist the Pueblo in creating a temporary road by clearing out the large boulders and debris flows. This work is critical as previously mentioned, in order to complete the on-the-ground assessment, to document all damages to infrastructure, such as the roads, culverts, gabion structures, GeoBrugg fences, any and all previous mitigation measures, water sources and our traditional cultural landscape.

Without a road and no access into the upper canyon, this is posing our staff challenges on performing and completing the much-needed on-the-ground damage assessment.

In conjunction with working with the federal and state agencies mentioned above, I have communicated and requested through Jorge Silva-Banuelos, the Superintendent of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP), to allow and authorize emergency access through VCNP road (VC-13). This route is through the Indios Creek, and will provide an alternate route to gain access into the upper watershed though Po’Pii Khanu. That request was granted and work was conducted and completed to remove all dead and down trees along that route.

I also communicated and requested through Jeff Marszal, the Deputy Forest Supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest, to then gain access through the Forest Service managed lands. As the VC-13 road, once exited on VCNP lands does then enter onto Forest Service lands, where then that road continues west and enters into

Po'Pii Khanu. A reconnaissance was completed on Tuesday July 2nd, with our staff and Forest Service road engineer. Access was then gained to the 3rd pond. The staff could not proceed any further down from 3rd pond as the roads were severely damaged and inaccessible.

The other route through Forest Service road 144 was also severely damaged by the same rain event on June 20th and no access can be made using that road. The Forest Service does have a contract road crew working on that road, however initial timeframe to reopen that road is estimated by the end of July.

Dino Chavarria, with the Pueblo's Office of Environmental Affairs, has been in communication with Forrest Luna, the Regulatory Specialist, Albuquerque Division, United States Corps of Engineers, regarding required permits needed to perform work in and along the Santa Clara Creek. The Santa Creek is considered "Waters of the United States", so therefore the Pueblo must request and seek regulatory authorization to perform any work associated with creating the temporary road and debris removal within and along the high-water mark of the creek channel. That request and associated photos and reports is taking some additional time to get completed, reviewed and approved. We, unfortunately, can not just go out and began mitigation work related activities, as there are potential negative consequences the Pueblo could face, without the necessary permits in place.

Out of respect, please bear with us. Our internal departmental staff and outside federal agency employees are diligently working daily on this disaster and associated tasks. Unfortunately, it does take time and there are certain federal regulatory processes, assessment and reports that must be followed and completed to even start performing the much mitigation work.

Attached to this Community Memo are pictures of some of the damage we have experienced. I along with Tribal Council, want to make sure we are transparent with the community as to why we have the need to close the Canyon. There has been a lot of work that has been completed over the past 10+ years which has now been compromised! However, a lot of the work that was completed over the years, helped to ensure the sediment and debris flows did not impact infrastructure with the Pueblo community. The emergency measures which were put into place along the creek from the white tank to the Rio Grande did their jobs as well. As previously mentioned, we only experienced the one breach of the flood waters outside of the existing creek channel, by the sewer lagoon low water crossing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to Incident Commander James F Baca at (505) 692-6331 or (505) 901-3069. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

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PUEBLO OF SANTA CLARA TRIBAL COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. 2024- 041

DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN SANTA CLARA PUEBLO NEW MEXICO

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara Pueblo Tribal Council is the governing body of the Santa Clara Pueblo, a federally recognized and Self-Governance Indian Tribe, its authority defined by its Constitution, approved December 20, 1935; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara Pueblo and Santa Clara Pueblo Office of Emergency Management has the responsibility to prepare its resources to respond to emergency situations affecting the Pueblo and the Pueblo community; and

WHEREAS, on June 20, 2024, a storm system brought strong rains in Santa Clara Creek Canyon that have caused Santa Clara Creek to flood, in turn causing significant damage to roads and irrigations structures in and near the Santa Clara Creek Canyon, jeopardizing the health, safety, welfare and well-being of the Pueblo and the Pueblo community; and

WHEREAS, an emergency declaration would allow the Pueblo to utilize available resources to respond, mitigate, and alleviate the effects of flooding;

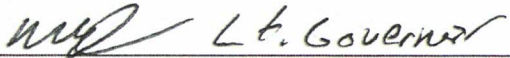
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara Pueblo Tribal Council, by the virtue of the authority provided by the Santa Clara Pueblo's Constitution, does hereby declare Santa Clara Pueblo to be under a state of emergency for the purpose of exercising necessary emergency powers, setting up an emergency fund account, and expending Pueblo resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara Pueblo Office of Emergency Management, under the direction of the Emergency Management Director or his designee, will direct, control, and coordinate all emergency response, recovery, and mitigation actions of all Pueblo departments and agencies and any external cooperating and assisting agencies associated with this emergency.

BE IF FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Tribal Council hereby authorizes the Pueblo Governor to sign all necessary documents on behalf of the Pueblo for this emergency declaration.

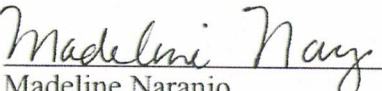
CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, as Governor of the Pueblo of Santa Clara, hereby certify that the Santa Clara Tribal Council, at a duly called meeting that was convened with proper notice and was held on the 21 day of June, 2024, at the Sant Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, a quorum being present, approved the foregoing Resolution with 9 members voting in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 3 being absent.



J. Michael Chavarria

Attest:



Madeline Naranjo

