

Request: Support for a streamlined permitting process to facilitate creek maintenance.

Description: At the beginning of the year, the west coast was hit with a series of atmospheric rivers, bringing significant rainfall and flooding to many regions, including Merced County. The Merced County Emergency Operations Center was activated in advance of the storms, and efforts were made to get the community as prepared as possible.

Sandbags were placed in locations throughout the County, storm drains were cleared out, and flood control infrastructure was monitored, repaired, and fortified as needed. Despite the robust preparedness efforts, several unincorporated areas were hit hard by floodwaters. Planada, McSwain, and areas just outside the City of Merced experienced major flooding impacts. In Planada alone, more than 4,000 mandatory evacuations were issued as homes were inundated with floodwater. Emergency personnel conducted rescues using high-water vehicles, vessels, and other equipment. Three shelter locations across the County were established, where residents impacted by flooding received food, sleeping accommodations, and personal items. They were also connected with local, state and federal resources. Disaster declarations were declared at the state and federal levels, with Merced County proclaiming a local emergency. Merced County is currently working with local, state, and federal partners as we conduct recovery operations.



Necessity: The January storm events brought major rainfall and runoff to communities across California. One of the reasons Merced County was hit the hardest is due to vegetation and other debris stemming the flow of water through our creeks and canal systems. While Merced County and its partners would like to thoroughly maintain and clean these waterways on an annual basis, a bureaucratic permitting through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has caused significant delays and has prevented local agencies across California from being able to adequately maintain these systems. As Merced County looks to address these issues with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife moving forward, we ask for awareness and support from our federal partners. Additionally, we encourage funding for water storage and flood control projects in the future to manage these extreme weather events.

CONTACT:

Dana Hertfelder
Public Works Director
Merced County
(209) 385-7601

Dana.Hertfelder@countyofmerced.com