

NEWS

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County addresses solutions for Greenwood Avenue

After more than a year of non-stop preventative work and study, County of San Bernardino Public Works/Flood Control officials are close to proposing long-term solutions to the erosion problem that developed on Greenwood Avenue in Devore following the 2003 wildfires and Christmas Day storm.

At the request of Supervisor Paul Biane, County Public Works/Flood Control Director Pat Mead told the Board of Supervisors today that his staff during the next two weeks will meet with the County Administrative Office to discuss options and financing before coming to the Board of Supervisors with a formal proposal to address Greenwood Avenue.

"We sympathize with residents who want answers and solutions right away. However, it is understandable that permanent flood control solutions cannot happen without a great deal of study and consideration by federal agencies," said Supervisor Biane, whose Second District includes Devore.

"The county will develop a solution for Greenwood Avenue as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will keep residents informed and continue to provide temporary flood protection measures," Supervisor Biane said.

The county – working closely with various federal agencies that would have to play a role in any solution – began addressing the post-fire flood issue while the 2003 wildfires were still burning by identifying high-risk areas and trying to predict where the most serious flows would occur.

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Prior to the Christmas Day storm, crews worked overtime to make sure county Flood Control facilities were clear and ready for what the eventual storms might bring. Despite the tragedies that occurred outside of the county's Flood Control jurisdiction, the county's Flood Control system successfully protected the neighborhoods they were designed to serve.

Mudslides and debris flows were never a problem on Greenwood Avenue prior to the 2003 wildfires, and the county, along with a private consultant, FEMA, the NRCS, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers have spent the past 11 months studying how this area was changed by the natural disaster and what can be done to protect residents from the new threat.

This past spring, the Army Corps of Engineers identified a number of approaches that might serve to protect Greenwood Avenue during future storms. At that time, the county hired a consultant to determine which solution would work best and how such a project might be funded.

Studies conducted immediately prior to the October storms revealed that erosion above Greenwood had traveled down to bedrock, forcing subsequent storms to eat away at adjacent slopes. A solution may involve fortifying slopes and redirecting flows.

Mead said such a project would cost in the neighborhood of \$10 million. A project would also require a variety of federal approvals.

In the meantime, the county has successfully protected the vast majority of Greenwood Avenue residents with concrete railing. The county has also:

- Created a Telephone Emergency Notification System capable of placing phone calls to residents warning them of impending disaster. The system was used in October to assist in the voluntary evacuation of Greenwood Avenue prior to a major storm.
- Instituted the Flood Area Safety Task force, a partnership of county emergency agencies, to monitor storms and make on-the-spot decisions on public safety measures.
- Conducted informational community meetings and door-to-door warnings of approaching storms.
- Obtained the best available storm forecasting and tracking equipment.