

NORTH COUNTY DISASTER RECOVERY

On August 12, 2020, conditions of disaster and extreme peril to the safety of persons and property arose as a result of the Lake Fire in the unincorporated communities of Lake Hughes and Elizabeth Lake. The Lake Fire burned over 31,000 acres and required significant resources from the Los Angeles County Fire Department and the United States Forest Service to contain its destructive path.

Hundreds of firefighters, first responders and fire equipment and apparatus were assigned to the Lake Fire. Full containment of the fire took more than one month. In all, the Lake Fire destroyed 12 homes, damaged 6 others, and destroyed an additional 21 buildings.

Meanwhile, as fire fighters were engaged in battle with the Lake Fire, another significant disaster began in the San Gabriel Mountains above the City of Azusa near Cogswell Dam. The Bobcat Fire erupted on September 6, 2020 and at present time has burned nearly 115,000 acres within the San Gabriel Mountains and the Angeles National Forest. While the fire started in the San Gabriel Mountains and threatened foothill communities within the Los Angeles Basin, it quickly turned and headed north over the mountains towards the Antelope Valley. The fire has devastated the communities of Juniper Hills, Valyermo, and Pearblossom.

Thousands of fire fighters, first responders and fire equipment and apparatus have been deployed to combat the Bobcat Fire. At present, the fire is close to 90% containment, however, 80 homes have been destroyed, 23 others damaged, and another 80 structures destroyed. Current estimates note that the fire will continue raging until at least the end of October.

- M O R E -

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

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BARGER _____

The Lake Fire caused the loss of property, caused evacuations of residents, required road closures and closure of the National Forest areas within the impacted regions, and has created significant damage to the rural landscape and the Significant Ecological Areas within the community.

The Bobcat Fire, significantly larger in terms of acreage, has had a much larger and more significant impact and at times threatened County landmarks and critical regional infrastructure, such as Mount Wilson. Almost all north-south roads entering the Angeles National Forest have been closed to access and the vast swaths of the Angeles National Forest remain closed. In addition, the Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area, a unique wonder of Southern California known for its tilted sandstone formation, has been devastated by the fire. Its visitor's center and support facilities were destroyed, along with countless acres of vegetation. Only the caretaker's home remains. The Devil's Punchbowl is home to some of the region's most interesting and valued native plant and wildlife, including manzanitas, Junipers and the threatened Joshua Trees.

Within or below the burned area boundaries are facilities of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, which provide critical flood and debris flow mitigation; water supply facilities of the Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts; sewer facilities of the Consolidated Sewer Maintenance District; County and State roads and appurtenant infrastructure; and numerous homes and businesses.

With the significant loss of vegetation resulting from the fire, there is a substantially heightened risk of flooding, debris flows, and mudslides from the burned areas during rain events in the upcoming rainy season and beyond, until the vegetation in the burn areas has recovered. This creates a significant hazard for communities near the burn areas, which includes direct impacts on properties due to debris flows may require mitigation measures. Furthermore, with the scale of the Bobcat Fire, flooding hazards could extend far into downstream communities. Initial estimates indicate approximately 7 million cubic yards of debris and sediment could flow into debris basins, debris dams, and reservoirs below the burn areas reducing the capacity to provide flood protection to downstream communities. In addition, the large quantities of sediment expected to flow into the reservoirs during upcoming storm events as a result of the burned watershed conditions would threaten the operability of the dams' outlet works. Such impacts would prevent the controlled releases of the stormwater flows from the dams and result in larger uncontrolled flows from the dams' spillways, potentially resulting in flooding of the downstream communities. The health and safety of the people of the County of Los Angeles therefore require that Los Angeles County Public Works take immediate emergency action to repair and restore the facilities damaged and impaired as a result of the Bobcat Fire.

As these unincorporated communities are reeling from the impacts of these current disasters, there has been additional ongoing stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these socioeconomically diverse communities were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, facing escalating health, mental health, and financial health impacts.

Now as our communities look to rebuild, amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the County must take swift action to ensure their ability to recover. Many of these communities were founded decades ago, prior to zoning efforts in the 1950s, and therefore have inherently local physical characteristics. Some of the structures that were destroyed have been in existence for nearly a century and represent the rural context of the community. As they begin to rebuild, we must take note of their character and history and help them rebuild in a way that does not fundamentally change their unique characteristics and attributes.

As the County pulls together its available resources to provide a critical lifeline to these impacted constituents, we are also in need of additional state and federal resources to ensure that we have a wide array of assistance programs to rebuild the damaged homes, public infrastructure, and valued community assets. On September 25, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom declared a State of Emergency in Los Angeles County due to the Bobcat Fire and requested a Major Disaster Declaration from the Federal Government. The Governor, however, did not declare a State of Emergency for the Lake Fire.

The County should be mindful of the potential cost of rebuilding, but also the unforeseen costs that may be incurred by property owners long before rebuilding can start. Affected property owners have property tax bills coming due in November. In advance of payment, the County will need to assess land, planning, building, and assessor records; and will need to clear their properties of potentially hazardous materials and fire debris prior to contemplating the rebuilding process. All this is dependent upon the financial abilities of the individual property owners and the speed with which they are able to access financial resources and insurance proceeds.

I, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Office of Emergency Management to activate the Recovery Section of the County Emergency Operations Center, and coordinate with County Departments to take all necessary actions to effectuate the recovery phase for the impacted communities;

I, FURTHER MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors to instruct County Departments to take the following actions, and any other specific actions necessary to recovery, within the umbrella of the Recovery Section, to:

1. Direct the Department of Public Health, Public Works, Fire Department, and Office of Emergency Management to conduct an evaluation on the ability to expedite the safe removal of fire debris and effectively mitigate the negative health effects of exposure to hazardous waste;
2. Direct the Department of Public Health, Department of Mental Health, and Department of Public Social Services to conduct a needs assessment and evaluate the implementation of public health mental health and eligible social service resources to mitigate the negative effects experienced by those affected by the Lake and Bobcat fires;
3. Direct the LA County Development Authority and LA County Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services to conduct an assessment on the

ability to provide eligible housing and community based services to mitigate the loss experienced by those impacted by the Lake and Bobcat fires;

4. Direct the Registrar Recorder/County Clerk to suspend all fees for copies of real property records recorded with the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for any individuals who lost such records as a result of the Lake and Bobcat Fires and direct the CEO to reimburse the Registrar Recorded/County Clerk for said suspension of fees;
5. Direct the Los Angeles County Assessor and instruct the Treasurer and Tax Collector to inform affected property owners of the importance of filing a Misfortune and Calamity Claim, including the impact to the deferral of the first installment property taxes due December 10;
6. Instruct the Treasurer and Tax Collector to ensure that payment is deferred without penalty or interest for those affected by Lake and Bobcat Fires until the Assessor reassess property in accordance with state law;
7. Instruct the Treasurer and Tax Collector to report back to the Board in 90 days on the number of affected property owners who filed Misfortune and Calamity Claims, as well as the number of property owners that requested a cancellation of late payment penalties.
8. Instruct the Acting Director of DCBA to conduct outreach to residents impacted by the disaster and provide information regarding price gouging and consumer best practices, tenant protections, and business recovery resources.
9. Find that public interest and necessity demand immediate emergency action to repair and harden public infrastructure including public roads, bridges, roadway drainage, water supply facilities, flood control facilities; to remove sediment at debris basins, debris dams, and major dams and reservoirs; and to construct temporary and permanent debris mitigation measures and structures; and find that these emergency actions cannot be delayed by a formal competitive solicitation for bids;
10. Authorize the Director of Public Works or his designee on behalf of the County, and acting and as the Road Commissioner, the Chief Engineer of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, and County Engineer, to carry out the following emergency activities:
 - a. Coordinate with the National Forest Service and any other property owner as needed to restore and modify damaged infrastructure, including the construction of temporary and permanent debris mitigation measures, required as a result of the fire;
 - b. Trim or remove fire-damaged trees adjacent to any County roads, bridges, flood control facilities and water supply facilities within the fire area. If any of the trees are within Significant Ecological Areas, work with the Department of Regional Planning to secure permits or exemptions, if applicable, for said work, with particular emphasis on addressing impacted Joshua Trees;
 - c. Restore damaged road and flood control infrastructure, and construct temporary and permanent debris mitigation measures required as a result of the fire;
 - d. Conduct outreach to impacted residents and provide engineering advice on mitigation of impacts from potential debris flows;

- e. Develop strategies and action plans for potential mudflow events, including maintenance and road closure plans;
 - f. Analyze and map debris flow hazards and develop strategies and action plans for potential mudflow events, including maintenance and road closure plans;
 - g. Acquire the necessary rights of way and permits, and enter into agreements, including but not limited to cooperative agreements with the United States Forest Service, as necessary to conduct these emergency actions;
 - h. Submit grant applications and conduct any necessary actions, including negotiating and executing grant agreements and signing requests for reimbursements to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the California Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the California Office of Emergency Services in order to secure Federal and State funds for emergency infrastructure repairs and rehabilitation, and debris flow protection measures, as necessary;
 - i. Fully utilize existing resources, and apply increased resources as necessary, to assist property owners in the reconstruction of structures damaged or destroyed by the fire. DRP, PH, Fire, and Public Works assistance will include streamlined coordination, plan review, and permit issuance for project compliance with County's building codes and all building requirements. Assistance will also include enhanced community outreach to affected property owners through local information workshops and one-on-one consultation;
 - j. Supplement and extend for up to 12 months existing professional service contracts, such as geotechnical, design, inspection, environmental and survey, by up to an additional \$2,000,000 each, not to exceed a maximum additional aggregate amount of \$35,000,000 to support Public Works' emergency recovery activities, and up to an additional \$1,500,000 each, with a not to exceed maximum additional aggregate amount of \$20,000,000 for other existing support service contracts, such as field security, debris removal and disposal, haul-truck services, and operated heavy equipment contracts, to support emergency repairs to County facilities and construction of temporary and permanent debris mitigation measures required as a result of the Bobcat and Lake Fires; and
 - k. Supplement the existing road emergency repair contracts by up to an additional aggregate amount of \$5 million to support emergency repairs to County facilities and construction of temporary and permanent debris mitigation measures required as a result of the Bobcat and Lake Fires.
11. Find that the proposed removal of sediment from debris basins, debris dams, and major dams including Cogswell, Morris, San Gabriel, Santa Anita, Sawpit, and any additional dams which may be impacted by the Bobcat Fire, the construction of rail and timber structures and other temporary flood control facilities, and any other directly related and immediate action, including maintenance and repairs required to prevent or mitigate the emergency, are

statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21080(b)(4) of the California Public Resources Code and Section 15269 (b) and (c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, which exempt emergency repairs to publicly owned service facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare and specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency;

12. Authorize the Director of Public Works to perform force account work, to negotiate and amend existing emergency and as-needed contracts on behalf of the County, in an amount not to exceed an aggregate total of \$30 million for the necessary equipment, services, and supplies in order to repair road facilities damaged by the Bobcat and Lake Fires;
13. Require the Director of Public Works to report back to the Board on a regular basis as required by Section 22050 of the Public Contract Code what actions have been taken and verify the need to continue these emergency actions;
14. Direct the Director of Public Works to work with Southern California Edison to expedite the establish a streamlined permitting process to install temporary power solutions and associated infrastructure within the public rights-of-way and on County properties; and to establish a similar process that includes the Department of Regional Planning for private property;
15. Direct the Director of Public Works to work with the Department of Public Health identify and streamline permitting for necessary actions to repair existing septic systems and water wells;
16. Direct the Director of Regional Planning to identify potential exemptions from current regulations governing land use restrictions that may impact the recovery and rebuilding efforts;
17. Direct the Chief Executive Office, in conjunction with the Departments of Public Works and Regional Planning and the Fire Department, to build online resources, specific to the impacted communities, that provide step by step instructions on the recovery and rebuilding process; and
18. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to send a five-signature letter to Governor Gavin Newsom thanking him for his support for additional resources with the response efforts, to request his continued support for financial assistance with recovery efforts in Los Angeles County, and to request the State to proclaim a state of emergency for the Lake Fire.

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