

# Flood response continues

## Some roads closed temporarily; snowpack tops 300 percent of normal

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ST. GEORGE -- The Washington County Commission's agenda for its Tuesday meeting was full of items regarding the January flooding, including the temporary closure of roads near Enterprise and Gunlock.

The commissioners voted to close the road from Upper Enterprise Reservoir to its junction with state Route 318 about 6 miles west of Enterprise. They also closed Gunlock Road from its junction with Old Highway 91 to Gunlock Reservoir.

Chairman James Eardley said the roads were severely impacted by the flooding and are not safe for the general public. Construction is continuing in both areas to make them accessible again.

The commissioners also passed a resolution to contract with area cities and the Washington County Water Conservancy District regarding the funding of Emergency Watershed Protection measures.

The measures will be implemented and significantly funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The NRCS is authorized to relieve hazards created by the flooding, according to the contract. It also states that damage caused by the January flooding has made the area susceptible to further damage from even normal stream flows. The flood deposited debris and sediment that could pose an additional risk if not removed before the spring runoff.

County Emergency Services Coordinator Dean Cox reported to the commission at the beginning of the meeting. He said the area will experience three to four years of normal spring runoff in one season this spring.

Snow pack estimates for the Virgin River drainage are well in excess of 300 percent of normal. Cox said even with optimal conditions, the rivers would run full to their banks during the runoff.

But the county is prepared with sandbags. Cox said this is the most sandbags the area has ever had with 150,000 in St. George, 130,000 in Washington City and 25,000 for the county.

Funds from the NRCS will help local officials minimize the effects of future high waters through debris cleanup and armoring of the banks in sensitive areas.

Among the areas that will be strengthened are the Riverwood area in St. George and the area near the Swiss Village Condominiums in Santa Clara. Debris and sediment will be cleared from Gunlock through south St. George along the Santa Clara and Virgin rivers.

The NRCS will bear the bulk of the costs, up to \$5 million. The county will act as the sponsor for the local entities and pay \$1,666,667, which is 25 percent of the \$6,666,667 total cost.

The county also passed a resolution for a contract with Santa Clara, St. George and the water district to fund a Santa Clara River Master Plan. The plan will help with restoration and future management of the Santa Clara River, taking into account relevant structural, hydrological and technical information.

The total cost of the plan is \$150,000 and will be split up among the participating parties and the Virgin River Resource Management and Recovery Program.

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