

..Title

Receive a report on the potential impacts of 2015-16 winter storm and El Niño forecasts and the emergency preparedness efforts by Monterey County.

..Report

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors receive a report on the potential impacts of 2015-16 winter storm and El Niño forecasts and the emergency preparedness efforts by Monterey County.

SUMMARY:

The report describes the activities of various County departments in preparation for possible winter storms and flooding and provides information on current winter predictions as a result of a strong El Niño event in the Pacific Equator region.

DISCUSSION:

A strong El Niño event is occurring in the Pacific tropical equator with significant warming of the equatorial waters. These warm water have extended far along the North American coast lines. Most models indicate that a strong El Niño will continue through the Northern Hemisphere winter 2015-16, followed by weakening during the late spring or early summer. The National Weather Service forecaster consensus remains nearly unchanged, with the expectation that this El Niño could rank among the top three strongest episodes going back to 1950.

The winters of 1997/98 and 1982/83 were the largest and strongest El Niños of the twentieth century. El Niño is not a weather system itself but it has a great influence on our winter weather patterns. Winter storms, caused by “atmospheric rivers of concentrated precipitation” are enhanced by the El Niño warm waters.

In response to the strengthening El Niño event, county departments have convened an internal task force to coordinate planning and response activities. These departments include representatives from the County Administrative Office (CAO); Office of Emergency Services (OES), Resource Management Agency (RMA); Health; Social Services; and the Monterey County Sheriff Office. The San Francisco-Monterey Bay Office of the National Weather Service are also contributing partners. The focus of county preparedness efforts include flood fighting efforts to increase community protection efforts and public safety response; education through public outreach and availability of preparedness tools with emphasis on high risk and vulnerable communities; and building government emergency management capability to encourage and facilitate response in response to a severe flood event.

Information on the current preparedness activities and mitigation efforts are attached in this report (Exhibit A).

No amount of preparation can guarantee absolute protection of local residence and property, but local agencies have come together to prepare and educate themselves and local residence to the greatest extent possible to promote and encourage preparedness and safety, even if 100% protection cannot be ensured.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

External Agencies: California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES); California Department of Water resources, CALFire, California Department of Fish and Wildlife; San Francisco-Monterey Bay Office of National Weather Service. Internal Departments/Agencies: CAO; OES; WRA; RMA; Health; Social Services; Sheriff's Office.

FINANCING:

There is no impact to the general fund related to receipt of this report. There could be fiscal impacts to the general fund in the event that responsive actions are implemented if emergency winter storm and/or flooding events occur.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Sherrie L. Collins
Emergency Services Manager

Nicholas E. Chiulos
Assistant County Administrative Officer

Attachment: Exhibit A