



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Kevin Houck, Chief, Watershed and Flood Protection Section

DATE: November 5, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: Agenda Item 15. November 19-20, 2025 Board Meeting
Update on SW Colorado Flooding

Introduction

Both La Plata and Archuleta Counties experienced historic flooding events from October 10-14. The catalyst for this event was not one, but two, Pacific basin tropical storm remnants - Priscilla and Raymond. Over 12 inches of rain fell in mountainous areas above Pagosa Springs and the unincorporated community of Vallecito, resulting in the 3rd highest flood of record on the San Juan River through Pagosa Springs, and the 2nd highest flood of record on Vallecito Creek through Vallecito. This resulted in numerous evacuations and some structural damage as noted below.

Discussion

The flood event created numerous problems for both public infrastructure as well as individual property owners. Public infrastructure impacts included damage to roads, bridges, utilities, buildings, and reservoirs, with millions of dollars of debris needing to be removed. On the private homeowner side, three homes were destroyed, with ten additional homes experiencing major damage. In addition to these, 58 homes were considered to have sustained minor damage, and 173 homes were considered to be "affected". Widespread heavy erosion and substantial stream movement were observed throughout both stream reaches.

Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) were conducted to support disaster declaration requests for both Public Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA) programs through FEMA. CWCB staff participated in these damage assessments. At this time, it is not at all certain that a federal disaster declaration will be issued. Without this disaster declaration, FEMA will not be activated to bring recovery money into the incident, and most of the recovery will fall to the State of Colorado and the local governments. Other federal agencies, most notably the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, may be able to provide additional recovery funds, although federal actions are very uncertain due to the current government shutdown. CWCB staff have worked with the NRCS during past flooding and wildfire events, and it is anticipated that staff will have a role during this recovery.

Remaining challenges include the identification of a non-federal sponsor for any potential recovery programs, identification of sources for non-federal match funds, and, particularly in Vallecito, community agreement as to how the recovery should proceed with the river.

Staff Recommendation

This is an informational item only and no action is requested. Numerous staff members have assisted with the damage assessments and preparations, and a presentation of the findings and a summary of staff actions will be given to board members.

