

# County hopes to get in on federal disaster aid for storm damage

By LeeAnn Neal, *For The Citizen*

Tillamook County Emergency Management officials are hoping to net roughly \$650,000 of \$9 million in federal disaster aid made available to certain government agencies in Oregon late last month. The county was among 18 Oregon counties and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation to be named eligible to receive a portion of the federal funds. The announcement, made on March 20, followed President Bush's declaration of a major disaster in Oregon as a result of damaging winter storms that occurred in December and January.

"This declaration enables public agencies such as counties, cities and non-profit organizations to apply for Public Assistance through the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act," said Tom Manning, Tillamook County Office of Emergency Management director. He led the successful effort to document sufficient local damages to warrant the county being named eligible. The limited declaration does not provide any individual or family assistance.

Through the program, FEMA would give a 75 percent match to help pay for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by severe

storms, flooding, landslides and mudslides, according to David Paulison, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Tillamook County currently has more than \$600,000 in estimated damages that may be eligible," said Manning. As a result of the declaration, the county could be reimbursed for any emergency work performed during the storm window from Dec. 18 through Jan. 21. This would include any overtime paid out, any equipment rentals or contracted work to repair any infrastructure, roads, levees, culverts, or flood control structures and delivery systems.

"The program also addresses permanent work to repair damaged infrastructure, buildings, roads, bridges, culverts, flood control structures, levees, water delivery systems, water treatment facilities and delivery systems, including any lifeline utilities that may have been damaged," said Manning. "Also parks and recreation facilities are eligible under the program. If any of these facilities have been destroyed the program will re-build the facility to the pre-disaster condition, unless new building codes have been adopted. If this is the case, they will be rebuilt according to the new building requirements."

An initial assessment of damage resulting from recent winter storms indicated the following totals

for various local agencies: Tillamook County Public Works - \$318,900; Tillamook County Parks Department - \$33,000; Nehalem Bay Wastewater Agency - \$123,000; Port of Tillamook Bay - \$50,000; City of Wheeler - \$53,000; Tillamook Bay Habitat Estuary Improvement - \$145,000; Tillamook PUD - \$30,000; Tillamook Anglers Cooperative (Whiskey Creek Hatchery) - \$26,200; Northwood Water District (near Sollie Smith Road, in Tillamook) - \$3,300; Nestucca Wastewater Treatment Plant - amount not reported. The total estimate is \$659,400.

Manning has until April 20 to submit a request for federal disaster funding for Tillamook County. In addition to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation and Tillamook County, other Oregon counties eligible for federal disaster aid are Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Coos, Crook, Curry, Douglas, Gilliam, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Lincoln, Linn, Polk, Sherman, and Wheeler.

FEMA is charged with managing federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2003.