

What Kulongoski said in his press conference

Following are excerpts from Gov. Ted Kulongoski's press conference of Wednesday, Nov. 8:

Q: Governor, in terms of the flooding on the coast, there's a real disaster over there. Obviously, there's been some complaints that the flood warnings were few and far between and that the shelters weren't set up. What is the state's rule in providing disaster assistance there, and have you been pleased, not pleased with how things have been going?

A: You know what I'm really amazed at, and I've finally come to the conclusion of why this is. It is a naturally occurring event. It has been raining in Oregon for millennia of time. And because the way the television treats weather — the crisis team — you have actually elevated the weather — raining in Oregon — to a national crisis. And the truth of it is, it has been raining in this state for years and years and years.

The Wilson River, since my memory, goes up and down for a variety of reasons. This is nothing new.

It was a very severe, a large amount of moisture came out of the sky, the rivers came up, the state declared an emergency in Tillamook County. We have been out there since this started.

The weather has gotten ... I was going to take a helicopter ride today, but they tell me the river is receding. I tried to take one yesterday afternoon but they wouldn't let me up in the air because the pilots wouldn't go off the ground

because they said we would actually probably be skimming the tops of the trees because the cloud cover was so low and it would be dangerous.

The fact is the state has been working very well. Ken Murphy and Emergency Management have been on top of this. We've been working with the National Guard. We have pre-positioned Black Hawk helicopters to be able to take advantage if they were needed. There are shelters that were going. I had a meeting yesterday morning with Murphy and my staff about what we were going to do, and to find out and Mr. Murphy said that the main thing that we had to do was to see what the weather pattern was going to be like and it broke yesterday afternoon as they anticipated. And the rivers are receding.

Q: Are you saying the response was adequate?

A: Well, look it ... If you are asking me if I could have actually reduced the amount of moisture that fell, I would have done it. Could I have done it? No. It's just nature.

What I am suggesting to you is that, given the fact that there was a large amount of rain, I think that the state responded appropriately in working with the counties and trying to see that we could actually ... not only rescue the people, but actually provide shelters for them and we have been doing that.

Q: Has the state acted appropriately in allowing people and developers to build in flood

plains and high erosion zones?

A: Vince, if you want a view, there's always a price to be paid for it. The fact is that this is what happens to the homes on the coast. This isn't the first time. How many of us remember Gleneden Beach, I mean the Salishan Spit, in the early '70s? And just about a few years ago, we had the issue over on the coast about the homes, the condominiums that were built.

I think that what happens is that everybody thinks a weather pattern is permanent. You know, when the tides aren't coming in and they think that this is the way it is going to be forever? That isn't the way the coast is.

I think there's always risk that, when you build right on the edge ... What is the old adage? If you want a secure house on the coast, buy two streets back? Something like that?

And I think that when you want that view, it's a risk. I went over to Astoria last year when it happened and there was a beautiful community that had a view. And what happened? It rained so much that the moisture in there just slid down at the bottom and it destroyed about two or three homes at the very bottom of it.

I think they should look more at things like that, but at the immediate time, everybody forgets what it was like 10 or 20 years ago and no one ever believes it will ever come back again. But it does.

Q: Governor, with Tillamook in particular, folks over there were telling me yesterday, that

the bay, Tillamook Bay, needs to be dredged. And all that silt, the Tillamook burn, 70-plus years, and it needs to be worked, it needs to be uncorked, so that that particular problem doesn't keep recurring.

A: Look, if I remember and help me, I think there are 14 ports on the coast and they all have a problem with dredging. And the federal government used to put up substantial funding for doing that and they do not do that like they used to. Do we need to do more dredging on the coast? The answer is yes.

Can the states just pick it up by themselves? No. The federal government has to be a partner with us on this thing. And they have been stepping back away from it and wanting the states do it all.

Q: What have you done to encourage this ...?

A: Well, listen. I've gotten more letters off to the federal government and the congressional delegation about the appropriation on this. But let's see what happens now. We have a professional lobbyist that represents the state now in D.C. and we have a whole series of issues that we are talking with the congressional delegation. I've been with most of the members of the delegation in the last two or three weeks and we're talking about different issues coming up. And I think this change in Congress is going to have a substantial impact on our ability to get some response here for Oregon.