



Flooding takes its toll



County's losses at \$4.25 million, but officials believe it will go a lot higher

BY JOE HAPP
Headlight-Herald Staff

TILLAMOOK — County officials have so far estimated the loss from last week's record-setting floods at about \$4.25 million.

"We all think that's on the low side," said Tillamook County Sheriff Todd Anderson, emerging from a meeting with Emergency Management Director Tom Manning and others Monday morning.

Early estimates of financial losses suffered by businesses in the county were in the range of \$2.2 million,

but officials noted that figure is bound to go higher because so many businesses have had to close down to make repairs and replace damaged inventories.

MORE FLOOD COVERAGE:

Impacts on business in North, Central and South County

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Central farms hardest hit by the deluge

North County dairies affected, too, but it wasn't as bad as floods in '96

BY DENISE PORTER
Agriculture Correspondent

TILLAMOOK — Dairy farmers in the central part of the county bore the brunt of the damage in last week's record-setting floods, while North County dairies, hardest hit by the 1996 flooding, fared reasonably well this time.

RELATED STORY: Family reels from loss of animals in flood. Page A8

About 100 animals were reported lost last week, most of them on farms along the Trask and Tillamook rivers.

Farms along the upper Wilson River — including Wilsonview Dairy, owned by the Josi family; Shreve's Triple K Dairy, owned by Mike and Sharon Shreve; Sander Dairy, owned by Bernie Sander, and leased acreage across the river from Sander's farm used by George Prince as pasture and heifer facilities — sustained considerable physical damage.

All four experienced deposits of several feet of silt in pastures, as well as massive amounts of logs and debris that ripped through fences and came to rest in pastures. Three RV's that

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ABOVE: John Fjarlie rides in a skid loader with Flint, one of the Snell family's prized cows, after rescuing her during last week's floods.

LEFT: Fjarlie with Flint on higher, drier ground. A story on the rescue efforts at the Snell farm appears on Page A8.

DENISE PORTER
HEADLIGHT-HERALD

Farm losses due to lost livestock and damage to artichoke, cranberry and floral acreage was pegged initially at \$700,000. That's another figure that is expected to go higher because of costs to farmers for damaged equipment and fencing, debris removal and treatment of diseases picked up by cattle from drinking contaminated floodwater.

Reports so far have placed the number of lost cows, heifers and calves in the county at about 100.

Officials said there have been no estimates yet of the amount of damage inflicted on private residences in the county.

Damage to county roads was estimated at a little more than \$1 million, Anderson said.

County and city government agencies estimated losses from damage to water control facilities, public buildings, utility systems and the cost of debris removal at nearly \$280,000.

Flood damage to tracks on the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad was estimated at \$500,000 or more. The trains have not been

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FLOOD TOLL: County may have good chance for federal disaster aid

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running since last week, which means the Stimson and Tillamook lumber companies have not been able to ship any lumber out of the county.

Port Manager Jack Crider said last week he expected to be able to get "a skeleton" line operating by this Friday.

In addition, an estimated \$210,000 worth of damage to dikes, levies and tide gates was reported by the Tillamook Bay Habitat and Estuary Improvement District.

Tillamook County Commissioner Mark Labhart said he thinks the chances of getting federal disaster aid as a result of last week's weather are good.

"The state has to spend \$20 million on damages before it can qualify for federal aid," the commissioner said. "Damage from the flooding to Highway 35 near Mt. Hood was \$20 million all by itself."

Labhart said the state will combine Tillamook County's disaster estimates with those of other counties and state agencies and submit them to the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

The next step would be for FEMA officials to do their own assessment and verify those reports before deciding on whether the state qualifies for federal disaster relief.

If that relief is granted, he said, the federal government would pay 75 percent of the recovery costs borne by public agencies.

He added that a federal disaster declaration might qualify private individuals for grants of as much as \$24,000 per household to help pay for flood damages.

County Emergency Manage-

ment officials closed down the operations center Monday, Anderson said. It had been operating since Sunday, Nov. 5, staffed by Manning, his assistant JoAnne Spencer, Undersheriff Terry Huntsman and 11 volunteers.

The volunteers, Anderson said, put in 268 hours and Manning, Spencer and Huntsman worked a combined total of 250 hours.

Sheriff's Office deputies logged more than 600 hours on flood-related duties from Nov. 6 through 9, including 35 water rescues.

More than 100 water rescues were performed last week by first responders, including sheriff's deputies, Tillamook Police, Oregon State Police and Tillamook Fire District and U.S. Coast Guard personnel, Anderson added.

Anderson said Emergency Management officials also met Monday with representatives of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to plan repairs necessitated by the flood and prepare for more winter storms.

Meanwhile, Tillamook County residents were reacting angrily to remarks last week by Gov. Ted Kulongoski in a post-election press conference, part of which was broadcast over a couple of Portland TV stations.

To a question about whether he was pleased or not pleased by state officials' reaction to the coastal flooding, the governor gave a rambling answer that included this: "Because of the way television treats weather — the crisis team — you have actually elevated the weather — to a national crisis. And the truth of it is it has been raining in Oregon for years and years and years ... This is nothing new."

Loten Hooley, president of



MEGHAN MCGUIRE/HEADLIGHT-HERALD

A street sign washed up with logs and debris by the north Barview jetty after last week's storm.

Rosenberg Builders Supply, which sustained heavy water damage in last week's flood, sent Kulongoski a letter.

"As I shovel mud and take wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow to the dumpster, I am reminded of your comments ... Thank you for those kind words.

"We have paid a price. A large one. At Rosenberg's, we installed flood walls, extensive diking, and large diesel pumps to prevent the damage caused by the Wilson River coming up and going down. We were dry inside at 6:30 p.m. Monday. We had 3.5 feet of water outside our building; you could

see out our windows into the water. Yet we were dry.

"Not until the water kept rising and breached our flood walls were we in danger of flooding. According to you, it is our fault. The water was 8 to 12 inches above the FEMA 500-year flood level. Now, Ted, you haven't been around that long.

"We will clean, repair, and reinforce our flood prevention system out of our own pockets. We will learn from this situation. We will survive and thrive

in Tillamook.

"What will you learn from this? Give us permission to dredge. Not studies. Not money. We will raise the money. Just permission. That is all we want."

Local farmers and others have been trying without success for years to get gravel bars that have built up in local rivers dredged, but have run into bureaucratic roadblocks from a number of state and federal agencies.