

Opinion: Douglas County addressing flooding

By Jim Nichols

I would like to first offer my sympathies to those who were affected by the recent flash flooding in Douglas County. Many of you have suffered damage to your property as a result of the recent flood events. Many of you have expressed your concerns and frustrations over this situation and I can assure you we are taking every measure in our power to respond, recover and develop a long term solution with-in our means.



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Over the last weeks of storms and subsequent flooding, East Fork Fire and Paramedic District, Douglas County Sheriff's Department, Douglas County Road Department including roads and utilities, GIS, public information, and the Community Development Department staffs have been working countless hours to assist residents. Our main priority has been public safety first and foremost followed by clean up. Questions have been asked of staff and so we have outlined a few common questions and answers for you below.

What is the Road Division doing to help with the clean up and how can I contact them if I have flood damage on my road or drains?

Our road division staff is in the process of removing dirt and

debris from many of the drainage infrastructure, mainly flow lines and culverts. Along with re-establishing of flow lines, we are shoring up the road sides from the excessive erosion that occurred as a result of the flooding.

We have contracted with A&A Construction and they are removing some of the several thousands yards of soil that filled the detention basins/flow lines around Johnson Lane. We expect this work to take a minimum of two weeks, with occasional road closures Monday through Saturday, 7am to 3:30pm.

We had the National Department of Forestry crews working on clearing out buried culverts and opening up the ends of the culverts, both public and private.

Why does the Johnson Lane area keep flooding?

Johnson Lane floods because very short length, but high intensity storms bring high volumes of water quickly resulting in drainage facilities becoming overwhelmed. County drainage systems are generally sized for the 25-year, 24-hour storm which is a long, gentle rainfall with an intensity of about 0.1-inches per hour. Last year's flood event was a 100-year, two-hour rain event which delivered about 0.6-inches of rain fall an hour. This month's event was a 500-year, one-hour storm which dropped 1.12-inches of rain. These events are six to 12 times more powerful than what the drainage system in Johnson Lane is equipped to handle.

What is Douglas County's long-term plan to address the flooding issues in Douglas County?

This will be discussed at the Aug. 6 board meeting. Currently no tax dollars are dedicated to storm drain improvements. The county has been 100 percent reliant on applying for and being awarded grants to fund storm water improvements. The county has been very successful in obtaining these grants, but generally these grants are awarded to improve flood issues along major transportation routes (highways 88, 395, 50) and

the county has not been as successful in the Johnson Lane area. The first step in addressing flood issues in the county is to complete an area drainage master plan for Johnson Lane. This ADMP would provide a list of projects and potential cost and allow the county to prioritize construction.

Although these issues will not be resolved overnight, I can assure you Douglas County is doing everything we can to help our residents. We will be hosting a flood outreach event on Aug. 6 at the CVIC Hall from 3:30-7pm. We hope this event will allow residents to speak with several members of our staff about their concerns around the flooding.

Jim Nichols is the county manager of Douglas County.