

INFORMATION NOTE

DATE: November 18, 2021

PREPARED FOR: Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

ISSUE: ENV's response to flooding in B.C.

KEY FACTS:

- A province-wide state of emergency was declared on November 17, 2021 to mitigate impacts and support response and recovery from widespread damage caused by severe flooding and landslides in B.C.

BACKGROUND:

- Recent heavy precipitation, strong winds, landslides, and flooding have caused devastating damage in the southern part of the province.
- Environmental and human health concerns include hazardous materials and threats to human life and property; extensive livestock mortalities and issues with disposing carcasses; overwhelmed wastewater treatment plants (WWTP); and potential impacts to infrastructure related to authorizations discharging waste to the environment.

DISCUSSION:

ENV is responding to the flooding events in the following ways:

EPD:

- The Environmental Emergencies Program (EEP) is liaising with Emergency Management BC (EMBC) and leading the management of environmental impacts supporting the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC). It is our understanding that the City of Merritt and the City of Abbotsford are undertaking flood impact assessments and Environmental Emergency Response Officers (EEROs) are available to provide technical support for hazardous materials.
- EEP has assigned one EERO to assist the Lower Mainland Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centre (PREOC) and resources are available to support EMBC and other flood impacted communities. This includes providing leadership and advice to EMBC regarding structures threatened by watercourses. EMBC has put a call out to TEAMS to deploy staff in functional roles in PECC and PREOC.
- EEP's Recovery Section is continuing to lead the Environmental Sector under EMBC's Provincial Recovery that includes wildfire recovery and recently added flood recovery.
- EEP is planning for sustained flood support including providing key personnel and identifying specific resource needs.

- EEP will continue to support local authorities, First Nations, partners, stakeholders, and the public in mitigating and preventing hazardous materials and other threats to human life and property as top priorities.
- ENV authorizations staff are liaising with Enbridge and Transmountain regarding the pipelines and terminals in the Lower Mainland. They will monitor steps taken to protect infrastructure to maintain compliance with discharge authorizations.
- South Authorizations flood response has been focused on supporting local government with:
 - Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP)
 - Issued bypasses for all major WWTPs in Metro Vancouver on Monday, Nov. 15, 2021 to manage extremely high-water levels due to stormwater surges.
 - Have been in contact with the Chief Administrative Officer of Merritt regarding their WWTP. We will be providing support directly to the City to assist and guide in any way that we can from the Lower Mainland.
 - Dead livestock
 - Supporting the City of Chilliwack in confirming the existing Bailey landfill can be used for disposal of dead livestock.
 - Supporting the City of Vancouver with a request for out of region disposal of waste for flood affected areas.
 - Environmental Standards Branch (ESB) will support Regional Operations Branch (ROB) authorizations and AGRI on recovery planning efforts. ESB's role will be to support on agricultural waste management policy, including guidance on mortality and waste disposal and environmental considerations.
 - If the situation cannot be managed within existing authorizations and policy, and there is a need to take more extraordinary measures, ESB can also participate with the Legal Services Branch and Strategic Policy Division in scoping of tools available under s. 10.1 of the *Emergency Program Act* while under a state of provincial emergency.
- The ministry will take into consideration the current situation including the provincial state of emergency when addressing non-compliances.

BCP/COS:

- B.C. Parks is working to track and record all storm related damage; anticipate extensive damage in the South Coast and potentially West Coast regions (more information will be coming in a separate Information Note from B.C. Parks).

ESD:

- Knowledge Management Branch is working with Environment and Climate Change Canada, FLNRORD and other implementing partners to assess the damage to our monitoring networks and determine where we may have data gaps and access issues for technicians to get to sites and stations (to ensure data continuity and support predictive flood forecasting and data analysis).

CAS:

- CAS is developing the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy (CPAS) which is informed by the Preliminary Strategic Climate Risk Assessment for B.C.
- The Risk Assessment demonstrated that climate-related events such as extreme wildfires, long-term and seasonal water shortage, coastal and riverine flooding, heat waves, and landslides caused by extreme rainfall are increasingly significant risks for B.C.

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