



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

January 8, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region IX  
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200  
Oakland, CA 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President,

Under the provisions of Section 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§5121-5207 (the "Stafford Act"), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. §206.35, I request that you issue an Emergency Declaration for the State of California due to the current and ongoing series of atmospheric river systems impacting the State, which are forecast to continue to impact California through at least January 19, 2023.

These atmospheric river systems have pummeled California since December 27, 2022, and have caused twelve fatalities to date. Due to the sustained force and longevity of these atmospheric river systems, there are multiple cumulative and compounding effects which have already strained local, tribal, and State resources. The National Weather Service's forecast and California's State Climatologist's current modeling predicts additional significant, if not historic, flooding impacts in the following counties due to the upcoming storm: Mendocino, Merced, Monterey, Sacramento, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Ventura. Due to wildfire burn scars, debris flows are highly likely in the following counties: El Dorado, Los Angeles, Mariposa,



Monterey, Napa, Placer, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma. I am specifically requesting approval of emergency protective measures (Category B), limited to Direct Federal Assistance (“DFA”), under the Public Assistance program for the above listed counties.

I am requesting DFA in order to meet critical emergency protection requirements in the form of personnel, mass care support, mass shelter support, mass evacuation support, equipment, and supplies. The Army Corps of Engineers’ assistance is requested specifically for debris flows from burn scars, levee failures, and damage to roadways. The emergency measures required as a result of the severity and destructiveness of these continuing atmospheric river systems are beyond the capability of the State and affected tribal and/or local governments to perform or to contract for, thus requiring DFA.

**I. Meteorologic Forecasting and Hydrologic Conditions**

Meteorologic Forecasting Overview

Starting in late December 2022 and continuing into January 2023, a series of atmospheric river systems began to significantly impact California, bringing substantial snowfall, precipitation, and river and urban flooding. These widespread atmospheric river systems will continue to impact the State and bring heavier precipitation and increased impacts on Monday, January 9, 2023, and Tuesday January 10, 2023, and continued impacts are predicted through January 19, 2023.

It is expected that trillions of gallons of water will soak California through the course of these atmospheric river systems over the next two weeks in addition to the water which has already saturated the State. The current atmospheric river system will have continued impacts over the next two days, and is expected to have rainfall totals between two to five inches for lower elevations in northern California as well as the coast and valleys of Los Angeles County. San Diego County is expected to get one to three inches of rain. Mountains throughout the State will see rainfall amounts of three to ten inches depending on elevation and location.

The cumulative effects of all the recent precipitation to a now saturated State are a stark contrast from the extremely dry environmental conditions

previously. River, creek, stream, roadway, and urban floods will be at their highest during this period. In addition to the probability of flooding, there is grave concern regarding the risk of mud and debris flows from approximately 21 burn scars due to recent wildfires across California.

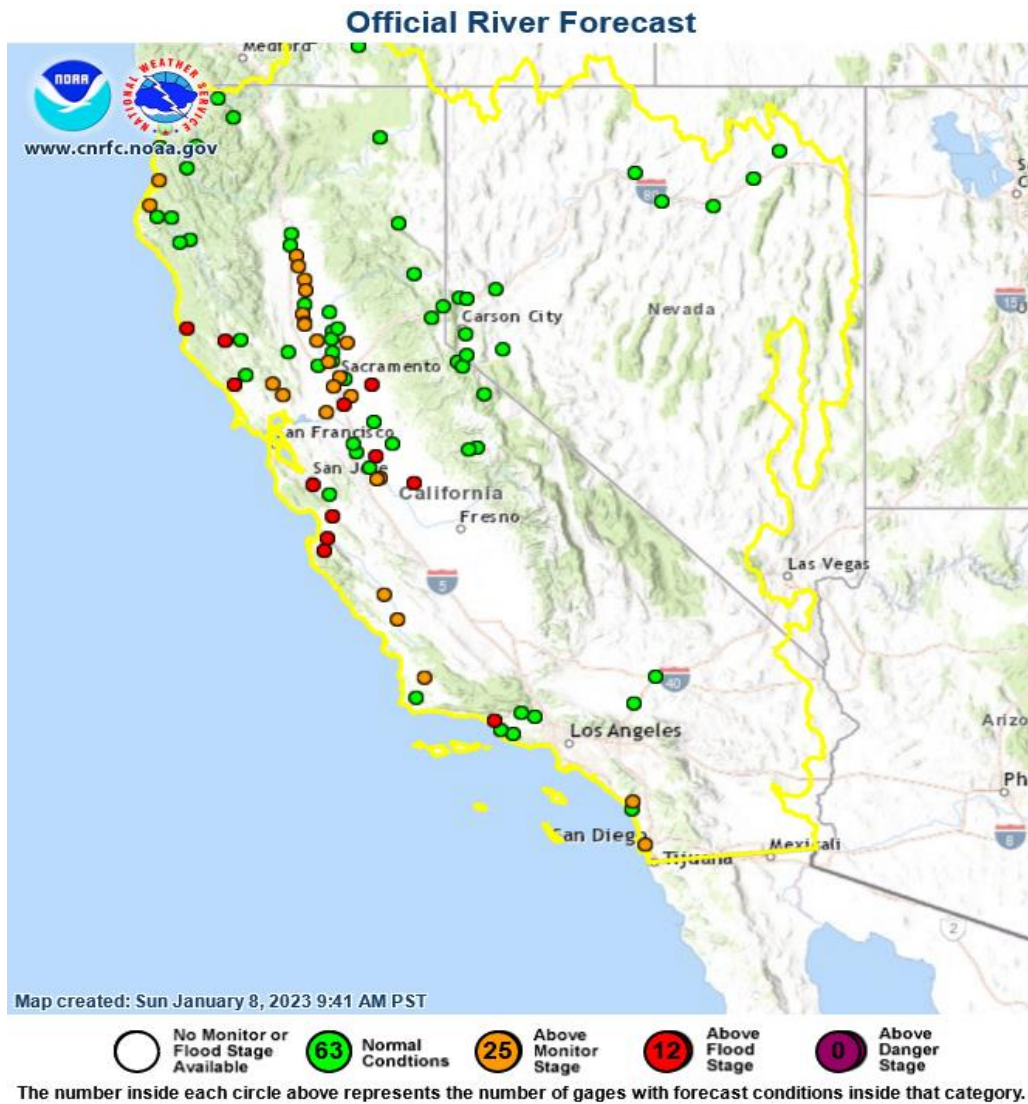
### Hydrologic Conditions Overview

The below graphic<sup>1</sup> predicts 12 locations exceeding flood stage and 25 locations exceeding monitoring stage throughout the entire State of California. Any location where the flood stage is exceeded will result in flooding. Changing reservoir releases for flood control will impact some locations. New and historic flood records within this window are anticipated.

For example, the Bear River at McKee Road in Merced County is expected to set a record high water mark at 27.8 ft at 2 AM PT on January 10, 2023. As the previous flood of record was 24.65 ft in 2006, there is serious concern about this historic flood and potential impacts. The Guadalupe River at the Almaden Expressway in San Jose is currently forecasted to peak at 11.5 feet on Monday, January 9, 2023, around 4 PM Pacific Time. A peak of 11.5 feet at this location will result in potential flooding of neighborhoods as well as closing a state highway interchange. There is also a chance that the flood may set a new high-water mark, as the previous mark was 11.73 ft set in 1995. Both events are expected to bring flooding impacts to thousands of people.

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<sup>1</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and National Weather Service graphic generated on January 8, 2023, at 0941 hours, reflects forecasted critical stages of hydrologic impacts.



## II. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

### A. INCIDENT OVERVIEW – STATE AND LOCAL EFFORTS AND RESOURCES

On December 27, 2022, the State activated its State Operations Center at its highest level, along with the State's Flood Operations Center ("FOC"), in response to the predicted atmospheric river. The State also stood up its Watershed Debris Task Force in order to analyze potential rainfall and prepare for possible debris flows from wildfire burn scars. The earlier atmospheric river systems caused wind gusts across California in the 45-60 mph range while the rainfall amounts exceeded nine inches in certain areas. By December 31, 2022, 17 counties had stood up their Emergency Operations Centers in response to

these atmospheric river systems and their effects, and the State's FOC was monitoring 20 different potential and actual flood events including at least two levee breaches. The State responded to this system with flood fighting materials, sandbags, swift water rescue units, and urban search and rescue units, and by opening shelters. Over 2,500 persons were evacuated statewide, including the Rio Consumnes Correctional Facility. Numerous state highways were closed and damaged due to flooding, snow, and earth slides. I proclaimed a State of Emergency on January 4, 2023, for the entire State of California due to the widespread impacts of the atmospheric river systems that had occurred and those that were and are still ongoing.

Even while the State was still responding to the initial atmospheric river systems, the additional storms compounded impacts to many communities throughout California and, on and after January 4, 2023, drastically expanded the scale and scope of the emergency response efforts. This part of the atmospheric river systems resulted in over 10,000 persons being under evacuation orders with another 16,000 persons under evacuation watches. Twenty-seven counties stood up their EOCs, with several cities and local agencies doing so as well. Other resources including sand, sandbags, and flood fight containers were disbursed. Additional state highways and roads were closed and damaged due to flooding, snow, and earth slides. By January 8, 2023, 19 counties and numerous cities had proclaimed local states of emergency. As of 1236 on January 8, 2023, there is an evacuation order in Santa Cruz and evacuation warnings for over 6,200 persons in three counties. These numbers are expected to change overnight as more information about the incoming weather is obtained.

In order to prepare for the continued onslaught from these atmospheric river systems, the State has pre-positioned its resources including swift water rescue task forces, aviation search and rescue, high water vehicles, excavation equipment, fire engines, and hand crews throughout the State, drawing upon CAL FIRE, the California National Guard, California Conservation Corps, California Department of Corrections, and local government resources. Those resources are pre-positioned to handle both the potential flooding events and potential wildfire burn scar debris flows from 21 different burn scars in eleven counties across California.

## B. FEDERAL AGENCY EFFORTS AND RESOURCES

Federal resources that have been deployed or are set to arrive at the SOC for advance planning purposes include members of FEMA, the United States Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the United States Coast Guard.

## C. ACTION TAKEN

In addition to the above-described response efforts, I have taken appropriate action under State law and directed the Execution of the State Emergency Plan consistent with 44 C.F.R. § 206.35 (c)(1) and (c)(2) when I proclaimed the State of Emergency on January 4, 2023, for the State of California due to the widespread impact of these atmospheric river systems.

## D. FINDINGS PURSUANT TO 44 C.F.R. § 206.35 (b)(1) and (b)(2)

Based upon the Incident Overview, I hereby find that these atmospheric river systems are of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capability of the State and the affected tribal and/or local governments. I further find that the State requires supplementary Federal emergency assistance, as set forth above, to save lives and to protect property, public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of this disaster.

## III. CERTIFICATION

I certify for this emergency that state and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shared costs as required by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act.

## IV. STATE COORDINATING OFFICERS AND AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES

I have designated the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Nancy Ward, as the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) and State Coordinator Officer for this request. Director Ward is empowered to execute on behalf of the State all necessary documents for federal assistance, including claims for Public Assistance, and will work with FEMA in continuing to provide more information or justification on my behalf. Christina Curry, Lisa

Mangat, Ryan Buras, Robert Troy, Edward Westfall, and Eli Owen are the alternate GARs and are similarly empowered.

**V. CONCLUSION**

California continues to recover from multiple, consecutive disasters that warranted and received Major Disaster Declarations in recent history, as seen in the enclosed list. Now, due to these atmospheric river systems saturating California and overwhelming deployed State and local resources, I am requesting an Emergency Declaration to authorize Direct Federal Assistance for effective efforts necessary to save lives and protect public health and safety.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California

Enclosures:

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13  
Stafford Act and State Disaster Declarations in Previous 24 Months