



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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PRESS RELEASE

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PANETTA TOURS STORM DAMAGE

U.S. Congressman Jimmy Panetta and Supervisor Zach Friend on Saturday toured storm-damaged areas of Santa Cruz County, focusing on the Aptos area and the issues facing Valencia Elementary School in particular.

During a two-hour tour arranged by Friend, Panetta met with neighborhood representatives and school officials, as well as representatives from the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office and Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District, to discuss the challenges storm-damaged roads have placed on neighborhood access, childhood education and public safety response times.

"It's clear that this series of storms has significantly impacted the community," Panetta said. "State and federal disaster declarations are a good step toward getting things back to normal, but we all have more work to do to make sure people's lives are restored. I am committed to doing everything I can to see that that happens."

"The damage to roads throughout Santa Cruz County has been catastrophic," Friend said. "People have been unable to work, schools have been closed and neighborhoods have grown uncomfortable with the very roads they once relied on. I will continue to call to attention to the need to expedite the funding and process for these repairs for my district and the rest of Santa Cruz County."

Despite being the second-smallest county in California, unincorporated Santa Cruz County has seen more than \$30 million in storm damage to roads alone, a figure that does not include damage to state highways, city roads, other infrastructure such as water systems or private property. There are more than 120 damaged spots on County roads that will require significant work before traffic returns to normal.



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The State of California and the federal government have declared a disaster for storms occurring Jan. 3-12. The County and its legislative delegation are working to expand that declaration to include storms beginning in December and through the month of February, a move that not only expands the availability of recovery funds for County infrastructure, but also provides greater access to recovery programs for residents and private property owners.

Accompanied by Friend and officials from the Department of Public Works, Panetta visited the Aptos area and discussed the closure of Valencia Road, as well as partial road washouts at Soquel Drive and on Valencia Road along Valencia Creek. He was also provided and discussed an extensive list of road impacts across Santa Cruz County.

Last week, officials from Pajaro Valley Unified School District closed Valencia Elementary School, displacing nearly 600 students to three different sites until access to the school is improved. Valencia Road is a top priority for the County, which is working closely with State and federal officials on a plan to repair or partially reopen the road as soon as possible.

Photos of the tour are available upon request.