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FYSA- Media Monitoring Report for DR 4241 SC 02/22/16

NEWS CLIPS

SOUTH CAROLINA-DR-4241

Monday, February 22, 2016

Issues:

- None.

Summary:

- Increasing coverage of property acquisition. Long term recovery efforts being highlighted.

Analysis:

- None

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Richland begins to identify which homeowners could get flood buyouts (The State)

County estimates greater than \$4 million cost to purchase, tear down 63 substantially damaged homes

Federal grants could cover up to 75 percent of that cost if state gives the funds to the county

How much money property owners could receive in buyout deals is still uncertain

By Sarah Ellis

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RICHLAND COUNTY, SC

More than five dozen homeowners whose properties were substantially damaged by October's historic floods might have the opportunity to sell their houses to the county government thanks to expected federal grants. Richland County has identified 63 homes eligible to be bought, torn down and turned into permanent green space at an estimated cost of nearly \$6 million. Federal grants could pay for about \$4.4 million of the cost. But the county still would have to come up with nearly \$1.5 million in matching funds for the buyouts.

Thirty-nine of the homes that might be bought out in Richland County are clustered in two groups in the Gills Creek watershed, including in the badly flooded area off South Beltline Boulevard. Another eight are clustered in the Crane Creek watershed, and 16 are scattered. County officials would not identify addresses that could be affected.

But the cost to buy out homes in Richland County would swallow nearly half of the federal money that could possibly be available for home buyouts statewide. And the county does not yet have the money.

Only a quarter of the expected \$36 million total in hazard mitigation grants coming to South Carolina from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or about \$9 million, can be used for home buyouts in the state, according to guidelines set by the S.C. Emergency Management Division.

The \$36 million in FEMA funds must be used for projects to prepare communities for future disasters. Richland County will be competing for a portion of those funds for projects including home and commercial buyouts, stormwater drainage management and flood studies.

The grants could start being distributed on a rolling basis by late April.

Properties qualify for voluntary buyouts if they lie in a special flood hazard area and have been determined by Richland County or FEMA to have been more than 50 percent damaged by floodwaters from the Oct. 4 rains.

If any property owner in a cluster of homes opts not to participate in a government buyout, it does not necessarily shut down the buyout option for other property owners in the cluster, assistant county administrator Kevin Bronson said. But the prospect of broken up green spaces could be less desirable to state officials doling out project money, Bronson said.

Property owners who agree to a buyout could be paid anywhere from the full pre-flood value of their homes to less than 75 percent, depending on what additional funding the county secures. Federal hazard mitigation grants can pay for only 75 percent of a project, and there must be a 25 percent local funding match.

If the county does not receive additional flood relief funds from the state or additional federal funds — which could be months or years away from distribution — property owners could be asked to absorb the remaining 25 percent of the pre-flood home value and cost of acquiring the home. For a home valued at \$100,000 before the flood, for instance, a homeowner might receive roughly \$68,000 in that buyout scenario.

County officials plan to make personal contact with property owners who are eligible to participate in the buyout program.

Reach Ellis at (803) 771-8307.

Read more here: <http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article61390217.html#storylink=cpy>

Nonprofits stepping up for vulnerable Columbia October storm survivors (The State)

Nonprofit organizations doing plenty of heavy lifting in state's long-term flood recovery

Those organizations are targeting the state's most vulnerable storm and flood survivors, many not eligible for insurance or much federal help

"Hundreds if not thousands" more could need help

By Avery G. Wilks

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COLUMBIA, SC

Stanley Beard is thankful to be done with chasing squirrels through his north Columbia home.

The furry pests for years had taken up residence with Beard, 67, a retired widower who lacked the money or physical strength to repair a hole in his home's roof.

The historic October rains further damaged the home. Water poured through the roof as Beard scrambled to set out pots and buckets. The squirrels scurried in as well, seeking shelter from the storm.

"It sounded like the world was coming to an end," Beard said.

The storm ruined the roof, ceiling and floors, plus a bathroom where the toilet fell through the soggy floor.

Beard did not apply for federal disaster aid. But he likely would not have gotten much help anyway because much of the storm's damage to the home can be attributed to the faulty roof.

Fortunately for Beard and other poor and elderly residents left vulnerable after the storm, that is where volunteer organizations have stepped in to help. Nonprofits have done much of the heavy lifting after the historic storm, helping residents gut and repair their homes.

Those organizations statewide have especially targeted single parents, veterans, the poor, the disabled and the elderly. Some of those residents fell through the gaps of insurance and federal aid because of technicalities or did not receive enough to pay contractors for home repairs.

Home Works of America, a Columbia-based nonprofit, took up Beard's case and 11 others. The nonprofit spent two weeks in late December repairing Beard's house. Home Works plans to work on 10 more flood-related homes in 2016.

More than a dozen nonprofits so far have received funding through the One S.C. Flood Relief Fund, set up by the Central Carolina Community Foundation and [endorsed by Gov. Nikki Haley](#).

The fund's first round of grants, amounting to \$500,000, helped nonprofits repair about 350 homes in 13 counties across the state, said Dana Fulmer, who directs the fund. Another 244 homes will be repaired using funds from the second round of grants, Fulmer said.

"These are the people that would not be able to rebuild without the help of volunteer organizations," Fulmer said.

Jim Powell, executive director of Homes Works, said "hundreds if not thousands" of homeowners in Richland and Lexington counties still are struggling with "unmet needs related to flooding."

That means service organizations like Home Works still have work to do, Powell said.

"Our community needs its local service organizations to creatively find solutions," Powell said. "Even though we're not big yet, even though it's just one home at a time, we're still seeking to step out."

As a result, Beard hasn't chased a squirrel in weeks. His house has a new ceiling, heater, light fixtures and flooring. The roof has been repaired, and the toilet rests on a solid bathroom floor.

"It's more satisfying living here. I feel better," said Beard. "I don't mind having company now. I was ashamed of the place because I had never lived like that my whole life. My parents didn't raise us like that. And it was just nothing I could do about it."

Beard has his house back, but also a little more. Beard said he has built a relationship with the staff at Home Works, including program manager Chris Kemp, who helped oversee the repairs at the home.

"I've got a friend for life," Beard said. "My heart gets warm when I think about Chris. If they're doing work like this for other people, the world is a much better place than we all thought."

VIDEO: Volunteer organizations banding together to help flood victims

February 20, 2016

Non-profit organizations across the state are using donated flood relief dollars to rebuild and repair houses for flood victims. Donations to the One S.C. Flood Relief Fund, endorsed by Gov. Nikki Haley as a way to directly help the state's most vulnerable flooding victims, are at least partially funding the efforts of more than a dozen volunteer organizations.

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Flood recovery moves to long-term phase (The Times and Democrat)

SANTEE — County, state and federal emergency services officials are calling on faith-based and nonprofit organizations to step up to the plate to help those in the area still struggling with flood recovery.

"We feel like a lot of the cases now are falling back on the churches in the community," Orangeburg County Emergency Services Director Billy Staley said Friday morning. Staley spoke during a long-term recovery workshop at the Santee Conference Center.

"We don't want the churches bearing the burden," he said.

Staley said the historic October flooding dropped significant rainfall on the region, leaving in its wake major damage to properties. Some parts of the county saw nearly 20 inches of rain between Oct. 1 and Oct. 6.

The Holly Hill area recorded about 20 inches while the Orangeburg Airport received about 11 inches. St. Matthews got about 13 inches, and Bamberg received about 8-1/2 inches.

While the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration helped provide some relief to T&D Region residents, there are still some severe unmet needs, Staley said.

He said about 67 percent of residents who applied for FEMA assistance in Orangeburg County were denied

help.

“That sounds high, but in a lot of areas, it is not. Out of those, there was a high percentage of people who had deferred maintenance and what FEMA would classify as insufficient damage,” Stanley said. “This means my roof has been leaking for a long period of time and I never fixed it, and now I have 20 inches of rain and there is a mess.”

Case management statistics indicate there are at least 80 cases in Orangeburg County where severe flood needs exist, he noted.

“We know that everyone who is not in that 80 is going somewhere,” Staley said. “We think there are an isolated number of people who still have a need who are reporting it to their churches.”

He said shortly after the flooding, FEMA estimated potentially 6,000 people were impacted.

Staley said Friday’s workshop was intended to inform churches about the current long-term recovery committee in place in the region and to encourage them to join the Long-term Recovery Committee.

Approximately 20 people, representing federal, state and local government agencies, attended. Churches participating were Orangeburg Lutheran Church, Cornerstone Community Church, New Life Temple Church of God in Christ and the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The LTR was formed in December through the partnership of the South Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the South Carolina Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Currently, groups such as the Salvation Army, Samaritan House and the Edisto Chapter of the American Red Cross are part of the committee but more members are needed.

Staley said being involved in the LTR enables churches to leverage resources, coordinate home repair/rebuild efforts and collaborate on case management in an effort to reduce duplication of services.

“The system is here, and we need to track these cases,” he said.

Being a part of the LTR also enables churches to have access to the One SC Flood Relief Fund, Stanley noted. Gov. Nikki Haley set up the fund after the October flooding so corporations, foundations and individuals can donate to the flood relief efforts.

The purpose of the fund, which can be accessed at yourfoundation.org, is to help bridge the funding gap in order to rebuild the state and help citizens resume their lives.

If a need is identified, a church can apply to the fund for financial assistance, Staley said.

Louis Carrow, FEMA Voluntary Agency liaison, said there are currently 26 volunteer agencies helping with flood recovery in the state and training is available for people who do not have the skill sets but would like to help.

“This is not something that is going to be done in a month or two,” Carrow said. “It is going to be ongoing. The more people we can get into this thing, the stronger the community is and the quicker the community can come back.”

A meeting with the faith-based and business communities is scheduled for Wednesday, March 16 at the Santee Conference Center.

The event is free and open to nonprofit groups, churches and businesses.

Bishop Dr. Richard Copeland of Orangeburg’s New Life Temple Church of God in Christ said a handful of people have come to the church seeking assistance for flood damage over the past few months.

“I want to find out how I can help and see if I can provide assistance to people in need,” Copeland said.

Ken Westbury, chairman of Calhoun County Cares Board, said his county was not hit as hard by the flooding as its neighbors in Richland and Orangeburg counties. But, his organization is there to help, he said.

“Certainly if people come to our doors, we don’t know what their needs are,” Westbury said. “We don’t do repair projects, but we guide people to those types of people.”

Those who are still struggling with severe flood recovery needs are asked to call 211 or an organization such as a church or the Red Cross for assistance.

For more information about the long-term recovery efforts, area churches and organizations are asked to contact Pastor Kary Poinsette at kareypoinsette@aol.com; Mike Patterson, South Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster chairperson, at mike.patterson@usa.salvationarmy.org or Joane Miller, South Carolina State Voluntary Agency liason, at jmiller@emd.sc.gov.

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Farmers to get updates on flood relief for crop losses (Times and Democrat)

Historic flooding last year submerged many fields in The Times and Democrat Region, damaging crops and

preventing farmers from harvesting their produce.

The crop losses have left some area farmers wondering if they will be able to survive to farm another year. Relief, however, could be on the way.

Last week, the S.C. House Ways and Means Committee unanimously approved legislation that would allow farmers to receive up to \$40 million in state aid to stay afloat. The legislation is now being taken up in the House.

The legislation would allow farmers to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 each. The grants could equal 20 percent of a farmer's total loss. Farmers have to prove they sustained a 40 percent loss, and the monies can only be used for direct crop inputs such as seeds, fertilizer and other expenses related to planting this year's crops. In order to distill the latest information in crop relief efforts, the Orangeburg and Calhoun County Farm Bureaus will hold a meeting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 25 in Roquemore Auditorium at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College on U.S. 601.

"The flood put us in a financial burden, and crop insurance did not make us whole," Orangeburg County Farm Bureau President Landrum Weathers said.

South Carolina Farm Bureau President Harry Ott and South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers will be involved in the meeting, which is open to all farmers and other interested parties.

The \$40 million in the proposed bill would come from state surpluses so the money would not have to wait on the budget process. Farmers are also hoping to receive about \$60 million from the federal government.

The House is slated to take up the proposed legislation next week.

The bill could then stall in the Senate. If it passes, the board the bill would create to evaluate applications and award the grants, would have 20 days in which to hold its first meeting.

State agriculture officials said the money would ideally be available in March, when corn planting begins, with the hope that supply stores are willing to extend short-term credit to farmers in anticipation of the monies being available.

Weathers said he thinks farmers will be appreciative of the state money.

"It has been a tough year, and any help is good," he said. "Agriculture is our number one industry, and there are other industries getting help. We want to get some help too."

Legislators in both chambers and parties have said the state needs to help farmers survive.

Last October's torrential rains wiped out \$330 million in crops at harvest time. Farmers lost an additional \$45 million because they couldn't plant winter crops in bogs, according to the state Department of Agriculture.

Those figures don't include losses from last year's spring freeze and summer drought.

Farmers essentially lost their entire inventory after incurring a year's worth of expenses, leaving many unable to pay operating loans that were due Dec. 31. State farm officials say 30 percent of farm loans through the Farm Service Agency in South Carolina are already delinquent.

Gov. Nikki Haley has said farmers shouldn't be treated differently than other impacted businesses in South Carolina. She has said crop insurance should suffice, noting she's asked the federal government to expedite the insurance claims.

Agriculture officials, however, say even farmers who paid the most for insurance didn't recoup enough money to cover what it cost them to plant the crops.

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