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FYSA- Media Monitoring Report for DR 4241 SC 01/11/16

NEWS CLIPS

SOUTH CAROLINA-DR-4241

Monday, January 11, 2016

Issues:

- Opponents of a hotly debated sewer project for Lower Richland County say they're angered by the recent way officials are getting word out about it. The group 'Hopkins and Lower Richland Citizens United' is fiercely against the project. Members have also filed a lawsuit against the county over it.

Summary:

- Fire Chief Pat Cavanaugh got unanimous approval from the council to apply for a **FEMA** grant to upgrade the radio communications system used by the fire department.
- The Semmes Lake dam at Fort Jackson blew out during heavy rains in October
- The long awaited repairs to Langley Dam could take a step forward soon with the Tuesday announcement of a \$1.5 million federal hazard mitigation grant.
- CanalSide residents and riverwalk pedestrians and some facade improvements moved Columbia's design commission and the developer closer on Wednesday to agreement on a \$58 million expansion to the residential community.
- Making South Carolina stronger in 2016 will be about rising from the ruins to address challenges, improving the state and our lives.
- The long awaited repairs to Langley Dam could take a step forward soon with the Tuesday announcement of a \$1.5 million federal hazard mitigation grant.
- The NWS says roads in low lying areas and swampland downstream from Columbia could become flooded, especially the areas that are already saturated from heavy rain we saw last week.
- If you were a victim of October's flood, you may qualify for tax relief efforts from the IRS.
- Federal law states that SCE&G officials cannot let Lake Murray rise above 360 feet. On Monday, they explained the process that helps keeps those levels under control when the possibility of more inflow, such as rain, exists.
- Opponents of a hotly debated sewer project for Lower Richland County say they're angered by the recent way officials are getting word out about it.
- The group 'Hopkins and Lower Richland Citizens United' is fiercely against the project. Members have also filed a lawsuit against the county over it.

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Floods

Three Darlington council members take seats; communications grant sought (Morning News)

New Darlington City Council members sworn in

By MELISSA ROLLINS

[MORNING NEWS](#), January 5, 2016

DARLINGTON, S.C. — The room was packed Tuesday night as three at-large council members took the oath of office for Darlington City Council.

As one of the first orders of business during the first council meeting of the new year, Carolyn Bruce, John Milling and Bryant Gardner were sworn in by Darlington city attorney Albert James III.

In other business, Fire Chief Pat Cavanaugh got unanimous approval from the council to apply for a **FEMA** grant to upgrade the radio communications system used by the fire department. Cavanaugh said that the new system is not a want; it is a need, and it is only a matter of time before it is required to do the job.

“The current system we are using is a VHS system and we’ve had it for years,” Cavanaugh said. “Coming down the pike, the federal government is going to be putting in mandates that require all public safety across the county to go to an 800-megahertz system that is going to provide better operability from state to state, agency to agency.”

Cavanaugh said other agencies are already using the 800-MHz system, including the Darlington Police Department, but cost had kept his department from changing over.

“If we were to go today, if **FEMA** came down and mandated us, it would cost us over \$324,000 to make the switch,” Cavanaugh said. “There is a **FEMA** grant available right now that I would like the opportunity to grab; it is a five percent cost share grant.”

If it were to be awarded the grant, the fire department would be able to switch over its communications for a small percentage of the overall cost for the quipment.

“(With this grant) we could make the switchover for less than 16,500 bucks and be compliant if we had to,” Cavanaugh said. “That is a pretty big savings.”

The new system would cost around \$9,000 to operate annually but Cavanaugh said he did not anticipate that being a problem as the fire department currently budgets around \$12,000 a year for its communication needs.

Cavanaugh said that if the city is awarded the grant, it would be ahead of the curve rather than behind when it

comes to compliance. It would also give the city the ability to communicate with more agencies, ensuring that during an emergency everyone gets the help that is needed.

Before the council meeting, Gloria Cheeseboro Hines was sworn in as mayor, becoming not only the city's first **FEMALE** mayor but also the city's first African-American mayor. Darlington will hold an election to fill the seat vacated by Hines on April 5, 2016. Anyone who lives in Ward 1 can vote between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.; anyone wishing to run for the office must file paperwork at Darlington City Hall between noon on Feb. 5 and noon on Feb 19.

For more information, call 843-398-4900 or 843-398-4000 extension 103.

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Midlands mayors travel to Washington, D.C. to request flood relief funding (WIS)

By Chad Mills

[WISTV 10](#) Columbia, Jan 07, 2016

Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin and Sumter Mayor Joe McElveen had a busy day Wednesday in Washington, D.C.

The mayors spoke with Congressman James Clyburn, had a meeting with the Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Jerry Abramson, and spoke with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Julian Castro, and his staff.

"The floods of 2015 were devastating across the Carolina, seeing almost 12 trillion gallons of water dumped down into our community," Benjamin said.

The flood disaster is the reason Benjamin and McElveen took the trip to Washington, D.C.

"Letters and phone calls and e-mails are important, but sometimes, you need to look a man in the eye and say exactly what you want," said Benjamin.

The mayors had a full day of meetings with federal officials to make the case for more federal funds for flood relief.

"It's not lost on me that the money in the federal coffers are monies that come from people in our state. When we saw disasters in Texas or New Orleans or New Jersey with Superstorm Sandy, the federal response was significant. It was robust," said Benjamin. "We've got to make sure that our request is just that: it's significant, it's robust, and it's representative of the fact that our citizens have been paying taxes for years. They've been paying federal taxes year after year. It's time for the federal government to respond in kind."

Benjamin's eyes are on a \$300 million pot of money known as a Community Development Block Grant that's written into the federal budget for disaster relief for the areas affected by Hurricane Joaquin, the storm that fed the flood with moisture. He's hoping some of that money can be used to fix the Columbia Canal, which Benjamin calls the biggest project in the state, and fund the \$140 million that'll likely be needed to restore about 2,600 properties of low and moderate-income families.

"We're going to be vigilant. We're not going to slow down. We're not going to stop," he said.

As for the pot of \$300 million worth of federal funds, there's no word yet on when it'll be divvied up, but Congressman Clyburn told us in a statement:

"Officials at the Department of Housing and Urban Development tell my staff the allocation of additional disaster relief funds will be made in the coming weeks based on the damage and unmet needs for recovery in the affected states. ...I will continue to work closely with local leaders to make sure these HUD officials understand the scope of our needs in South Carolina."

The mayor said he expects rebuilding the canal will require some state funding too.

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Inspectors noted 'serious hazard' at Fort Jackson dam before it failed (The State)

By Sammy Fretwell

[The State](#), Columbia, SC, January 9, 2015

Problems found at Semmes Lake dam

Dam break blamed for flooding property nearby

Corps won't release some inspection records, citing terrorist threat

The Semmes Lake dam at Fort Jackson blew out during heavy rains in October

Two years before a flood swamped neighborhoods and commercial areas near Fort Jackson, federal inspectors found substantial problems at the base's Semmes Lake dam, an aging structure that crumbled during the massive October storm.

A 2013 inspection noted deficiencies in the dam and rated the 22-foot high structure as a "serious hazard,"

according to records released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A serious hazard rating is one of the worst grades the Corps can give after inspecting a dam to make sure it is stable and safe, records provided to The State newspaper show.

Fort Jackson did not respond to questions last week about whether it attempted to make repairs to the Semmes Lake dam. The fort was awaiting answers from the U.S. Department of Justice, a base official said Saturday.

But one Corps of Engineers dam expert said deficiencies cited in the 2013 inspection may have caused the dam to fail during the storm that rocked Columbia three months ago.

"I reviewed our report for Semmes and we did a very good job of describing all of the deficiencies that may have led to the failure," according to an Oct. 15 email from Corps dam official Shaun Stanton to other Corps officials.

Records released by the Corps provide more details about the possible cause of flooding near the military training base Oct. 4. That day, sheets of rain pelted Columbia for hours, swelling creeks, soaking neighborhoods, flooding streets and causing many people to flee to higher ground. More than a foot of rain fell.

Among the areas that flooded were major intersections, businesses and neighborhoods downstream from Fort Jackson.

Property owners in King's Grant, a gated neighborhood next to the base, have hired lawyers in an attempt to obtain compensation from the fort. Upset property owners say they suspect the Semmes Lake dam failure caused the rapid rush of water that flooded homes along Wildcat Creek, which runs out of the lake and into their community.

The Army could be liable for millions of dollars in damages if it is determined that the Semmes Lake dam failure contributed to flooding off the base – and federal officials know it.

"There has already been talk of the public blaming Fort Jackson for the damages, in the millions," Stanton's Oct. 15 email said.

At this point, it is unknown specifically what problems the Corps found in its 2013 inspection at the Semmes Lake dam. The Corps of Engineers refused The State newspaper's request to examine inspection reports for the Semmes Lake structure and other dams on the base.

The agency's Vicksburg, Miss., office provided some correspondence in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, but it said releasing dam inspection reports might help terrorists. It cited an exemption in federal law that allows the Corps to withhold documents if the release could endanger anyone's life.

Releasing inspection reports "would give anyone seeking to cause harm the ability to deduce the effect of dam failure," Corps lawyer Bill Woodard's letter to The State said. "Terrorists or criminals could use that information to determine whether attacking a dam would be worthwhile."

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said he wants to know more about dam failures at Fort Jackson – and why the Corps won't release the records. Graham labeled the Corps' refusal to release the records "an inappropriate decision."

Thousands of homes and businesses are near Fort Jackson in South Carolina's largest city.

"I want to hear what the Army says," Graham said. "But my bias is to say that there is no national security compromise in talking about a dam. Why did the dam break? The people in South Carolina who live by the base need to be reassured it is not going to happen again. I don't buy what the Army is saying. It makes no sense."

In addition to the Semmes Lake dam failure, more than 40 private dams failed in the Columbia area during the storm. Unlike the base, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control has provided inspection records for the dams it regulates.

Although the Corps would not release inspection reports, other documents released by the agency, or which are on federal websites, show the Semmes Lake dam has a history of repair needs.

Federal records show that the earthen dam needed attention as far back as 1981. In the mid-1990s, inspectors cited erosion and a sinkhole in the dam, a 1995 Department of the Army report says.

Some of the 1990s deficiencies later were fixed, according to the report. But the 75-year-old dam continued to need maintenance and, in 2006, was scheduled for repairs, records show. By 2013, inspectors again noted problems, according to two emails from Corps officials in October.

The Oct. 15 email from Stanton, a dam inspection program manager with the Corps' Vicksburg, Miss., division, said the 970-foot-long dam ranked as a "serious hazard, which is our second to worst rating." In an Oct. 16 email, Corps structures laboratory director William Grogan also noted that the dam was a serious hazard.

Stanton, in an interview with The State newspaper last week, said deficiencies cited in the 2013 report were notable. A dam with a serious hazard designation "is a dam that we feel could fail under normal working conditions," Stanton told the newspaper.

Jones Andrews, a Columbia lawyer representing property owners whose homes were damaged in the flood, called the email referring to the hazardous condition of the dam "extremely concerning" given the number of people who live around Fort Jackson.

The Semmes Lake dam is one of four on Fort Jackson that either failed or sustained damage during the Oct. 4 storm, officials at the fort said a month after the flood.

Fort Jackson officials have said the Army is conducting an investigation to determine the exact cause of the failure. They were unsure in November whether the dam, which held back water for a recreational lake, would be rebuilt.

Grogan's email noted that Fort Jackson did not seek help from the Vicksburg division of the Corps in trying to determine why the dam had failed. The Vicksburg division inspects Army dams, but in this case, Stanton said another section of the Corps is looking into the cause of the Semmes Lake dam failure. The status of the investigation was unknown last week.

Staff writer Andrew Shain contributed to this story.

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[Aiken County officials to receive \\$1.5M federal grant for Langley Dam repairs](#) (Aiken Standard)

By Dan Brown

[Aiken Standard](#), Jan 6 2016

The long awaited repairs to Langley Dam could take a step forward soon with the Tuesday announcement of a \$1.5 million federal hazard mitigation grant.

The grant includes a \$500,000 Aiken County match to bring the total funds allocated to Langley Dam repair work to \$2 million, according to County Administrator Clay Killian.

In the fall of 2014, officials discovered a leak in Langley Dam causing the dam to close and several water competitions to be canceled. During Tuesday's meeting, Council tabled a \$6 million general obligations bond earmarked for Langley Dam repairs while waiting for a response from the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** regarding their grant application.

"It's a good news/bad news thing," Killian said Tuesday. "We asked for \$8 million, which was the maximum amount allowable under the Hazard Mitigation Grant, and we got \$1.5 million with the \$500,000 match, which isn't great, but it's a start, and we're keeping our fingers crossed for more."

Repairs would include a complete replacement of the spillway, Killian told Council on Tuesday.

"The biggest problem is the spillway," he said. "With all that we have to replace, it will be a complete replacement by the time we're through."

The key issue, according to members of Council, is to make sure the job is done completely and correctly.

"We have been pushing for a complete replacement of the spillway so we can make sure this is done right," said Council member LaWana McKenzie. "It's not a quick fix. When we do this, and it needs to be done right so it will last another 100 years. We want to bring Langley Pond back to its former prestigious level where it is a family oriented venue. It's just a matter of doing it right and making sure it's not a problem that keeps coming up."

The lower gates in the spillway will need to be replaced, according to Killian, while the three upper gates with temporary siphons running handle pond levels.

"The problem with the lower gates is we're not sure we can close the lower gates once they're opened," Killian said.

Langley Dam is roughly 135 years old, and the spillway, constructed during the 1950s, is more 60 years old.

Built in 1854, the dam originally was developed as an earthen dam, built 900 feet long and 20 feet high.

The County acquired the property about seven years ago, according to Killian, with Langley Pond being the site for rowing events, including practice sessions for canoe and kayaking before the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Killian said he hopes to have a plan of action ready for Council's review to present to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by their next meeting on Jan. 19.

"Our engineers are working to present DHEC with a plan of action we can afford and, at the same time, meet DHEC's design standards," Killian said. "This grant award helps give us a sense of direction moving forward."

In other business on Tuesday, Council approved the second of three readings of a rezoning request ordinance to rezone 211 tax parcels, or 88 acres, from rural urban development to single family residence.

The 211 tax parcels, or home sites, are located in the Beech Island area in Council District 3.

"We have had a town hall meeting in the community after sending out letters advising homeowners and residents of the proposed zoning change," McKenzie said. "There was a good turnout of concerned residents, about 45 to 55 people attended."

McKenzie said under the current zoning, homeowners are protected from just three business developments – hazardous waste sites, adult oriented retail stores and junkyards.

“What they’re trying to do is to keep their neighborhood from having businesses with loud noises attached to their neighborhoods,” she said. “These are small lots, and they would have farm animals come in there otherwise. This will help the communities retain their neighborhood feel.”

County Council also honored Council member Sandy Haskell on Tuesday for his service as County Council vice chairman during 2015.

“I want to thank you for all your help over the last year,” Council Chairman Ronnie Young said. “You really helped me out a lot.”

For his efforts, Haskell was reelected to the vice chairman’s position for 2016 by a unanimous council vote. (This does not relate to the Oct 2015 flood).

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Tiny home built for family devastated by South Carolina flooding (WTOC)

By Traci Washington

(WTOC) BLUFFTON, SC, Jan 08, 2016



The first tiny home made for South Carolina flood victims is finished and ready to be delivered to a family in need.

Brighton Builders built this tiny house after the historic floods that devastated parts of the Palmetto State. The home will soon be given to a family affected by the natural disaster, the project was funded by donations.

“Building the home was easier than getting the details worked out for the family,” said Susan Gunyou. “There’s been some red tape involved but I think we’re in the final stages of getting everything worked out.”

Brighton Builders have already started building a second tiny home to give to another family.

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Mosquitoes a growing problem after the flood (King Tree News)

BY MICHAEL DUKE

Kings Tree News, October 24, 2015

During Williamsburg County Council's October 20, meeting Council member Andy McKnight brought up a serious matter. McKnight has talked with several citizens who have voiced concern regarding the exploding mosquito population as a result of the flood. McKnight addressed Supervisor Stanley Pasley and council about looking into widespread spraying. “I’d like for us to look into and see if there’s any way possible that we can get someone to fly the area to spray because there is so much water in the swamp,” said McKnight. He suggested resources that may be able to help with the cost. “Maybe we can get some money from **FEMA** or someone to help to take care of the cost of it.” McKnight also said the next step would be to bid it out. “I think we could get more mileage because we go down the roads with trucks but if we fly - several counties I talked to and they are doing it - we would benefit much greater.” Pasley said several colleagues had approached him with the same concerns. “That’s one of the items that Dr. (Tiffany) Cooks was talking about,” said Pasley, referring to the Williamsburg County Emergency Management Division Director. “I hope that we will have an answer regarding how we may be able to proceed tomorrow.” On Saturday, October 24, McKnight said they are still looking into it but added because of the state of emergency the County continues to be in, they could waive the bidding process. “That would expedite the process,” said McKnight. “I’ve never seen so many mosquitoes in my life. They are all over the place.” In the meantime, Williamsburg County Environmental Services is assessing neighborhoods and has started ground-based spraying in some areas. Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service suggests in order to reduce the chance of being bitten by Asian tiger mosquitoes, wear insect repellents and long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. There are a variety of products available such as Biopesticide repellents derived from natural ingredients such as Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. Products with the active component DEET work to repel all mosquitoes. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control recommends that DEET products should be applied sparingly to exposed skin. Most effective

repellents will contain 20 percent to 30 percent DEET. Products with more than 30 percent DEET may cause side effects, mainly in children. Before using any insecticide, always read the label and follow directions and all safety precautions.

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A plague of mosquitoes vexes South Carolina after historic floods (Associated Press)

[Associated Press](#), November 05, 2015

Floodwaters continue to wreak havoc in South Carolina

COLUMBIA, S.C. – After rainfall and floods of almost biblical proportions, South Carolina is seeing a plague of mosquitoes. Now, lawmakers from both parties agree exterminating them must be a priority — even if it means spending actual money.

There's bipartisan support for killing the tiny bloodsuckers that have been tormenting residents following last month's historic rainfall that flooded several areas of the state. Lawmakers said Thursday they want the federal government to pay for the anti-mosquito campaign, but if it doesn't, the state should consider picking up the tab.

The total price tag for all counties that are part of the federal emergency declaration is estimated at \$39 million, according to South Carolina's Emergency Management Division. But lawmakers said rural areas can't afford the hefty \$1.5 million per-county estimate for aerial spraying. Yet they're concerned about possible health risks for people, pets and livestock.

Richland County, also home to the state capital Columbia, is paying to spray rural parts of the hard-hit county this week, where the "landing rate" has reached more than 60 per minute. That's far more than the four or five landings normal for this time of year, vector control director Tammy Brewer told The State newspaper.

Several days of record-setting downpours in early October claimed 19 storm-related deaths in the Carolinas, flooded hundreds of homes and businesses, and temporarily shut down hundreds of flooded roads and washed-out bridges. The storm also temporarily left stretches of several interstates impassable in South Carolina.

Lawmakers said it's not fair to leave residents of counties with smaller tax bases to suffer.

"I see this as a statewide problem, not a county problem. Rural counties can't do this," said state Rep. Murrell Smith, R-Sumter, adding that mosquitoes are the No. 1 complaint he's getting now from constituents. If the federal government doesn't pay, "the state of South Carolina will have to bear this as an expense."

State Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Democrat from Orangeburg, said it should be an issue all lawmakers can support, as mosquitoes don't care about anyone's political party or race.

"We're all getting bit," she said, speaking at a meeting of the state's house budget-writing committee Thursday.

She suggested asking the state's congressional delegation to push for federal reimbursement. She said it could affect the state's No. 1 industry of tourism "if the word gets out we've got West Nile mosquitoes flying around here."

Tony Melton, a Clemson extension service agent who's been helping farmers for 35 years, said the mosquito problem is the worst he's ever seen.

"People are staying inside; that's the bottom line," said Melton, who's based out of Florence. "You can't get out of a tractor in the field."

He said mosquitoes were "eating me alive" a couple weeks ago as he rode a cab-less tractor in a sweet potato field.

He predicts the problem will only worsen with time as the mosquitoes are "just breeding tremendously."

"All that water is standing in spots and fields where there's no drainage for a long time," he noted.

It appears the federal government will not cover the cost of killing mosquitoes, said Kim Stenson, director of the state's Emergency Management Division. But he said he will keep bringing the issue before **FEMA**.

"It has to present a fairly significant health hazard. The evidence isn't there right now," he said.

There have been no cases of West Nile Virus since the flooding, according to the state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Smith said the state shouldn't wait until cases are detected.

"It's incumbent on us in the General Assembly and everyone to mitigate this before it becomes too late. One person being affected is one too many," he said. "I've never seen mosquitoes this large. They're multiplying, and we're just getting started on the breeding and what's to come."

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CanalSide community nearing agreement to expand (The State)

By Avery G. Wilks

[The State](#), January 7, 2016

COLUMBIA, SC- A grander courtyard entrance to appeal to CanalSide residents and riverwalk pedestrians and some facade improvements moved Columbia's design commission and the developer closer on Wednesday to agreement on a \$58 million expansion to the residential community.

The informal, hour-long meeting with The Beach Co. of Charleston came a month after plans for the addition stalled in a meeting of the city's Design/Development Review Commission. Changes, which must be approved by the full commission, included adding more aesthetic detail to one building and redesigning an entrance to a courtyard on another.

The proposed addition includes roughly 315 residential units and would nearly double CanalSide's number of residents, currently at about 600.

Panel members on Wednesday had questions about the latest design but said the changes were a step in the right direction.

Member John Powell said the updated plans would probably be approved if the board were able to hold a vote Wednesday.

"I think we're pretty close," said Ned Miller, The Beach Co. development manager overseeing the project. "We're 95 percent of the way there."

The panel previously approved two of the four proposed buildings but was critical of designs for the other two. After hearing that feedback, The Beach Co. redesigned the entrance to a courtyard area near the building facing the Columbia Canal.

Panel members said that entrance needed to better separate public space from private space while still appealing both to the building's tenants and to residents walking along the canal's riverwalk.

"We're trying to make it feel more grand, a more impressive face toward the (riverwalk), where there's going to be a lot of public going by," Miller said.

The developer also added more aesthetic detail to one building close to the canal and Klapman Boulevard, which leads into downtown Columbia. That included connecting two buildings that were previously separated and further articulating the facade to make the back of the building, which faces a major thoroughfare, look as detailed as the front.

Member Tom Savory told the developer the design for that building was "vastly improved."

The plans are set to return to the city's design panel in February.

Miller said the delay has left The Beach Co. about three months behind schedule. The developer expects to begin construction in late spring or early summer and to complete construction in two years, Miller said.

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Making South Carolina stronger (The State)

By John Monk

[The State](#), January 2, 2016

After a tumultuous 2015, state faces clear challenges in year ahead

The South Carolina and Clemson bands combine to honor the Charleston Nine who died at Mother Emanuel church during halftime of the USC-Clemson game November 28, 2015 at Williams-Brice Stadium

The South Carolina and Clemson bands combine to honor the Charleston Nine who died at Mother Emanuel church during halftime of the USC-Clemson game November 28, 2015 at Williams-Brice Stadium

2015 is gone.

Thank heavens.

But out of the losses, what will rise?

The year saw a murder-suicide rock the University of South Carolina campus, the Legislature fail to address the state's crumbling roads and bridges, police officers shoot unarmed men, a gunman kill nine parishioners who had welcomed him, a long-divisive banner finally furled, a long-sought savior give up and quit, and historic rains cause historic damage.

But there were uplifting moments, too.

Relatives forgave the gunman, teaching a nation – once again – the meaning of amazing grace. USC's women's basketball team made the Final 4. So, too, did Clemson's football team.

Now comes 2016.

The losses of 2015 must be addressed. What – if anything – can be done about mad gunmen? Failed leaders? Age-old divisions? Flood damage?

And can those bright spots grow even brighter?

Making South Carolina stronger in 2016 will be about rising from the ruins to address challenges, improving the state and our lives.

Those who stood in that Charleston courtroom and the volunteers who risked their lives to save flood victims they did not even know show the strength of South Carolina's character.

They showed what can be done when heart combines with will.

Now, in 2016, we must, too.

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Residents Optimistic On Returning Home After The Flood (WLTX)

By Loren Thomas,

[WLTX](#), January 4, 2016

It has been three months since the October flood devastated neighborhoods around the Midlands. Now homeowners are working to rebuild in order to get back into their homes.

Columbia, SC (WLTX) - For the past three months residents who saw flood damage from October 4th are working to get back into their homes.

"Sometimes it's hard to believe that it has happened," says Cynthia Pierce.

Pierce lived in her home off of Rickenbaker Rd. for 28 years. In October she saw several feet of water in her home. Now more than 90 days later she and her husband are one step closer to moving back in, but before they do that, they must raise their house and extra five feet.

"It's now about two to three feet off the ground and it'll be seven to eight feet off the ground," says Pierce. "So the appearance is what we thought about, but being in compliance so that we would have a better resale value one day was utmost in our minds too."

Her next door neighbor has a different story.

Yes, both of their homes saw severe damage from the flood and they both received help from **FEMA**, but for the Richardson's they won't have to raise their home.

"We were very lucky," says David Richardson. "We are actually the highest house on the street."

Richardson says most of his neighbors were hit hard by the flood, but they are all taking a different route to getting back into their homes.

"Some people are just selling their houses as is, some people are raising their houses you know, but most of the neighbors are rebuilding and moving back in."

It could take him a few months to get back in his home and for Pierce it could take a year, but they are both optimistic about the results.

"We're very hopeful and God has just surrounded us with friends and strangers who have helped us immensely," says Pierce.

"It will be great, it will be, but right now I'm just trying to get a plumber in here," laughed Richardson.

So far **FEMA** has approved \$78.7 million in grants to more than 30,000 people in the Palmetto State. [Back to top](#)

Aiken County officials to receive \$1.5M federal grant for Langley Dam repairs (Aiken Standard)

By Dan Brown

[Aiken Standard](#), Jan 6 2016

The long awaited repairs to Langley Dam could take a step forward soon with the Tuesday announcement of a \$1.5 million federal hazard mitigation grant.

The grant includes a \$500,000 Aiken County match to bring the total funds allocated to Langley Dam repair work to \$2 million, according to County Administrator Clay Killian.

In the fall of 2014, officials discovered a leak in Langley Dam causing the dam to close and several water competitions to be canceled. During Tuesday's meeting, Council tabled a \$6 million general obligations bond earmarked for Langley Dam repairs while waiting for a response from the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** regarding their grant application.

"It's a good news/bad news thing," Killian said Tuesday. "We asked for \$8 million, which was the maximum amount allowable under the Hazard Mitigation Grant, and we got \$1.5 million with the \$500,000 match, which isn't great, but it's a start, and we're keeping our fingers crossed for more."

Repairs would include a complete replacement of the spillway, Killian told Council on Tuesday.

"The biggest problem is the spillway," he said. "With all that we have to replace, it will be a complete replacement by the time we're through."

The key issue, according to members of Council, is to make sure the job is done completely and correctly.

“We have been pushing for a complete replacement of the spillway so we can make sure this is done right,” said Council member LaWana McKenzie. “It’s not a quick fix. When we do this, and it needs to be done right so it will last another 100 years. We want to bring Langley Pond back to its former prestigious level where it is a family oriented venue. It’s just a matter of doing it right and making sure it’s not a problem that keeps coming up.”

The lower gates in the spillway will need to be replaced, according to Killian, while the three upper gates with temporary siphons running handle pond levels.

“The problem with the lower gates is we’re not sure we can close the lower gates once they’re opened,” Killian said.

Langley Dam is roughly 135 years old, and the spillway, constructed during the 1950s, is more 60 years old.

Built in 1854, the dam originally was developed as an earthen dam, built 900 feet long and 20 feet high.

The County acquired the property about seven years ago, according to Killian, with Langley Pond being the site for rowing events, including practice sessions for canoe and kayaking before the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Killian said he hopes to have a plan of action ready for Council’s review to present to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by their next meeting on Jan. 19.

“Our engineers are working to present DHEC with a plan of action we can afford and, at the same time, meet DHEC’s design standards,” Killian said. “This grant award helps give us a sense of direction moving forward.”

In other business on Tuesday, Council approved the second of three readings of a rezoning request ordinance to rezone 211 tax parcels, or 88 acres, from rural urban development to single family residence.

The 211 tax parcels, or home sites, are located in the Beech Island area in Council District 3.

“We have had a town hall meeting in the community after sending out letters advising homeowners and residents of the proposed zoning change,” McKenzie said. “There was a good turnout of concerned residents, about 45 to 55 people attended.”

McKenzie said under the current zoning, homeowners are protected from just three business developments – hazardous waste sites, adult oriented retail stores and junkyards.

“What they’re trying to do is to keep their neighborhood from having businesses with loud noises attached to their neighborhoods,” she said. “These are small lots, and they would have farm animals come in there otherwise. This will help the communities retain their neighborhood feel.”

County Council also honored Council member Sandy Haskell on Tuesday for his service as County Council vice chairman during 2015.

“I want to thank you for all your help over the last year,” Council Chairman Ronnie Young said. “You really helped me out a lot.”

For his efforts, Haskell was reelected to the vice chairman’s position for 2016 by a unanimous council vote.

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Inspectors noted ‘serious hazard’ at Fort Jackson dam before it failed (The State)

By Sammy Fretwell

[The State](#), Columbia, January 9, 2015

Problems found at Semmes Lake dam

Dam break blamed for flooding property nearby

Corps won’t release some inspection records, citing terrorist threat

The Semmes Lake dam at Fort Jackson blew out during heavy rains in October

Two years before a flood swamped neighborhoods and commercial areas near Fort Jackson, federal inspectors found substantial problems at the base’s Semmes Lake dam, an aging structure that crumbled during the massive October storm.

A 2013 inspection noted deficiencies in the dam and rated the 22-foot high structure as a “serious hazard,” according to records released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A serious hazard rating is one of the worst grades the Corps can give after inspecting a dam to make sure it is stable and safe, records provided to The State newspaper show.

Fort Jackson did not respond to questions last week about whether it attempted to make repairs to the Semmes Lake dam. The fort was awaiting answers from the U.S. Department of Justice, a base official said Saturday.

But one Corps of Engineers dam expert said deficiencies cited in the 2013 inspection may have caused the dam to fail during the storm that rocked Columbia three months ago.

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Session Opens With Lawmakers Still Far Apart On Fixing Roads (AP)

By Seanna Adcox

Associated Press, January 9, 2016

COLUMBIA – While legislators pledge to address road funding and flood relief during the next six months, there's no consensus on what they'll do.

A \$1.3 billion windfall makes a compromise even harder. And in a year when every House and Senate seat is up for grabs, concern over attracting challengers could delay votes until after the March 30 filing deadline.

But legislators do agree there's a bright side to October's catastrophic flooding, which caused roadways ? many of them already in bad shape ? to crumble. At the Oct. 5 peak, more than 500 roads and bridges were closed across the state, including a long stretch of Interstate 95 that forced a 168-mile detour.

"The flood highlights just how poor our roads and bridges are," Sen. Greg Hembree, R-North Myrtle Beach, said at a pre-session gathering of reporters Thursday. "It brings a new sense of urgency that's necessary."

Fixing South Carolina's roadways topped last year's priority list, too.

The House passed a plan last April that would raise an additional \$400 million annually. A bill raising roughly twice that through increases in gas taxes, vehicle sales taxes and license fees reached the Senate floor. But a weekslong filibuster by Sen. Tom Davis blocked a vote.

That bill is back up for debate when the legislative session resumes Tuesday.

"The focus has been on raising the gas tax instead of the need. Once people understand the need, we'll figure out a way to fund it," said Rep. Kenny Bingham, R-Cayce. "The need is now obvious."

But Davis, R-Beaufort, continues his call for reforms first. He said he believes more senators see the need to change the Department of Transportation's governance structure. He can agree to a gas tax increase later, he said, if the money's spent wisely and more is still needed.

The \$1.3 billion additional revenue available to spend ? much of it surpluses from previous years ? complicates the debate, said Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler.

Agencies' budget requests would gobble up all of that and much more.

But that money makes it "very difficult to go back home and explain to citizens how we're raising their taxes," said Peeler, R-Gaffney. "It cuts both ways ? people will vote against you if you vote for a gas tax and they'll vote against you if you don't fix their roads."

Republican leaders say any gas tax increase will be accompanied by a tax cut elsewhere. They don't agree on how much.

"When you raise the gas tax, you have the benefit of those using the roads paying for the roads, but we have enough money to cut taxes at the same time," Hembree said.

But Democrats say it's folly to deal with income taxes inside a roads bill.

Roughly \$115 million of the extra revenue will cover the state's match for federal money spent amid the disaster.

Legislators of both parties say the state should also provide money to farmers who were devastated by flooding at harvest time. The Department of Agriculture estimates direct crop losses from the flooding at \$376 million.

"Everyone I've talked to is worried we may well lose many, many farmers in South Carolina if we don't provide them with aid," said House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Hartsville.

But the amount and how it would be distributed is unknown. Even less clear is whether legislators will help other property owners. The **Federal Emergency Management Agency** has awarded more than \$79 million for home repairs, temporary housing, and other disaster-related expenses. But that's an average of just \$3,000 per approved household. And roughly 70 percent of the more than 83,000 people who applied for help were denied.

"If they need a roof, **FEMA** gives them enough money for a shingle," said House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford.

He and other Democrats want the state to use surplus money to help restore homes. But no Republican at Thursday's gathering backed the idea.

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It could be 6 more months before Riverwalk Park is fully open (WIS)

By Michal Higdon

[WIS TV 10](#) Columbia, Jan 07, 2016

Months after October's flooding, the Midlands is still seeing problems every time it rains -- especially Riverwalk Park and Amphitheater in West Columbia.

Last week's rain brought even more floods to the area. Park officials say rising water levels along the Congaree

River are still high and there's flooding prevalent throughout the park.

Since the flood back in October, the Riverwalk Park has been on a sort of roller coaster. After the initial flood, they were able to reopen the Amphitheater portion of the Riverwalk, but it has been closed several more times because it keeps experiencing flooding problems.

Crews monitoring the Riverwalk say there are pedestrian bridge issues to the north and erosion problems toward Cayce. Since October, crews have cleaned up everything from mud, debris, and trees. They also found a lot of erosion problems and the river level is not helping.

"We are getting additional erosion from that," Jamie Hook, director of the West Columbia Public Works Department, said. "And mainly we've got a lot of tree balls that were exposed down by the river because of the erosion. So now with these rains and all now, we're getting additional trees that are falling and things like that more frequently than in typical times. Other than that, it's just the typical mud that's washed up and cleanup and things like that. But that's been the biggest issue."

Hook says accessibility to the river is another major problem, so they're not going to be able to bring in a lot of large equipment -- extending the amount of time it could take before the park is fully opened again.

"The city is doing all it can do right now to open it as soon as we can," Hook said. "We know that people enjoy the Riverwalk, we want them to. We know it's one of our jewels that we have as a city and as quick as we can I promise you we're going to get it open. It's been unreal lately and the intensity of the rains lately. It's just something I've never seen."

Hook says he believes it could be 6 months until everything is back to normal and folks are able to use the Riverwalk Park in its entirety.

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Rainfall brings flooding threat to Midlands (WIS)

By WIS Staff

[WIS TV 10](#) COLUMBIA, SC - Update Jan 08, 2016

A River Flood Advisory has been issued by the National Weather Service and is in effect until late Tuesday for Lexington and Richland Counties.

A flood warning was issued for the Congaree River at Carolina Eastman in lower Richland County. At 7 p.m. Sunday the river was at 122 feet. Flood stage is 115 feet. According to the NWS, The river will continue rising to near 123 feet Friday afternoon.

The National Weather Service believes the river will fluctuate between about 10 and 15 feet through Friday. Weather officials say rainfall during the past few days combined with reservoir operations has produced elevated flows along the Congaree River.

The NWS says roads in low lying areas and swampland downstream from Columbia could become flooded, especially the areas that are already saturated from heavy rain we saw last week.

A Flood Warning was extended Tuesday morning for the North Fork Edisto River at Orangeburg. The same warning was extended for the Wateree River at Lake Wateree, which reached flood stage at 100 feet Tuesday morning. The river will rise to about 102 feet Friday afternoon.

Flood-prone areas near Olympia, Five Points, and under the Gervais Street train trestle in Columbia could take on water very fast from heavy rainfall. Drivers are warned to use caution.

In Newberry County, people living along the Saluda River are warned of a high water emergency at Buzzard Roost Dam on Lake Greenwood in Greenwood County. Water will be released from the lake into the Saluda River, which eventually will make its way into Lake Murray.

Wednesday and Thursday will also feature periods of rain which could aggravate saturated areas that have recently flooded due to heavy rain.

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Any flood damage for you? You could claim it on your 2015 tax return (WIS)

By Billie Jean Shaw

[WIS News 10](#), NBC Columbia, Jan 08, 2016

If you were a victim of October's flood, you may qualify for tax relief efforts from the IRS.

RELATED: See flooding photos from October's historic flooding.

Janet Kellet, a local tax expert says those who suffered severe damage such as losing a home have the option of claiming a casualty loss on their 2014 or 2015 tax return.

A casualty loss is a tax loss that is unexpected or sudden.

However, Kellet says not all property qualifies as a loss.

"Well with casualty losses that will have to exceed 10 percent of your AGI, that's your income for the year to be able to deduct that and also you will have to have some tax liability. What it will do is reduce your tax liability, it's not like a credit."

If you choose to file a casualty loss for your 2014 return, the deadline has been extended to February 16. The 2015 deadline is April 15.

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Rising water levels not only threat on Lake Wateree and Wateree River (WIS)

By Chad Mills

WISTV 10 KERSHAW COUNTY, SC Jan 08, 2016

A Midlands lake is breaking records but not in a good way. Officials are keeping a close eye on Lake Wateree and the Wateree River as the flood warning continues for that area.

As of 9 a.m. Friday, the Wateree River at Lake Wateree was recorded at a record 104.3 feet. Flood stage is 100 feet. The National Weather Service expects the water level to fall Friday afternoon.

It's a lot more water than Tucker Smith is used to at his home on Lake Wateree.

"I mean, if you go over there to our dock, I mean, you can't even walk over there without waders on. It'll come up to your chest and shoulders," he said.

Right now, his Kershaw County home is an island.

"We still got probably a foot and a half or two feet before it comes in the house."

Thursday afternoon, as the lake level rose inch by inch, he prepared.

"You know, I know in talking to my dad and my uncle up here, you know, I made sure all the low outlets were cut off at the breaker, and we were ready if water came in the house to get all the electrical stuff off the floor if we could get it," he said. "We've got lots of water in case the power goes out. Flashlights. Things like that."

Duke Energy says the lake is as high as it has been since 1989, when runoff from rain produced by Hurricane Hugo pushed the lake level to just shy of 107 feet.

"We've had crews out most of the day putting signs out and warning. We've had social media," said Gene Faulkenberry, Kershaw County's Department of Safety and Emergency Services Director.

But right now, water continues to spill over the dam – a similar sight back in 1989 after Hugo.

"Looking at the radars and, hopefully, with the rain diminishing after today, we will start to see the river and the lake start to recede in the next several days – maybe into next week," he said. "That'll be a big help if we can get some sunshine, and it'll dry some of this out."

As emergency officials keep a watchful eye on the lake and river, homeowners do, too.

"We're going to try and stick it out for the night. We've got a backup plan if we need to take a run out."

In addition to the water, Smith also had to deal with a water moccasin. One swam up to the side of his house Thursday and he had to chase it off with a golf club; all the more reason to be cautious around the flooded areas of Kershaw and Fairfield Counties.

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SCE&G officials explain how lake levels are controlled (WIS)

By Emery Glover

WISTV News 10, NBC Columbia, Jan 05, 2016

With more rain in the forecast this week, SCE&G officials are continuing to monitor Lake Murray dam levels.

Federal law states that SCE&G officials cannot let Lake Murray rise above 360 feet. On Monday, they explained the process that helps keeps those levels under control when the possibility of more inflow, such as rain, exists.

First, water is released from Lake Murray. Then, it travels through the Saluda Hydro Plant and flows to the Lower Saluda River. This process controls the inflow and outflow of water in the dam, which could be dangerous if it does not remained balanced.

SCE&G spokesperson Eric Boomhower says this process is a standard protocol.

"We've been running that plant and we will continue to run it with the goal of trying to create enough storage capacity, if you will, in Lake Murray so that should we see additional rainfall the lake can accommodate that," Boomhower said.

Boomhower said local law enforcement would be in charge of notifying residents of an evacuation in the event that water levels rise and could become hazardous.

Real-time updates on the Lake Murray water levels are provided by SCE&G.

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Residents upset over reverse 911 call for Lower Richland sewer project (WIS)

By Mike DeSumma

WIS TV 10 NBC Columbia, Jan 06, 2016

Opponents of a hotly debated sewer project for Lower Richland County say they're angered by a recent way officials are getting word out about it.

Early last month they say reverse 911 calls went out to several area homes, reminding folks of a deadline to connect to the project without fees. Those calls came from the Richland County Sheriff's Department through the Community Action Team.

The group 'Hopkins and Lower Richland Citizens United' is fiercely against the project. Members have also filed a lawsuit against the county over it.

Their question, why was the 911 system being used for that purpose?

"We expect that system to be used for emergencies, jailbreaks, criminals on the loss. Anything to inform the community of any crimes or anything that might be going on, or any emergency flooding or something to that effect," 'Hopkins and Lower Richland Citizens United' member, Helen Taylor-Bradley said.

The group says several residents became worried when the calls went out.

"They were elderly people and they were intimidated and wanted to know 'what should I do?' Umm do I have to go do this if I don't want to do it? And I said nobody has to do anything that they don't want to do. You have the right to make your decisions, and don't feel threatened by a call that you get on the phone from the sheriff's department, because in the first place it should not have come from the sheriff's department," Taylor-Bradley said.

The sheriff's department says it sent out the 911 call at the request of the Richland County council. Officials there say the purpose was to remind people the connection deadline was approaching, not telling people they had to connect.

Opponents of the sewer project say more people have signed on since the call went out.

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Residents frustrated over road still closed from October's flood (WIS)

By Mike DeSumma

WISTV 10, Columbia, Jan 07, 2016

People who live off Spears Creek Church Road in Elgin say they're still waiting on DOT crews to start repairs from October's flood. But the Department of Transportation says as of now, it can't.

According to the DOT the problem is a dam that sits near the road. It was breached during the October flood causing the road to get washed out.

State officials say essentially until the dam gets repaired, work on the road has to wait.

Typically Spears Creek Church Road allows drivers to get from Two Notch Road to I-20. Currently traffic is being detoured down Clemson Road to get around the closure.

On the Two Notch side, there are several housing developments. Many people say their daily commutes are now longer, and they're also facing more traffic on Two Notch due to the road being closed.

"Like I said, ya know, it's kind of putting me out the way. And looking at this mess down here and everything, and everybody else's roads are somewhat being fixed, being looked at...uhm being worked on. And ya know I got to deal with what we dealing with right here. I'm just hoping they will go ahead and try to get the road fixed," Rodino Tew, who lives on Spears Creek Church Road said.

The DOT says currently DHEC is on the front lines of this problem. That department is contacting the owner of the dam, who has to make a choice.

The department says either the owner could chose to fix the dam or abandon it. Once that decision is made the DOT says it can design the structures to fix the road.

At this point it's not clear how quickly that will happen. ■

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TV/Radio Clips

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[FEMA. on WIS - COL \(NBC\) - Columbia, SC](#)

01/08/2016 07:27:58

Today (News)

... part of the cayce riverwalk which will not re-open is phase two centers set up by FEMA to help flood victims in the midlands are closing today. richland county officials say ...



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[FEMA. on WIS - COL \(NBC\) - Columbia, SC](#)

01/08/2016 08:58:26

Today (News)

... expects that may reopen in the summer. two centers set up by FEMA to help flood victims in the midlands are closing today. richland county officials say ...



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[FEMA. on WIS - COL \(NBC\) - Columbia, SC](#)

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WIS News 10 Middyay (News)

... no word yet on any injuries from the crash. two centers set up by FEMA to help flood victims in the midlands are closing today. richland county officials say ...



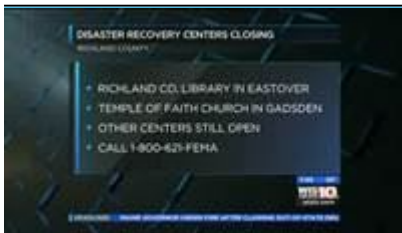
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[FEMA. on WIS - COL \(NBC\) - Columbia, SC](#)

01/08/2016 16:03:12

WIS News 10 at 4PM (News)

... no word yet on any injuries from the crash. two centers set up by FEMA to help flood victims in the midlands are closing today. richland county officials say ...



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[FEMA. on WIS - COL \(NBC\) - Columbia, SC](#)

01/08/2016 19:05:47

WIS News 10 7:00 Report (News)

... no word yet on any injuries from the crash. two centers set up by FEMA to help flood victims in the midlands have closed their doors. richland county officials say ...



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[FEMA on WACH - COL \(FOX\) - Columbia, SC](#)

01/08/2016 22:09:06

WACH FOX News at 10 (News)

... claims. chuck received assistance from FEMA and the local business administration. >> inside of the house doesn't look so good, but i still love the house. ...



[FEMA on WACH - COL \(FOX\) - Columbia, SC](#)

01/10/2016 08:36:03

OnPoint (Other)

... governor coming up with funds to help so in people who didn't necessarily get money from FEMA and still had recovery effort that is need today be done. this was 2015 was not just a year for that kind over think ...

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