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FYSA- Media Monitoring Report for DR 4241 SC 01/20/16

NEWS CLIPS

SOUTH CAROLINA-DR-4241

Wednesday, 20, January, 2016

Issues:

- None.

Summary:

- Nikki Haley's budget proposal provides more than \$350 million for flood recovery and infrastructure.
- A decision is being postpone to rebuild or tear down the TitleMax building until new flood maps go into effect later this year.
- Students volunteered their time cleaning up trash surrounding Gills Creek along Fort Jackson Boulevard Saturday for MLK Day.
- Farmers across the state are forming a coalition to get the help they say they need to survive and are currently recruiting more members before they try to reach out to politicians leaders.
- A woman receives the wrong order from Zappos. Zappos responds by sending fleece blankets as donations which will be distributed to Summerton flood victims still in need.
- South Carolina Advocates for Agriculture, a 501c3 organization, has announced the establishment of Plant it Forward South Carolina, a private relief fund for South Carolina farmers

Analysis:

- None

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- None

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Floods

Hope blooms for reopening Cypress Gardens (The Berkeley Independent)

By: Lindsay Street

[The Berkeley Independent](#), Tuesday, January 19, 2016

Cypress Gardens will reopen again — and hundreds of volunteers converged on Berkeley County's top tourist destination to make sure that reopening will be beautiful.

On Saturday, Jan. 16, about 300 people swarmed the 3.5 miles of trails around the 175-acre park that's nestled between Goose Creek and Moncks Corner. They cut down dead and dying trees, trimmed shrubs that obscured trails and gazebos, and tidied up, putting in about six hours of work on the sunny winter day.

The quiet of the gardens was, at least for one day, filled with the buzzing of equipment and laughter.

"They're here because they're proud of this place," gardens Director Heather Graham said during the event. "And they're ready for us to open back up."

There is still no date slated for the gardens reopening. Cypress Gardens was closed indefinitely in October following the historic flooding that devastated South Carolina. The heavy rains and swelling swamps damaged buildings and the kayak ramp.

County officials have promised that the public-owned gardens will reopen and have sought federal funds to aid in its reopening. In November, the nonprofit group that aids the gardens, Friends of Cypress Gardens, voted to freeze funds to the gardens during the rebuilding effort while funding from other organizations is determined.

The Friends organized Saturday's event on its Facebook page.

Andy Jarrett of Summerville brought his 4-year-old daughter Vera and 6-year-old son Frank to the cleanup event.

"I'm helping cleaning up for the animals," Frank said with a stick in hand and a smile on his face.

"You have to work all day and then get the ice cream when you get home," Vera said sagely. She added she liked being at the gardens because, "I like the name Cypress Gardens."

Andy Jarrett said this was his family's first visit to Cypress Gardens. Prior to this event, he was unaware of the Berkeley County jewel.

"I definitely want to come out once it opens again," Jarrett said. "It's beautiful ... I wasn't sure what to expect. It's been really nice being out here. It's gorgeous."

One could say cleaning up Cypress Gardens was a family affair. Stratford High sophomore Samantha Tyner is a third generation Cypress Gardens attendee. Her grandfather started visiting and she continued the tradition by helping with the cleanup effort.

"There's a lot of memories here. I feel like we should get closer to nature," Samantha said. "Today, I got a sense of I helped the community."

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Flood Cleanup Needs Are Ongoing, USC Students Are There to Help (SC Public Radio)

By: Tut Underwood,

[South Carolina Public Radio](#), January 19, 2016

Just because most of South Carolina's flood-ravaged roads and bridges have been re-opened and repairs to homes and businesses are in progress does not mean that little remains to be done. A group of University of South Carolina students met at Columbia's Gills Creek, site of some of the Midlands' most severe flooding, to clean flood debris from the creek banks and surrounding area. They were joined by USC President Harris Pastides. In this week's South Carolina Focus, the students talk about their motivations for helping out, and their plans to return to do more work soon.

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Local leaders hope Haley's budget means recovery money for roads (WRDW)

By: Logan Nester & Associated Press

[WRDW](#), January 15, 2016

AIKEN COUNTY, S.C. (WRDW) -- A drive through Aiken County shows roads recovering from October's historic flooding.

Glenn Poole, Chief of the Hollow Creek Volunteer Fire Department in Aiken County, says, "The roads, most of them have been repaired and others need more work done. The ponds, we have some that are still down."

Poole says his volunteer firefighters even spent their own money, "Several fire department members used their personal equipment to not repair, but patch roads so we could get people in and out, and no funding has come for that."

Poole and the fire department applied for relief money from FEMA, but haven't seen anything yet.

As Poole and others wait, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley proposed more than \$350 million for flood recovery.

Haley says, "The thousand year flood did have a cost... Our state match off of what FEMA gave was \$75 million, we also wanted to cover DOT's match which was \$280 million."

Law makers are going to have to come up with a lot of 0s to make this plan work, because Haley also wants to increase spending by more than \$100 million dollars for road improvements, up from \$216 million last year. "Roads and bridges are not left out. They certainly are there. We have taken \$344 million and put it toward roads," Haley says.

Haley also wants to hire more state dam inspectors and put more laws in place to regulate private dam owners. Poole says it all sounds nice, but there's a private pond blown out and a road still closed from flood damage in Aiken County. Poole says, "That pond is very valuable to us. It is a water point that we're trying to get certified. When that pond blew out, it took out not only one of our water points but one of our major roads to cut across."

For Poole, the millions Haley is hoping for won't mean much until his department (with only a \$15,000 budget) can start to see some cash.

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) -- Gov. Nikki Haley's budget proposal provides roughly \$350 million for roadwork and \$300 million for education initiatives.

Her budget released Friday sends an additional \$113 million to local governments, fully funding the state's obligation for the first time since 2009.

The only state employees receiving a raise under Haley's plan are prison officers.

Haley's budget incorporates her plan for fixing South Carolina's crumbling roads and bridges. Last year, she said she supports raising the gas tax by 10 cents over three years if legislators drastically cut income taxes over 10 years.

The \$345 million her budget spends on roadwork includes \$49 million from that phased-in gas tax increase. It cuts income taxes by \$131 million.

The executive budget is a recommendation. The House's budget-writing committee is working on its plan.

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After last year's firestorm, corn growers look to 2016 for fresh start (Easley Progress)

By: Avery G. Wilks

[Easley Progress](#), January 18, 2016

BLACKVILLE — Corn growers in South Carolina escaped the wrath of early October's epic rainfall, but the damage had already been done. Long before the brutal storm released its first drop, a severe summer drought and accompanying heat wave scorched cornfields throughout most of the state.

As a result, farmers lost tens of millions of dollars, thousands of acres of planted corn were destroyed and much of the corn that did survive produced disappointing yields and quality.

So now that 2015 has come and gone, what's in store for corn growers in 2016?

"After last year's misfortunes, there is a lot of disappointment and uncertainty about this year," said David Gunter, Clemson Extension's feed grain specialist who is based at the Edisto Research and Education Center near Blackville. "Not only did we have damaged yields, but the markets crashed last year. Because of all this, corn growers are facing some tough decisions this year as they attempt to find ways to recoup some of their losses."

In the southern portions of the state, corn is typically planted in the last half of March. In the Midlands, it is planted in April. And in the Piedmont, it is planted in early May. But in many regions of South Carolina, pond-sized pools of standing water remain on cornfields more than three months after the monster storm. If these don't recede in time for planting season, a lot of valuable acreage will be unusable.

"Ideally, we'd love to have a relatively dry winter to get some of this water out of the fields," Gunter said. "And nature has ways of helping out. When the maple trees start turning red, they really pull up a lot of water. Flooded areas can dry up in a hurry. Hopefully, growers are due for some good luck — from wherever they can get it."

Assuming winter cooperates, Gunter said a mild, moist spring followed by a relatively mild summer that includes 3-5 inches of rain per month will create ideal growing conditions for corn in 2016. If all goes well, harvests will begin in August and run through the end of September.

"It's not like we don't want any rain at all," Gunter said. "We need moisture to activate the herbicides and to get the corn to stand up at the same time. We just won't be able to handle another deluge. But it's hard to say what the weather is going to do. It seems more difficult to predict every year."

Gunter said that many corn growers will devote more of their acreage this year to soybeans, which have relatively low upfront costs, such as those in seed and fertilization.

"I keep hearing that 'we're just going to plant beans,' " Gunter said. "Farmers will try to cut costs as much as they can. Instead of planting 1,300 acres of corn this year, a grower might plant 600 acres and use the rest for beans."

Last year, corn growers were in good shape through May and most of June. But then the dry, hot conditions suddenly appeared and stubbornly refused to go away.

“The corn had really good growing conditions early on and was not acclimatized to the intense heat that followed,” Gunter said. “Because of this, we lost a lot of yield — particularly in the dryland fields — in a very short time. And even fields that had irrigation still suffered damage. When you’ve got these big pivots covering hundreds of acres, it takes a long time to complete just one revolution. The corn needed water every three days or so, and some of these systems couldn’t manage it.”

Regardless of what happened in the past, the future is not all doom and gloom. Clemson hopes to receive \$2.5 million from the South Carolina Legislature that will help it expand research and outreach programs that can help growers recover from the 2015 mess, and Gunter believes that farmers in South Carolina have the will and fortitude to rebound from almost anything. But severe droughts, heat and torrential rainfalls – especially occurring side by side in the same year – make it tough on everyone.

“The good thing about growers is they are optimistic and have short memories,” Gunter said. “Last year was last year. This year offers a fresh start. The farmers of South Carolina are used to making tough decisions. And they are stubborn and proud. Regardless, let’s hope we never have another year like 2015.”

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Fate of Columbia flood-ravaged building up in the air (SCNow)

By: Avery G. Wilks

SCNow, January 19, 2016

COLUMBIA, S.C. -- The owner of one of Columbia’s most visible reminders of the destruction of last fall’s floods is stuck in limbo, waiting on government officials whose decisions will control what he can do with his nearly \$1 million investment.

Owen Chastain, the primary owner of the TitleMax building that has become an eyesore on Devine Street, said the building probably won’t be torn down or repaired for months.

Richland County officials have said that under current floodplain laws, neither Chastain nor a new owner could rebuild because the property, on the banks of Gills Creek, is in a floodway.

But preliminary flood maps that likely will take effect later this year would open the door to rebuilding because the land would no longer be in a heavily restricted floodway, according to Andrea Bolling, the county’s floodplain coordinator.

So Chastain, a Port St. Lucie, Fla., resident, is left with a gamble. If he tears down the building and the county decides to ban future development, “then a very, very valuable piece of property is worthless,” he said. “And that’s not fair, and that’s not equitable. I’m kind of spinning around in circles right now.”

Richland County spokeswoman Beverly Harris said county officials are working with Chastain on a solution. But she would not discuss details.

“While the Richland County ordinance has specific requirements for development and redevelopment in the floodway, the county is looking into various alternatives to help property owners – both commercial and residential – affected by the flood,” Harris said.

Though Chastain’s property is surrounded by the city of Columbia, it is in an unincorporated parcel of land known as a doughnut hole.

Three months after the historic October flooding, the vacant brick building that held a TitleMax and Liberty Tax on a high-traffic stretch of Devine Street remains almost as it was when floodwater tore through it.

Much of the ceiling of Chastain’s building has collapsed. Insulation and wiring hang from parts of the ceiling that remain standing. Rubble is everywhere. The floor and parking lot on the side closest to the creek have caved in.

Chastain’s is not the only unused building in the hard-hit area. Across Devine Street, a Subway and Title Loans remain boarded. Their owners are working with city officials because those parcels are within Columbia’s city limits.

On the uphill side of Gills Creek, an adult sex shop and a sandwich shop have reopened.

Though Chastain said the county has given him the option, he said he has neither the interest nor the money to repair the building, which was at the site before restrictions on construction.

He discovered the damage to his investment while on a trip in early October. Chastain said he stopped at a hotel and watched television images of the building as it buckled. He said he had flood insurance and received a settlement, though Chastain would not say how much.

“The sheer force of water is truly amazing,” Chastain said last week during one of three trips here to find a solution. He said he’s been in talks with the county since the days immediately after the flood.

TitleMax and Liberty Tax have moved out of the building that dates to 1956, apparently before the land was designated as being in a floodway. Chastain said he wants to tear down the building, which county tax records show he bought for \$720,000 in 2008. He wants to sell it to a developer.

The distinction between a floodway and a floodplain is key to what can be done with the property.

Floodways include land closest to rivers or other waterways. They have tighter development restrictions than floodplains, which are farther away from waterways.

For example, the county's floodplain law allows construction in floodways of parking or loading areas, agricultural or horticultural uses, fishing or swimming areas and other open-air uses. But buildings are not permitted, with few exceptions.

Chastain said he will postpone his next move until new flood maps go into effect later this year.

County spokeswoman Harris said the maps, drawn by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, are going through an appeals process. Once all the appeals are addressed, there is a six-month "compliance period" before the maps take effect, she said.

"It's not a matter of what I want to do," Chastain said. "I have no choice but to simply wait and hope that the maps will allow the restrictions to be eased."

He said he is mulling other options, including selling the property to the county for green space.

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Students Celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day With Service Saturday (WLTX)

By Charles Ringwalt

[WLTX](#), January 17, 2016

Columbia, SC (WLTX) - Millions of people will be celebrating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Monday, but some are already honoring his name by volunteering this weekend.

Students volunteered their time cleaning up trash surrounding Gills Creek along Fort Jackson Boulevard Saturday.

"I believe in the dream. The dream that he had. I feel like I'm living it," University of South Carolina senior, Jaquan Irby said. "What he fought for is what I have the reality to do."

USC senior Tamaragail Tarrant she said she enjoys the moment when those volunteering for the first time realize the impact that they are having.

"These students probably didn't even know each other when they first started, but they're going to know each other by the time they leave and hopefully continue to build these relationships that they are building," said Tamaragail Tarrant.

This is not the first time Tarrant has volunteered, and said that her work helps the community understand the need and work of volunteers.

"You get to see that light in their eyes when they finally understand and they are so thankful for the help that you gave them. That's the feeling that I get every time I do service," she said. "This is our way of making sure people understand that we still need people to be out in our communities providing service of flood relief, helping keep the place beautiful because there is still all of that litter and trash from the flood."

The King Holiday Bill was signed into Federal law in 1983. In 2001 all states began observing the day as a paid holiday. South Carolina was the last.

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Haley budget plan includes \$350M for roads (Charleston Business Journal)

By: Staff Report

[Charleston Regional Business Journal](#), January 18, 2016

Gov. Nikki Haley's spending plan for the next fiscal year includes some \$350 million for shoring up the state's crumbling transportation infrastructure.

In unveiling her \$7.5 billion executive budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year, Haley also proposed spending \$124 million as the state's share of flood recovery costs, bolstering the dam safety program and trimming the state income tax for military retirees.

During Friday's press briefing, Haley said she plans to help pay for the road work by increasing the state fuel tax by 10 cents from its present level of 16.75 cents per gallon. At the same time, Haley has proposed that lawmakers trim the state income tax.

"I think this will be an active, healthy discussion on roads," Haley said, looking ahead to the coming debate in the General Assembly. Various proposals have been put forward to fix what is projected to be a \$1.5 billion-a-year shortfall in road funding.

"We're showing you how to pay for it, we're showing you how to give money back to the taxpayers, we're showing you how to put money into the roads and we're showing you how to make sure it's a win-win for everybody," Haley said.

Funding for Haley's transportation plan includes \$280 million in nonrecurring funds, \$65 million in motor vehicle sales tax and \$49 million in motor fuel fees. The gas tax increase of 10 cents per gallon would be phased in over three years, offsetting a portion of the income tax savings, with a priority on infrastructure spending, according to Haley's spending plan.

Meanwhile, the income tax would be trimmed "at all levels" by 30% over the next 10 years, according to Haley.

The governor also proposes to restructure the S.C. Department of Transportation and to "refocus the agency on maintaining the roads we have first, in an apolitical way."

Under the current setup, decisions about road funding are made by the DOT Commission and the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank. Although state law requires funding decisions be based on a priority list crafted by the Transportation Department, critics charge regional politics ultimately determine which projects are funded.

Regarding October's devastating floods, Haley said she plans to restore South Carolina's infrastructure to pre-storm conditions.

Her budget proposal includes \$75 million for the S.C. Emergency Management Division, which would cover the state and local share (25%) of damage costs under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Public Assistance program.

An additional \$1.5 million has been set aside to pay for repairs to S.C. National Guard armories damaged by the storm.

Haley's proposal includes \$49 million for the Transportation Department to cover the cost of repairs to roads and bridges not eligible for federal reimbursement. The governor also proposes appropriating \$40 million for the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism to initiate emergency beach nourishment projects prompted by erosion caused by the storm.

Additionally, Haley included \$661,500 to enhance the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Dams and Reservoirs Safety Program and provide for additional field inspections and dam reclassification inspections.

October's historic rainstorms, which dumped up to 20 inches on some areas of the Midlands, led to a series of dam failures. Follow-up investigations found that the state didn't have enough inspectors to enforce safety standards.

On workforce development, Haley has proposed \$5 million to fund the Pathways Initiative, which will provide workforce scholarships, and \$13.5 million in the ReadySC initiative.

As an incentive for military retirees to settle in South Carolina, Haley proposed a \$33.7 million tax cut for retirement income derived from active-duty military service.

"To get them to retire to South Carolina is a win for us," Haley said of efforts to attract military retirees. "Our companies can't get enough military retirees to work for them," she said.

Former service members are coveted by employers because of their leadership experience, integrity, discipline, loyalty and commitment, and ability to work in teams, advocates say.

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Farmers form coalition to seek help following damaging floods (WISTV)

By: Allie Spillyards

WISTV, January 19, 2016

CLARENDON COUNTY, SC (WIS) - Farmers across the state are coming together to get the help they say they need to survive.

With many still dealing with flood damage, high costs and low prices have left many farmers trying to figure out how they'll ever pay back loans.

"We're just brainstorming and trying to do whatever we can to get our story told and see if there's any money out there somewhere to help us, because we haven't seen this in my lifetime."

Now, over 100 farmers from nearly a dozen counties have formed the Coalition for Farmer's Hope, asking political leaders for flood relief aid for South Carolina's huge agriculture industry. That includes reform for crop insurance, which farmers say just didn't cover enough of the loss.

Right now, the coalition is still working on getting organized and adding members before determining their first step in reaching out to politicians.

However, the farmers aren't the only ones that are hurting. The coalition is also reaching out to those who supply farmers and those who benefit from their crops to join in support with them.

If you'd like to help, you can find donation information under the Big Red 10 on the WIS homepage.

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Fund established to help farmers (The Times and Democrat)

[The Times and Democrat](#), January 18, 2016

South Carolina Advocates for Agriculture, a 501c3 organization, has announced the establishment of Plant it Forward South Carolina, a private relief fund for South Carolina farmers severely affected by the 2015 flood.

The S.C. Department of Agriculture, Clemson University, S.C. Farm Bureau Federation and Palmetto Agribusiness Council are program partners.

Plant it Forward SC will reimburse farmers for a percentage of their seed costs used to plant crops destroyed during the 2015 rain event, as well as reimburse livestock producers for a percentage of their hay losses due to the 2015 rain event. The amount of funds distributed to producers will be contingent on the amount of donations received. All assistance is subject to the availability of funding and the amount awarded may be capped per applicant.

A brief, two-page application and more information can be found at plantitforwardsc.org. Farmers will need to provide supporting documents such as seed invoices, certification of loss and documentation of acres planted. All information is confidential, and no tax or insurance documents are required.

While Plant it Forward SC will not completely negate the industry's losses, significant donations are being received. Farmers are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity.

The deadline to apply is Jan. 31, 2016.

Contact Stefanie Kitchen at skitchen@scca.sc.gov or 803-734-2210 with questions.

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Wrong shoe order turns into surprise donation for South Carolina flood victims (WYFF)

[WYFF](#), January 19, 2016

COLUMBIA, S.C. (WIS-TV) —What started out as an order for a new pair of shoes, ultimately turned out into a surprise donation for flood victims in South Carolina.

Carson Cogdill said she recently used some Christmas gift cards to order a new pair of shoes for her husband.

But when the wrong shoe in the wrong size arrived, Cogdill was quick to jump on the phone with Zappos customer service.

Cogdill says the customer service representative was quick to apologize. And when the rep told her to give away the wrong shoes because the right pair would be sent for free, Cogdill couldn't help but share the heartache her community had been through during the flood.

"I told her about the flood we had here in South Carolina and how so many people have been effected, losing their homes and possessions, and promised

I would give the shoes to someone in town that needed them," Cogdill said.

Shortly after their conversation, a huge box arrived from Zappos -- much larger than Cogdill was expecting.

"I nervously laughed at my husband as I swore that I had not ordered anything, then I noticed the box had a sticker on it that said 'Surprise!' He opened the box and handed me the card that was on top and we both stared at the contents in shock," Cogdill said.

The box was filled with dozens of rolled fleece blankets and a note that read, "I wanted to send you something else to donate to the people in need. Thank you for being amazing and helping those around you who've had such a hard year."

Now Cogdill and her husband are working on a distribution plan to get the blankets to Summerton flood victims still in need.

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Flood Damage too Severe for Some Homeowners (ABCColumbia)

By: Beth Rousseau

[ABC Columbia](#), January 19, 2016

Columbia, S.C. (WOLO) — Sixty-one inches of October's flood waters submerged Janet DuBeau's home leaving it beyond repair.

"I lost practically everything that I owned except clothes and anything that was on the top shelf. If I did rebuild it would have to be 14 feet higher so they're just going to demolish the house," says DuBeau.

Her story is similar to so many of those living in the Pine Glen area who picking up the pieces flooding left behind.

Diane Allen says, "Our entire downstairs is totally wiped out. all the flooring is out all the walls are out all the carpeting is up. It's just ruined."

Despite the damage, some homeowners are determined to rebuild, seeing an opportunity to build stronger and

smarter.

“It happened and we were not looking for it we were not prepared for it but you know we’re going to pull it back together and get it together and reconstruct,”explains Allen.

For DuBeau it’s a chance at a fresh start somewhere new.

She says, “It’s like a little bit of closure because then at least I won’t have nightmares about this place anymore because it won’t be here.”

Neighbors tell ABC Columbia that at least two other homes on the street are set to be demolished in the coming months

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Historic flooding costs SC agencies hundred of millions of dollars (WatchFox)

By: Shelli Adamczyk

[Watch Fox 57](#), January 19,2016

COLUMBIA, SC (WACH) - South Carolina officials will present the most updated numbers on damages the state faced from historic flooding.

Tuesday morning South Carolina Adjutant General Bob Livingston in front of a House subcommittee.

Livingston told law makers he feels the state is heading in the right direction in the wake of October's flood.

"We were able to use intelligence to drive the positioning of resources we were able to be very efficient as a state to applying those resources so those numbers are lower than they would have had we just thrown a bunch of resources out there," Maj. Gen. Livingston said.

Since the historic rainfall state agencies have been working to get their budgets to law makers to see how much flood recovery will cost the state.

Officials estimate the National Guard and Emergency Management costs at more than \$39-million.

With some roads still in need of repair the floods cost the Department of Transportation (SCDOT) roughly \$137-million.

EMD officials say at this point the total damages to the state are more than \$300-million they say FEMA will reimburse 75 percent of that.

"Overall the state management with the funds that were applied against the flood we were able to be very effective with minimum amount of cost," Maj. Gen. Livingston said.

South Carolina Emergency Management Director, Kim Stanson will present the updated costs to the House subcommittee next week Tuesday.

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Two Richland County bridges to be replaced by June (The State)

By: Cassie Cope

[The State](#), January 19, 2016

The S.C. Department of Transportation has awarded contracts to replace two bridges in Richland County that were washed out during the historic flooding in October.

The Congress Road bridge over Jumping Run Creek in Lower Richland is expected to be complete by May 15. The Rockbridge Road bridge over Spring Lake in Forest Acres in expected to be complete by June 1.

The bridges are two of 18 statewide that are being fast-tracked for replacement in the aftermath of the flood. The cost of replacing the bridges is included in the \$137 million for flood repairs that the state Transportation Department has requested from the federal and state governments

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Editorial: Corps of Engineers should release study of dam faults

[The State](#), January 19, 2016

Columbia, SC

THE UNITED STATES Army Corps of Engineers needs to stop hiding behind national security and provide Richland County residents details about Fort Jackson’s Semmes Lake dam, which broke during the October floods.

While terrorism is a concern for everyone, caution is not warranted in this case. Rather, it’s paramount that the U. S. Army, including the Corps of Engineers, provides as much information as possible so the public can understand why the dam broke and whether the break could have been prevented.

A story earlier this month by *The State’s* Sammy Fretwell raises questions about what happened with the dam. Mr. Fretwell reported that the dam was rated a “serious hazard” after a 2013 inspection. That’s the second-worst rating

the Corps can give to a dam.

Inspectors noted 'serious hazard' at Fort Jackson dam before it failed

Any structure with that rating "is a dam that we feel could fail under normal working conditions," a Corps official said.

The storm that struck South Carolina in early October certainly was not normal. Up to two feet of rain fell on some parts of the state, overwhelming more than 40 private dams in the Midlands as well as the Semmes Lake dam. The rain and dam failures led to massive flooding in many areas of the Midlands, damaging or destroying hundreds of homes and closing dozens of businesses for weeks. Some companies still haven't reopened.

Residents of the King's Grant neighborhood near Fort Jackson believe the Semmes Lake dam failure caused severe damage to some of their homes. The homeowners have threatened to sue.

Thousands of dams avoid state inspections in South Carolina

Given the volume of rain and the number of other dams that failed, it's difficult to determine the specific role that the failed Semmes Lake dam played in the widespread flooding downstream. But it's logical to think the break deserves some blame.

Therefore, it's appropriate to ask if the Army did everything it could to prevent the dam from breaking. Residents should be given the necessary information to determine that answer.

Late last year, Mr. Fretwell — under the federal Freedom of Information Act — requested records from the Army Corps of Engineers related to the Semmes Lake dam. The Corps responded by releasing some records but denying his request for others.

One of the documents released was an email sent on Oct. 15, less than two weeks after the dam broke. The email, sent from Corps dam official Shaun Stanton to other Corps officials, referenced the 2013 inspection. "I reviewed our report for Semmes and we did a very good job describing all of the deficiencies that may have led to the failure," Stanton wrote.

The email also said: "There has already been talk of the public blaming Fort Jackson for the damages, in the millions."

Although the Corps released the email, it denied access to the 2013 inspection report. Presumably, the report lists the deficiencies that Mr. Stanton says may have led to the failure.

Releasing the dam inspection reports "would give anyone seeking to cause harm the ability to deduce the effect of dam failure," Corps lawyer Bill Woodard wrote to *The State*.

Floods, rain expose SC's flawed dam safety program

But nobody needs the inspection reports to "deduce the effect of dam failure." The dam failed. The worst-case effect can be seen downstream.

Releasing the inspection reports would allow the public to ask if the flaws were repaired. If the answer is no, the next question is: Why not? And did the Army's failure to act result in the dam breaking?

If the Army made all of the recommended repairs, then why did the dam break? Was the inspection flawed? Were the repairs shoddy? Should the Army reconsider how it builds, inspects and maintains dams? Should we be concerned about other Fort Jackson lakes?

The State has asked Fort Jackson for information about how the Army responded after the 2013 inspection. A fort official says he is waiting on a response from the federal Department of Justice.

The state Department of Health and Environmental Control has released hundreds of records regarding the private dams that broke in October. We don't know if DHEC considered national security before releasing the records. If the agency did, it correctly concluded that the records won't give terrorists any information they can't gather by simply looking at the failed dams.

Similarly, we don't believe that federal records pointing out flaws in a dam that no longer exists will give ISIS or al-Qaeda a blueprint for attacking the Midlands. But the records might give Richland County residents greater insight into the October flooding.

The Army Corps of Engineers should release them..

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Richland Co. looking for more input from flood victims

By: Chad Mills

[Live 5 News](#), January 20, 2016

RICHLAND COUNTY, SC (WIS) -

Karen Valentine survived the historic October flood.

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"It was surreal. It was just surreal. Little bit of panic, yes, but definitely just knowing that we had to get out. It was before we even knew what was going on everywhere else and before we even knew how dangerous and deathly it had become," she said.

RELATED: See October flooding photos from across South Carolina.

However, her home on Gills Creek in Forest Acres was not unscathed.

"Some volunteers from Fort Jackson came by and a couple of them followed me into the house for the first time, and they said, 'Ma'am, what can we do? What can we do? What do you want us to do?' I really didn't even know what to tell them," Valentine said.

Five feet of drywall was waterlogged, furniture floated around, and a layer of mud was everywhere. The damage still has her displaced, but she's doing her part to help officials prepare for the next flood

That was the purpose of a Tuesday night meeting at St. Andrews Parks.

A company contracted by Richland County is in the process of gathering detailed data from flood victims like Valentine to compile a list of projects that'll potentially lessen the effects of a future flood.

"What we're trying to do, as I stated earlier, is just trying to get an assessment so that we can assess these ideas and problems and then further address them," said Councilwoman Joyce Dickerson.

Heather Lovell brought her problem to the county during the Tuesday night session, the first of six. The apartment complex she manages, Willow Creek, severely flooded in October.

"On the fourth, total devastation is what it was like. All the way up to the second floors, the apartments were flooded out," she said.

Since then, the problems with the bordering Stoop Creek haven't gone away.

"During the normal rain that we have – just a normal, average South Carolina rain – the creek starts to rise and almost overflows again on us," Lovell said.

It's the reason she, and others, are hoping these community input meetings will yield results.

Officials with the contractor, Tetra Tech, said the report should be done in about two months. They'll be collecting more data in more public input sessions and then doing some field work too. When the report is done, they said they'll rate the corrective action plans and present them to Richland County Council.

The remaining meetings for the Community Input and Recovery Project will be held as follows:

12 p.m. - 2 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20

Gadsden Park 1668 Goodwin Circle, Gadsden

4 p.m. - 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20 Garners Ferry Adult Activity Center 8620 Garners Ferry Road, Hopkins

12 p.m. - 2 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21 Bluff Road Park 148 Carswell Drive, Columbia 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Thursday Jan. 21 Trenholm Park 3900 Covenant Road, Columbia

12 p.m.- 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23 Eastover Park 1031 Main St., Eastover

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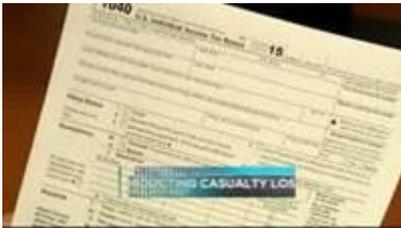
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