

Federal, State and Local Officials Working Together on Stormwater, Flood and Erosion Issues Following Wildfires

Agency Response to Fire Cleanup

- The primary focus of the response to the catastrophic fires in the North Coast has been the protection of human life and property. As the fires approach full containment and efforts are underway to aid those who have lost their homes, state and local agencies have turned their attention to the cleanup of fire debris and minimizing damage to natural resources as the rainy season approaches.
- CAL FIRE has 3 teams working the burn areas associated with the Tubbs, Nuns, and Atlas fires.
- CAL FIRE and California Geologic Survey have convened a Water Emergency Response Team (WERT). The WERT will rapidly assess the risks of landslides and flooding posed by the fire impacted zones.
- Multiple local agencies are working together, independently and in collaboration with CAL FIRE's WERT, to assess and reduce the risk of flooding and to prevent fire-related debris, pollutants and sediment from burned areas from being carried into our storm drains, creeks and rivers.
- These partners include the U.S. Forest Service, the State Department of Water Resources, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, the cities of Santa Rosa and Sonoma, the counties of Sonoma and Napa, the Sonoma County Water Agency, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works, Resource Conservation Districts, non-profit organizations and private partners.

- Our mutual goal is to protect human health, critical infrastructure (bridges, roads, culverts and flood protection facilities), wildlife, and the natural environment including our streams and waterways.

Protecting Human Health and Natural Resources

- There are 617 streams in the areas affected by fire in Sonoma County. Given that our natural watersheds in Sonoma County filter our drinking water, it is critically important that ash, debris and other pollutants are prevented from entering stream systems to the maximum extent possible.
- Sonoma County has developed hydrologic modeling to evaluate the threats to our watersheds and help establish priorities for recovery actions.
- Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District and partners noted above are using data from NASA and other sources to track sources of pollution in the watershed that have the highest likelihood of moving into stream systems during this winter's storms. This essential information will be used to prioritize our actions.
- In addition to assessing watersheds to reduce impacts to human health and safety, these local agencies are committed to protecting the natural environment: native habitats, including stream and forest habitats that support our endangered salmon and steelhead species, and a host of other wildlife.
- The Regional Water Board is focused on risk assessment (including field assessment to identify high risk areas), the development of emergency watershed protection measures and providing technical assistance to the local agencies.
- Sonoma County Water Agency, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories and US Geological Survey are developing a water quality monitoring strategy to assess water quality conditions in local waterways.
- The partners are also making contingency plans to address potential fire debris impacts to flood protection facilities.

Actions to Prevent Runoff Contamination

- In urban areas, the city and the county, in coordination with the regional water quality control boards, are working to increase street sweeping activities, cleaning and checking storm drains, and installing wattles and sand bags to prevent debris from entering storm drains. Plans are being developed to capture, store, and treat storm water runoff from the most impacted urban areas.
- The North Coast Regional Water Board has been working with local erosion control and sediment control companies to determine supplies they have on hand, and how they can assist local agencies in quickly mobilizing. Several companies are willing to donate supplies and equipment in this effort to keep potentially toxic ash from entering creeks and streams.
- The county will be checking or installing debris-capture devices in culverts and ditches along rural roadways.

For Residents

- Residents should not wash ash down into streets or drains.
- A fact sheet with [debris removal questions and answers](#) developed by Cal OES and FEMA is available at wildfirerecovery.org
- Actions taken by rural property owners can significantly reduce erosion on their property and help prevent downstream flooding. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NCRS) and the Sonoma and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation Districts provide tips for best management practices. The information is available online, and will be linked to the county and city's fire response webpages. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/newsroom/features/>
- "The US Army Corps of Engineers is taking the lead for Debris Removal operations. They hired two prime contractors who will use local contractors for their work. The prime contractors are Ashbritt and Environmental Chemical

Corporation. Local contractors can register as subcontractors at the primary contractor websites:

<http://www.ashbritt.com/>
and <http://www.ecc.net>

- All of the debris management info is available at the following Cal OES website:
<http://wildfirerecovery.org/debris-removal/>

(This Fact Sheet was last updated on Oct. 30, 2017)