

FLOOD EDITION

May 11, 2010

A daily roundup of recent news stories and opinion pieces about Tennessee transportation, water and flood control infrastructure

For the full story, click the headline or use the link.

Residents and business owners who sustained losses can begin applying for assistance immediately by registering online at www.fema.gov or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA.

[What the Media Missed in the "Nashville" Flood](#) (Huffington Post)

First of all, it wasn't just Nashville. There were 52 counties in Tennessee that the national media ignored in the early days of a storm with no name, and that doesn't include the parts of Kentucky that also suffered from the Flood of 2010. It wasn't just a typical Spring storm. The head of TEMA - Tennessee's version of FEMA - said the recording breaking rainfall of up to 18 inches in 36 hours was like hitting 150 home runs in a season or rushing for 4,000 yards in the NFL.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-sellers/what-the-media-missed-in_b_570686.html

[\\$28M In Federal Aid Approved For Tenn. \(Jackson Sun\)](#)

More than \$28 million in disaster aid has been approved for recovery efforts in Tennessee, Gov. Phil Bredesen and the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Monday. To date, 42 Tennessee counties have been designated for federal assistance, including Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Chester, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and McNairy counties in West Tennessee. A fundraiser for victims of the flooding will be held Thursday at the Old Country Store in Jackson. The Jackson Area Plectral Society is partnering with the store to collection donations for the Red Cross, according to a news release. Money can be dropped off during the free outdoor concert from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on the front porch of the Old Country Store. As rivers recede below flood stage, the cleanup has begun. But for some residents of Brownsville, their homes are still inaccessible or too damaged to try to clean.

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20100511/NEWS01/5110313/1002/+28M+in+federal+aid+approved+for+Tenn.>

[Counties Approved For Flood Aid \(Times Daily\)](#)

Heavy rains that inundated southern Tennessee May 1-2 sent streams spilling over their banks, damaging roads, homes and businesses and leaving Wayne County officials and residents worried about how to pay for repairing the damage. Lawrence County, Tenn., residents and officials were worried about finding money to pay for flood damage there, too. Those worries were put to rest during the weekend when Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen announced the Federal Emergency Management Agency has declared Wayne and Lawrence major disaster areas. The declaration paves the way for residents, business owners and local governments to apply for federal disaster aid. "We're thankful for the declaration," said Wayne County Executive Jason Rich. "We are looking at about \$2 million in damages to our roads. That's \$2 million we don't have. The disaster aid is really going to help out."

<http://www.timesdaily.com/article/20100511/ARTICLES/5115016/1013/news03?Title=Counties-approved-for-flood-aid>

[New Aid For TN \(Tennessean/Cass\)](#)

The federal response to Tennessee's floods intensified Monday as two Cabinet secretaries came to Nashville, 250 emergency management workers put boots on the ground around the state and millions of additional aid dollars started flowing to individuals and families. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency added 15 counties to the list of places where workers are eligible for disaster unemployment benefits, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development said it had put a moratorium on foreclosures for 90 days in flooded areas. FEMA plans to open two more disaster recovery centers in Nashville on Wednesday, while the head of the U.S. Small Business Administration, which handles low-interest loans for homeowners and businesses affected by disaster, will visit to open an assistance center downtown today. U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper said it's critical that federal agencies react to the crisis as effectively as local and state governments and other organizations did.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100511/NEWS02/5110351/New+aid+for+TN>

[Cabinet Secretaries Announce Aid For Flood Victims \(Associated Press/Loller\)](#)

Federal lenders were told to not foreclose on homes for 90 days for areas hit by recent flooding and were given flexibility to alter mortgage terms for victims who have trouble making payments, the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development said Monday. Shaun Donovan and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke had to dodge construction dumpsters and generators the size of cars as they toured downtown Nashville businesses that were recently underwater. Still, they were upbeat about the prospects for the city's recovery. "Nashville is open for business a large majority is open, and others will be back soon," Donovan said. In Trail West, a cowboy boot store where loose and buckled floorboards left wide gaps between rafters that offered a drop straight into the basement, owner Ed Smith told the secretaries that employees had managed to save about two-thirds of the inventory. The remainder had been dried out and would be offered at a discount in time for the CMA Music Festival in early June.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=33502479.story>

[Federal Flood Money Flowing In \(TN Report\)](#)

The typical flood victim will collect \$5,000 to \$10,000 in federal aid to help put their lives back together, even if the damage extends by thousands of dollars beyond that. Those who qualify can also apply for loans, although that money will have to be paid back. "In many cases, it gets people back into their homes," Eugene Brezany, a spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency said last week. "So at least they've got a roof over their heads and knives, forks and spoons in the kitchen drawer. But it's pretty bare bones," he said. Residents in more than half of the 52 soggy counties slammed with a storm that triggered floods earlier this month are now eligible to register with FEMA, officially signing up for an inspection of their home or damaged property in order to calculate how much recovery grant money, if any, they qualify for from the federal government.

<http://www.tnreport.com/2010/05/federal-flood-money-flowing-in/>

[Flood Victims Turn To FEMA For Help \(City Paper/George\)](#)

Erin Nevarez, dressed in blue jeans and an oversize brown T-shirt, stood shivering in the cold drizzle of early Monday afternoon, clutching a handful of green papers and trying to duck under the backyard-barbecue-style tent set up about 20 feet from a tan RV marked "FEMA" that has occupied the corner of a parking lot at the 100 Oaks Mall since Saturday, when the Federal Emergency Management Agency arrived in Nashville, at this location, their first in Davidson County. The feds only served about 60 people there between Saturday and Monday morning, according to Duane Tuttle, manager of this particular mobile disaster relief unit. But the numbers had picked up by early Monday afternoon. As FEMA officials ushered flood victims representing a range of demographics into and out of the RV — to use the phone, bring order to the paperwork, and begin the general accounting for and processing of accumulated stuffs (and homes) to hopefully obtain a check that cannot total more than \$29,900 — staffers with the Small Business Administration held meetings in their cars with constituents

<http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/2010-flood/flood-victims-turn-fema-help>

[President's Cabinet Members Visit Flood Victims \(WREG-TV Memphis\)](#)

Displaced flood victims living at the Ed Rice Community Center in Frayser told their stories of surviving raging floodwaters to some of the highest people in Washington. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and Secretary Shaun Donovan from the Department of Housing and Urban Development met with flood victims Monday. The men promised quick action in the form of grants and other funding to help flood victims rebuild. "The President has directed all of us to spend as much time as necessary to make sure that the folks of Tennessee, urban and rural, get back on their feet as soon as possible," Locke said. Locke says \$29 million in federal funding has already been approved and \$15 million is headed to Memphis and Shelby County. He also talked about a 90 day moratorium on foreclosures for flood victims.

<http://www.wreg.com/news/wreg-washington-visits-ed-rice-center,0,4005049.story?track=rss>

[Members Of Obama Administration Get First Hand Look At Flood Damage \(WPTY\)](#)

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan took a first hand look at damage after the massive floods in Shelby County. They also talked with some of the hundreds of people forced out their homes, like 11 year-old Brenda. Brenda was forced to leave her home in the Memphis Mobile City Park. Now here neighborhood and immune system are on the road to recovery. "My stomach and this (her wrist) hurts a lot. I went to the doctor and when I went, they gave me a shot." Locke, along with HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan took time out for a first hand look at what's left. They also pledged their commitment to help Shelby County. "Local leadership is the key," Donovan told myEyewitnessNews.com. "You tell us what the vision is, what the direction is and we will focus on the areas you prioritize and identify for us."

http://www.myeeyewitnessnews.com/news/local/story/More-Members-Of-The-Obama-Administration-Get/ebRWc1P5kkG3dqIBMG_HSQ.csp?rss=59

[Hundreds In Williamson Hear Advice From FEMA \(Tennessean/Walters\)](#)

With more than \$70 million so far in estimated damages countywide, questions mount from Williamson County residents about the federal emergency aid that could help shore up their losses. More than 400 residents such as Brenda Rainey, 59, filled a Centennial High School auditorium Monday night for the first community meeting with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials since the floodwaters rose. Rainey, a retired teacher, suffered electrical damage to her James Avenue home, leaving her without power in at least 20 outlets. "I'm retired and on disability. I'm hurting here financially," Rainey said. "I don't know exactly how I'm going to turn around."

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100511/NEWS01/5110354/1001/NEWS/Hundreds+in+Williamson+hear+a+dvice+from+FEMA>

[Locke, Donovan Promise Aid To Flooding Victims, Tour Shelter \(CA/Mckenzie\)](#)

Diana Marquez was nervous about talking to two top-ranking members of the Obama administration on Monday, but the teenager driven from her mobile home by flooding in Frayser warmed to the task. "Just treat us like we're human beings," Marquez, 17, told Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan. Locke and Donovan were the latest high-ranking Obama administration officials to land in Nashville and Memphis to highlight the federal response for the victims of the storms and flooding that struck May 1 in West Tennessee. "We in the Department of Commerce are here to help the communities rebuild," Locke said, addressing an array of public officials and television cameras at the Shelby County Office of Preparedness Emergency Operations Center. The lineup of federal officials visiting Tennessee continues today, with Small Business Administration Administrator Karen G. Mills scheduled to be in Nashville for the opening of a SBA Business Recovery Center.

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/may/11/partners-in-02/>

[Humboldt Residents Learn About Storm Aid Available From FEMA \(Jackson Sun\)](#)

Around 100 people showed up Monday in Humboldt to get information from emergency officials about applying for assistance in the wake of this month's intense storms. Monday's meeting was headed up by officials with the state and federal emergency management agencies, Gibson County EMA director and Humboldt and Gibson County mayors. Residents and business owners without flood insurance can apply for FEMA aid, grants and loans, depending upon their circumstances. Those affected by this month's storm have 60 days after their county received presidential declaration as a disaster area to register for assistance. Gibson County EMA Director Rickey Graves warned about hiring contractors from outside the area. After disasters, some people come from out of state to prey upon the vulnerable.

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20100511/NEWS01/5110312/1002/Humboldt-residents-learn-about-storm-aid-available-from-FEMA>

[FHA Puts 90-Day Freeze On Foreclosures In Flooded Areas \(City Paper/Garrison\)](#)

In Nashville on Monday, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan said he's ordered all Federal Housing Administration lenders to place a 90-day moratorium on all home foreclosures in Tennessee's flood disaster areas. "It is simply wrong for a family that has been struck by a natural disaster like you've seen here in Nashville, across Tennessee, to be victimized again by foreclosures because they cannot make their payment," Donovan said. "So we have declared all FHA lenders are putting in place a 90-day moratorium." In addition, Donovan said his department's community and development block grant has allotted more than \$29 million across Tennessee for 2010, \$17 million to be used to rebuild housing. Approximately \$9 million is available to Nashville. Financial resources available through this grant will be redirected to specifically address flood victims, he said.

<http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/2010-flood/fha-puts-90-day-freeze-foreclosures-flooded-areas>

[Dean Renews State of Emergency \(WPLN-Radio Nashville\)](#)

A week after historic rainfall swamped much of Middle Tennessee, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean has issued another state of emergency. The state of emergency expires after seven days, which is why Mayor Dean renewed it. The provision allows the mayor to issue contracts without having to get approval from the Metro Council, like bringing in clean up crews from Alabama this week to help dispose of debris. "This will allow us to continue to streamline how we contract for services and issues orders to departments, which will allow us to respond to the community as we go forward." The damage estimates for Nashville businesses and homeowners is basically complete. The floodwaters did more than \$1.5 billion worth of destruction. The city is still tallying the flood's impact on infrastructure and public buildings. Metro Schools has completed its assessment, which was surprisingly low at \$1.6 million. That figure includes 11 flooded school buses.

<http://wpln.org/?p=17472>

[Metro Reserves Continue To Grow \(City Paper/Garrison\)](#)

Bottled water, dirty laundry and fewer showers appear to finally be paying off. According to Metro Water Services Director Scott Potter, Nashville's water reserve supply is operating at 88 percent of its capacity. At its lowest, reserves had been measured at 37 percent of its operating capacity. "The conservation efforts by the citizens of Nashville has been very successful," Potter said. At a news conference Monday afternoon, Potter said Nashvillians need to continue to limit their water use until the K.R. Harrington water treatment plant, which had been submerged by floodwater, is functioning again. He said the process should take a week at minimum. Potter said repairs at K.R. Harrington are going well, but several daunting tasks still remain: Walls within a 9 million-gallon tank must be pressure washed; electrical circuits require cleaning; filters have to be replaced; and the plant's chemical feeding system awaits repairs and testing.

<http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/2010-flood/water-metro-reserves-continue-grow>

[Water Conservation New Reality for Metro \(WPLN-Radio Nashville\)](#)

It will be at least another week of shortened showers, deferred flushing and delayed laundry in Nashville. Metro Water Services is still in the initial clean up phase of restoring one of its two drinking water treatment plants. Residents of Nashville and parts of Williamson County have been heeding the request to conserve. Metro Water Services chief Scott Potter says the reserves, which had been dwindling, have doubled "We went from 43% on the 4th of May to 88% at noon today. I really appreciate everyone's efforts. I need that to continue because this is kind of our new reality for a while in the water department." Potter has been hesitant to nail down a timeline for restoring the K.R. Harrington plant in Donelson, which was completely submerged by the Cumberland River. Now he says it will be at least a week, but likely longer. He says only now are they able to pressure wash river grime from the inside of a nine million gallon tank, where the water runs through a maze of chlorine filters. Next the custom electronics and instrumentation have to be replaced, all before the strict water quality testing begins.

<http://wpln.org/?p=17469>

[Water Levels Fall In Dammed Lakes Upriver Of Nashville \(Tennessean/Paine\)](#)

Water levels continue to drop at most of the dams along the Cumberland River and its tributaries, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. With flooding water having retreated, more water releases from Dale Hollow Dam and J. Percy Priest Dam have been made to open up more storage room for future rains. Lake Cumberland and Center Hill Lake both continue to fall, and Cordell Hull, Old Hickory, and Cheatham lakes have returned to their normal operating range, the Corps said in an emailed statement. Cheatham Lake is what the river is called as it runs through Nashville to the Cheatham Dam. All of the rest of the lakes listed above are held back by dams upriver of Nashville. Little rainfall is forecast over the next five days for the Cumberland Basin, where much flooding occurred earlier.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100510/NEWS01/100510071/1001/NEWS/Water+levels+fall+in+dammed+lakes+upriver+of+Nashville+>

[Flooding Didn't Bring Whining/Looting Or National News: Alexander Says \(TN/Paine\)](#)

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander told the Senate about Tennessee's flooding plight this afternoon, letting them know that news about a bomber in Times Square, the Greek economic crisis and the BP oil spill wasn't all that was going on. "There is no bigger, nor more heart-wrenching, no more inspiring story today than what happened in the 48 hours in Nashville on May 1st and 2nd over the weekend when two to four inches of rain was expected and up to 17 inches came," Alexander said in the session broadcast on C-Span. "As a result of that, from the Opryland Hotel outside Nashville to the Millington Naval Station near Memphis, all across Tennessee there have been devastating floods. It is, according to the weather service, a thousand-year flood." Alexander said that besides other crises taking the spotlight, there's another reason some in Congress seemed to know little about the situation. "The other reason we haven't heard so much about it is this: Tennesseans have been busy cleaning up and helping each other, instead of complaining and looting. But people are hurt. Thousands of people are hurt, but they're going about their business helping themselves and helping others in remarkable and inspiring ways."

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100510/NEWS01/100510053/1001/NEWS/Flooding+didn+t+bring+whining+looting+or+national+news++Sen.+Alexander+says>

[Luring Business Back \(WPLN-Radio Nashville\)](#)

Tourism is one of the largest moneymakers for Nashville, bringing in more than three billion dollars a year. But in the days after the flood, tourists planning to visit the city started cancelling. As WPLN's Anne Marshall reports a campaign is underway to get the word out that Music City is still "open for business."

<http://wpln.org/?p=17438>

[SBA to Launch 'Business Recovery Center' \(WPLN-Radio Nashville\)](#)

Federal officials are looking to step up assistance efforts in the next few days in the wake of last weekend's deadly flooding throughout Middle Tennessee. Small Business Administration officials say they'll soon be opening up a "business recovery center" at Tennessee State University. The Small Business Administration bills itself as the federal government's long-term disaster recovery arm. Despite the "small business" in the administration's name, Jelani Miller says the SBA also works with homeowners and renters. "We're here to try to get you to the position where you were before the disaster struck; we understand that we cannot get you whole, but we try our best to get you as close as possible." Miller says to that end the SBA provides long-term low interest loans for homes and personal property. And it can help businesses cover costs like payroll and utilities to help them stay afloat during the recovery.

<http://wpln.org/?p=17406>

[Water Recedes But Problems Continue In Cheatham County \(WSMV-TV Nashville\)](#)

More than 600 homes and countless businesses have been flooded in Cheatham County. Walt Randolph, owns Riverview restaurant just outside of Ashland City. The eatery on the Cumberland River has been a popular destination in the county for over 60 years. Since Sunday, Riverview or what is left of it, has been closed. The Cumberland flooded the restaurant destroying everything. "Everything I got out of her I could fit in two shoe boxes," said owner Walt Randolph. Randolph wants to open his restaurant and get his 20 employees back to work. "It's been a week, its time to get this done," said Randolph. Randolph can't do anything until the County assesses the damages and issues a building permit. "I had a contractor apply for a building permit Friday, just to start doing some of the demolition stuff to get ready, he was turned down", said Randolph. He's been in a holding pattern ever since.

<http://www.wsmv.com/news/23513442/detail.html>

[Unemployment Available For Flood Victims \(WTVF-TV Nashville\)](#)

When the floods tore through Tennessee it wiped out countless jobs. On Monday labor officials said those affected can file for unemployment. "We've had thousands of people call to ask questions about unemployment insurance and disaster unemployment assistance," said Tennessee Employment Security Administrator Don Ingram. Those who lost their job because of the flooding crisis can turn to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Previously self-employed individuals could not receive unemployment benefits. Now sole-proprietors, farmers, and others in a similar state can file for Disaster Unemployment Assistance if their business was harmed because of the flooding. The affected individual must live in one of the counties in the Federal disaster declaration to apply for the assistance. The first step is applying for regular Tennessee unemployment.

<http://www.newschannel5.com/global/story.asp?s=12460536>

[High Court Offers Break For Soggy Litigants \(Nashville Post/Wood\)](#)

State Supremes respond to flood by extending deadlines for filings due in Metro courts last week Tennessee's Supreme Court today ruled that anyone who was supposed to get something filed in a Davidson County court last week now has another month to do so. Granting a request from Mark Fishburn, presiding judge of the 20th judicial district, the court activated a "limited disaster plan" for the district, which consists of Metro Nashville only. All courts in Nashville were closed from Monday through Wednesday of last week in the aftermath of the flood. The Davidson County Juvenile Court building, next to LP Field, was badly damaged, forcing that court to move to a temporary location. The order provides a thirty-day extension of the "mandatory deadlines of the Tennessee Rules of Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Procedure and the Tennessee Rules of Appellate Procedure, and any other applicable local court rules." It applies to any document that was due to be filed between May 3 and May 7.

http://www.nashvillepost.com/news/2010/5/10/high_court_offers_break_for_soggy_litigants

[Flood Extends Court Filings Deadline \(Tennessean/Carey\)](#)

People who had court filings due in Nashville last week will get a one-month deadline extension under a court order issued Monday. Nashville criminal and civil court offices were closed for three days last week because of flooding in Davidson County. The closures extended to clerk offices, where legal paperwork is filed. The flooding did serious damage to the Davidson County Juvenile Court Building, located near LP Field. Juvenile court proceedings have resumed in other locations. Because the offices were out of commission from May 3-5, people who had civil, criminal or juvenile court filings due in Davidson County between May 3 and 7 now have an extra 30 days to get their paperwork in order.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100511/NEWS03/5110348/1017/NEWS>

[3 Cheatham Co. Schools Will Remain Closed \(WKRN-TV Nashville\)](#)

Disaster relief crews were out cleaning in Cheatham County schools on Monday, but officials say it won't be enough to get students back in class at a few certain school by the end of the academic year. Since so many of students were affected by the flood at Harpeth High School, Harpeth Middle School and Kingston Springs Elementary School in the southern part of the county, the schools have canceled classes for the rest of the year. Instead of studying, many Cheatham County students are helping with flood relief efforts. Kelsey Arrington, a sixth grader at Harpeth Middle, said, "Our basement was flooded, so we've been cleaning it out." Kingston Springs Elementary was still one of the hardest hit schools in the county. Nearly eight feet of water flooded the building. No one is allowed into the school right now except for a disaster team who's working hard to save all they can. About 500 students go to the school, and administrators say even more in the county had to flee their flooded homes.

<http://www.wkrn.com/global/story.asp?s=12460410>

-Other Infrastructure News-

[Economic Stimulus Turns Into Hindrance In Sevier County \(News-Sentinel/Rolan\)](#)

What has been one of Sevier County's most popular thoroughfares has become an area to avoid after a four-mile construction project on Highway 66 began last summer, according to concerned merchants. Businesses that boomed a year ago now are struggling for survival because a gauntlet of concrete barricades, orange barrels and confusing detours generated by the project are obstacles for tourists, according to local business owners. One fast-food restaurant that depended on its visibility and accessibility from the highway suffered a major drop in profits after concrete barricades and piles of rubble blocked the store's main entrance and made its sign difficult to see. "It has affected us significantly," said Fred Ware, branch owner of the Zaxby's restaurant on the busy highway. "We are doing 30 to 50 percent of the business we had been doing historically." The project, which is funded solely by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is the largest stimulus project of its kind in Tennessee and was intended to increase employment, according to an online letter from Gov. Phil Bredesen.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/may/11/economic-stimulus-turns-into-hindrance/>

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