

FLOOD EDITION

May 14, 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.

[\\$28 Million In FEMA Money Approved \(Weakley County Press\)](#)

Gov. Phil Bredesen and the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Monday more than \$28 million in disaster assistance has been approved to help with recovery efforts just one week after a federal major disaster declaration was requested for severe storms and flooding that struck Tennessee. "We're very pleased with the pace of recovery operations, but we aren't letting up," said Bredesen. "State agencies and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency will continue working hand-in-hand with FEMA and local partners to make sure those affected by the flooding have access to the resources they need to help rebuild their lives." Individuals can register with FEMA online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362) or TTY 800-462-7585 for those with speech and hearing disabilities. The toll-free numbers are staffed seven days a week, 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. CDT until further notice. Help in all languages is available.

<http://www.nwtntoday.com/news.php?viewStory=40924>

[Cash and Food Assistance Available for Low Income Flood Victims \(WPLN-Radio\)](#)

Tennessee officials announced Thursday help for low income flood victims. The state department of Human Services says emergency cash assistance and food stamps are available for individuals and families. The qualifications vary by family size and income. Registering for assistance began Thursday and is only available for seven days in counties declared a federal disaster area. County offices will be open this Saturday, 7:30 am – 5:00 pm to handle the demand. Requesting assistance MUST be made at the local DHS office in affected counties.

<http://wpln.org/?p=17613>

[Flood Damage Creates 2,000 Temporary Jobs \(Nashville Business Journal\)](#)

The mess left by the flood of 2010 has created more than 2,000 jobs in Middle Tennessee, the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development announced Wednesday. The mostly temporary jobs do not require any experience and pay \$8 to \$10 an hour. Positions include general labors, movers, plumbers, electricians and carpenters. The jobs are listed here and at Tennessee Career Center locations. Most applications must be completed in person at one of the centers. A directory of Tennessee Career Center locations is here, or by calling 741-6749. The two Nashville locations are at MetroCenter and 3763 Nolensville Pike. "These jobs provide opportunities for people to help with projects that are important to communities working to clean up and rebuild," Labor Commissioner James Neeley said in a news release. "This obviously is tough work; however, we've received calls from all over the state from motivated individuals who are looking for ways to help in the clean-up effort as well as earn an immediate income."

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2010/05/10/daily31.html?surround=lf>

[2,000 Flood Cleanup Jobs Listed \(WPLN-Radio Nashville\)](#)

There are more than 2,000 flood cleanup jobs the state's career centers are trying to help employers fill. The jobs are mostly temporary and pay \$8-10/hour. The historic flooding in the midstate has increased demand for carpenters, electricians and general contractors. Tennessee Labor Commissioner James Neeley says the temporary jobs will help communities rebuild. "This obviously is tough work; however, we've received calls from all over the state from motivated individuals who are looking for ways to help in the clean-up effort as well as earn an immediate income." Jobs are listed with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Most job applications must be completed in person at the Tennessee Career Center, or applicants will be directed to the proper contact with the employer. Applicants should bring identification such as driver's license or social security card.

<http://wpln.org/?p=17634>

[Hickman County Looking for Loan to Help Finance Recovery \(WPLN-Radio Nash\)](#)

Hickman County is looking to take out a loan to help pay for recovery efforts in the wake of last week's flooding. The rural county, some 50 miles southwest of Nashville, will eventually receive federal reimbursements for most of the cleanup cost. But first it has to find a way to cover those costs up front. Some 22 roads in Hickman County are still out, and between clearing debris and fixing bridges, the highway department is blowing through roughly \$30 thousand a day. As an official disaster area, the county can get back 75 percent of what it's spending from the federal government. But Mayor Steve Gregory says he has to cover those costs up front, with money he doesn't have. "This is just taxing our reserves to the Nth degree, and come the end of this month we'll be out of those reserves if we don't have an influx of cash, and so that's why this borrowing is very important."

<http://wpln.org/?p=17572>

[Water Treatment Plant Won't Be Fixed Until End of May: Dean \(WPLN-Radio Nash\)](#)

One of Nashville's two water treatment plants will remain out of commission through the end of May. Nashville Mayor Karl Dean says he expects the Harrington Plant to be fixed by the end of the month. In the meantime, Dean says the city's water conservation efforts are paying off. On a normal day in May, the Nashville area uses more than a hundred million gallons of water. Officials say right now people are using much less – about seventy-five million. That's allowed Metro's water reserves to resurge after plunging last week. Mayor Dean says people still need to hold off from watering yards or washing cars, but outside that, water use could be close to normal. "This should not interfere with tourism, this should not interfere with convention business, this should not interfere with much of peoples' normal day-to-day lives. Our expectation is that we will have this thing done by the end of the month, and I can tell you people are working very hard."

<http://wpln.org/?p=17653>

[Mayor Says Water Conservation Needs To Continue Through May \(C. Paper/Garrison\)](#)

Repairs at the damaged K.R. Harrington water treatment plant are progressing, but Nashville's water conservation efforts need to continue through the end of the month, Mayor Karl Dean said Thursday morning. According to Metro Water Services Director Scott Potter, Nashvillians have clearly limited their water use. As of Thursday morning, Metro's water reserves were operating at 90 percent of capacity. At the bleakest point, they had dwindled down to 37 percent of operating capacity. "That's a direct result of conservation efforts," Potter said of the bump. Still, it appears workers will need a few more weeks to restore K.R. Harrington, which had been submerged by floodwater earlier this month. In the meantime, the Omohundro plant off Lebanon Pike will be the lone facility treating water in Davidson County. "Our residents and businesses should be prepared to continue with their conservation efforts at least through the end of the month," Dean said.

<http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/2010-flood/mayor-says-water-conservation-needs-continue-through-may>

[Nashville Residents Get Go-Ahead To Use More Water \(Tennessean/Rau\)](#)

Reserves are up, but Harrington treatment plant remains closed Water conservation efforts have worked well enough that Davidson County residents got the go-ahead Thursday from city officials to increase their usage to three-fourths of what it normally is. But don't rush for the car wash just yet. The damaged K.R. Harrington water treatment plant is expected to be out of commission until the end of May. Reserve levels are now at around 90 percent, according to Metro Water Director Scott Potter. That's a dramatic increase from last week, when reserves dipped to their lowest point of 37 percent. The Omohundro water treatment plant has been providing most of the county with its water after K.R. Harrington, Nashville's other treatment plant, was shut down when it became engulfed by floodwaters. After that, residents were asked to cut water usage in half. On Thursday, Mayor Karl Dean said it was OK to increase usage to 70 to 75 percent.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100514/NEWS0202/5140351/Nashville+residents+get+go-ahead+to+use+more+water>

[Metro Water Shortage Keeps Car Washes Closed \(WTVF-TV Nashville\)](#)

Nashville's second water treatment plant will not be up and running for at least two more weeks. That means conservation orders are still in place, and car washing is off limits for Metro Water Service customers. The ban on car washes will keep businesses that clean cars high and dry for close to an entire month. "Car washing is on the very bottom of the list as far as saying 'okay, you can operate,'" said car wash manager Bill Levrets. Levrets runs the White Bridge Auto Wash in West Nashville. On an average day, the business cleans 350 cars. In a month, that totals about \$150,000. Not being in business is costing a lot of money, but Levrets does not mind. "To me, being closed almost feels like I'm at least doing something," said Levrets. Nashville city leaders said it will be at least two weeks before the K.R. Harrington Water Treatment Plant is back in operation. Until then, Nashville is purchasing water from three nearby water utilities to keep the reserves at safe levels.

<http://www.newschannel5.com/global/story.asp?s=12480370>

[Sen. Lamar Alexander Adds \\$200M For TN Flood Relief To Spending Bill \(TN/Theobald\)](#)

Sen. Lamar Alexander added more than \$200 million in federal funding for flood relief in Tennessee to a war supplemental spending bill on Thursday. The bill passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on a voice vote and now goes to the Senate floor, where it's expected to receive quick action. Alexander, a member of the committee, joined the rest of the Tennessee delegation in asking President Barack Obama to include flood relief funding in the request he sent Congress for war spending and money for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But the administration said the \$5.1 billion it requested in FEMA money would provide enough to help Tennessee. Alexander convinced Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, and the panel's top-ranking Republican, Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi, to include the Tennessee funding — winning out over several other senators on the committee who had other special funding requests.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100514/NEWS02/5140357/Sen.+Lamar+Alexander+adds++200M+for+TN+flood+relief+to+spending+bill>

[Farmers Must Recover Crops, Livestock After Flood \(WTVF-TV Nashville\)](#)

Middle Tennessee farmers are counting the millions of dollars they lost in flooded crops and washed away livestock. There's still no word on how many of the 72,000 farmers were affected. It could take years for those in the hardest hit areas to recover. "Really it's just one day at a time," said Lee McCormick, owner of Piney River Cattle Company. "You show up and clean up and you work on what has to be worked on that day to keep operating." In just 24 hours, water changed everything that was considered normal at the farm. "All the gates were closed and all the fences were up, and we had cattle washed over the tops of the fences and were in the pen," said McCormick. Fences were either torn down or covered in debris across some of the 1,000 acre farm. Nearly the entire farm was covered in water, washing a large number of livestock away. There were 300 goats and dozens of cattle missing. Many were found dead up to four miles away.

<http://www.newschannel5.com/global/story.asp?s=12480298>

[River Gauges Damaged By Heavy Flooding In Tenn. \(Associated Press\)](#)

During severe flooding in Tennessee this May, several river gauges the National Weather Service uses to judge where flooding will occur were knocked out or unusable. The Tennessean reported that in Middle Tennessee, eight out of 20 gauges were knocked out. The U.S. Geological Survey had teams out this week checking equipment and water levels. Jim Noel, a hydrologist with the weather service's forecast center near Cincinnati, said the loss of the gauges made making forecasts for flooding in the middle of a record rains more difficult. Of the 20 river gauges in the area, 13 recorded the highest levels ever.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cId=tennessean&sParam=33520619.story>

[Why No Flood Warning? Residents Ask \(Tennessean/Cass\)](#)

Officials say they'll investigate communications deficiencies With water rising at alarming rates, residents in the Rivertrace Estates subdivision in Pennington Bend tried to find out if they could safely stay in their homes. But the information they kept hearing about river levels and dam releases didn't square with what they were seeing in their driveways and yards on Sunday, May 2. They took their cue to evacuate from a neighbor's cousin working at Old Hickory Dam, homeowners association president Kara Stephens said. Stephens started knocking on doors around 8 p.m. Joining a "mass fleeing" an hour later, she and her husband jumped in two of their vehicles and headed for higher ground at his mother's house in Kentucky. "What I was physically seeing with my own eyes was much more threatening than the reports we were getting from (police) officers and media," she said. "We were calling in every favor we could find to try to get any accurate information."

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100514/NEWS01/5140358/1001/news>

[Navy Enlists Facebook For Flood Updates \(Commercial Appeal/Mckenzie\)](#)

When flooding crippled the telephones and computers that serve the Navy base in Millington, Facebook provided an Internet-age way to communicate. The social media website is being harnessed by the Naval Support Activity Mid-South base to help residents and some 5,000 people who work there stay informed and ask questions. "The entire Department of Defense has only recently started to embrace social media as a valid means of communication, recognizing that the younger generation likes to communicate via Twitter, texting, etc.," NSA-Mid-South spokesman David Crenshaw said by e-mail. "But we're the first ones to really implement it the way we have during a crisis," Crenshaw said. The NSA Mid-South Facebook page -- facebook.com/NSAMidSouth -- was introduced in December and found a more critical use at 7:31 a.m. on May 1.

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/may/14/navy-enlists-facebook-for-flood-updates/>

[Loan Will Help Metro Reduce Sewage Overflow Into Cumberland River \(City Paper\)](#)

Metro has made vast improvements to its storm water system in recent years, but during times of heavy rains, runoff still enters and overwhelms the city's wastewater treatment facilities. When this happens, Metro experiences a "sewer overflow event," which means storm water mixed with partially treated wastewater overflows into the Cumberland River. This process is highly regulated and strongly discouraged by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. An \$18 million, 20-year loan from the state's SRF Loan Program — administered by TDEC — will provide funds to further prevent "wet weather combined sewer overflow events." The low-interest loan comes with a 1.74 percent interest rate. The loans are aimed to help communities, utility districts, and water and wastewater authorities finance projects that protect Tennessee's ground and surface waters and public health.

<http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/city-news/loan-will-help-metro-reduce-sewage-overflow-cumberland-river>

-Opinion-

[Stop Exempting Dams From State Inspections \(Jackson Sun\)](#)

A recent report in The Jackson Sun by investigative reporter Dan Morris uncovered a serious flaw in Tennessee law regarding state oversight of dams. While we see nothing nefarious in the inadequate law, the potential outcome to the unsuspecting public could be disastrous. The law should be changed, and soon. It is a matter of public safety. The state's Safe Dams Act was passed in 1973 to provide oversight of certain non-federal dams, including private dams and watershed dams. Under the act, dams are classified regarding public safety if the dam should fail. But time limits and exemptions built into the law can end dam inspections. That is a recipe for flood disaster. Tennessee's dam safety law exempts certain farm ponds based on whether there is public access to the pond and there are no more than two owners. Neither of those parameters seem to have anything to do with the safety of the dam creating the pond. In fact, the farm pond exemption applies regardless of the size or hazard category of the pond..

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20100514/OPINION01/5140303/1014/OPINION/Editorial--Stop-exempting-dams-from-state-inspections>

[Ophelia Ford: Millington Damaged, But We're Ready To Rebuild \(Tri-State Defender\)](#)

By now you have seen the images and videos of flooding in Millington. You have heard the stories, either in the media or from family and friends, of how much they have lost. Thousands were evacuated, only to come home to a life turned upside down. Damage estimates for the state are in the billions. I spent three days last week witnessing the damage and recovery. Much of Memphis escaped these storms relatively unscathed, and yet Shelby County was still declared a federal disaster area. For those who were fortunate enough to be unharmed, that should give you some idea of how badly Millington and other areas such as Frayser were hit. Thankfully, Gov. Phil Bredesen, Millington Mayor Richard Hodges and Interim Shelby County Mayor Joe Ford have acted swiftly in addressing the situation in Shelby County. Also, our federal government responded quickly to our plight: Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Craig Fugate, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan have all toured our county, and have given us their word that we will receive support.

<http://tri-statedefenderonline.com/articlelive/articles/4874/1/Millington-damaged-but-were-ready-to-rebuild-Page1.html>

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