

May 21, 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.

**[Marshall, Giles Declared Disaster Areas \(Columbia Daily Herald\)](#)**

Two more counties in southern Middle Tennessee have been declared federal disaster areas. The Federal Emergency Management Agency added Giles and Marshall counties to the list Wednesday. The declaration means residents and business owners in those counties are now eligible for disaster assistance from the recent flooding that devastated Tennessee. Giles and Marshall will join 42 other counties, including Hickman and Maury counties, that were previously declared federal disaster areas. Individual assistance can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repairs and other serious disaster-related expenses. For public-assistance projects, FEMA will pay 75 percent of the cost with the remaining portion being split between state and local government. These projects include debris removal, emergency services related to severe storms and flooding and repairing or replacing damaged infrastructure and public facilities.

[http://www.columbiadailyherald.com/articles/2010/05/20/top\\_stories/03disasteraid.txt](http://www.columbiadailyherald.com/articles/2010/05/20/top_stories/03disasteraid.txt)

**[Grant Will Allow Tower At Airport To Be Lowered \(Cleveland Daily Banner\)](#)**

An aeronautics grant was approved Wednesday for Cleveland Municipal Airport to lower a TVA Communications tower and conduct a value appraisal for lowering a cell tower near the runway. Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen announced the \$26,100 federal grant Wednesday in Nashville. "Local airports are vital to the economy and travel system of Tennessee," Bredesen said. "Investing in our airports helps them stay competitive and efficient at meeting the needs of businesses and travelers. I'm pleased to support this investment in the Cleveland Municipal Airport." The grant was made available through the Tennessee Department of Transportation's Aeronautics Division. "This division administers federal and state funding to assist in the location, design, construction and maintenance of Tennessee's diverse public aviation system," reported TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely. "We are pleased to continue to support Tennessee's general aviation and commercial airports."

[http://www.clevelandbanner.com/view/full\\_story/7549506/article-Grant-will-allow-towerat-airport-to-be-lowered?instance=homefirstleft](http://www.clevelandbanner.com/view/full_story/7549506/article-Grant-will-allow-towerat-airport-to-be-lowered?instance=homefirstleft)

**[Dam Inspections A 'Huge Step' \(Jackson Sun\)](#)**

State inspections of unregulated dams this year are a good "first step" and will help ensure public safety, officials said Thursday. But the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation hopes future legislation will strengthen its authority to inspect and regulate all of the state's 1,200 non-federal dams. More than 500 dams are exempt from regulation and not inspected for safety, including 70 high-hazard dams. A high-hazard rating means people would likely die if the dam fails. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation agreed Wednesday to inspect unregulated dams this year, beginning with high-hazard dams, if it receives permission from the dam owners. "Our goal is to assure the public's safety," said Tisha Calabrese-Benton, the department's communications director. "This is a first step. For the department to be able to inspect and regulate all dams would require action by the General Assembly."

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20100521/NEWS01/5210309/1002/Dam-inspections-a-huge-step->

**[Ex-FEMA chief may consult for Tennessee during flood recovery \(Tennessean/Ward\)](#)**

Official says state lacks resources to handle claims A disaster-consulting firm run by the former top gun of the Federal Emergency Management Agency under ex-President Bill Clinton may be on the verge of getting a state contract to help Tennessee recover from the May floods. The company, James Lee Witt Associates, would be hired under a one-year contract to advise and coordinate various programs and wade through FEMA rules and regulations to help Tennessee recoup all the federal dollars it would be owed as it cleans up after a flood that caused nearly \$2 billion worth of damage so far to Davidson County private property alone. The contract, which is under review by Gov. Phil Bredesen's staff, is necessary because the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency lacks enough staff to manage the accounting and federal payouts for a myriad of cleanup and repair programs, said Jeremy Heidt, a spokesman for TEMA. "If you look at the size of this disaster, it's very big and we need this in order for us to do this in an effective manner for the people of those communities," Heidt said.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100521/BUSINESS01/5210347/Ex-FEMA+chief+may+consult+for+Tennessee+during+flood+recovery>

### **[Flood Aid Deadlines Are Extended \(Tennessean/Ross\)](#)**

Tennessee flood victims have been granted more time to apply for emergency cash and food assistance. Flood victims in Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Dyer, Gibson, Haywood, Hickman, Humphreys, Madison, Montgomery, Perry, Shelby, Sumner and Tipton counties have until next Friday to apply. The federal government granted the extension because of the large number of people seeking assistance and problems getting into some offices. Flood victims must apply for food stamp benefits or cash assistance at the Tennessee Department of Health and Human Services office in the county where they live. The offices will be open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Only those who have registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and suffered flood damage are eligible for cash assistance.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100521/NEWS01/5210342/1001/NEWS/Flood+aid+deadlines+are+extended>

### **[Emergency Food Stamp Program Extended One Week \(WPLN-Radio Nashville\)](#)**

Flood victims have another week to apply for one-time emergency cash and food stamps. The federal program was extended yesterday in 14 hard-hit counties. Current food stamp recipients are eligible for the federal benefit to replace food lost in the floodwater or because of power outages. Even those who aren't already enrolled in the food stamp program can get a one-time benefit. Demetra Staten of west Nashville applied for her family, which is eligible for more than \$500. "I was flooded and the refrigerator floated away." Recipients do have to meet low income requirements and live in counties declared disaster areas. Those who have also registered for FEMA help are eligible for a one-time cash payment of \$250 through the Department of Human Services. Applicants for the emergency food stamps and cash assistance must apply in person at a county's Department of Human Services office.

<http://wpln.org/?p=17838>

### **[Weather Officials Question Info From Engineers \(Associated Press\)](#)**

A National Weather Service hydrologist says the extent of flooding in Nashville could have been more accurately predicted if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had kept them up to date on how much water it was releasing into the Cumberland River. "That's the information we used to put out the forecast for Nashville," Jim Noel said. "If we had information that was several hours old, that's the information that we worked off of." At a joint news conference on Thursday, officials from both agencies described communication problems during the recent flooding that killed 22 people in Tennessee and caused more than \$2 billion in damage in Nashville alone. Those problems included an almost 12-hour Internet outage at corps headquarters on Sunday, May 2. The weather service, not the corps, is responsible for predicting flood levels and issuing warnings to the public.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=33585835.story>

### **[Feds Say Public Was Given Sufficient Flood Warning \(Tennessean/Sisk\)](#)**

Federal officials defended Thursday their water management and public notice decisions during this month's flood, but they also described communications problems, including the loss of data service for nearly half a day during the storm's peak. Officials from the National Weather Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said decisions about when and how to manage the Cumberland River saved the city from a more damaging flood. They also said they were in touch with city and state emergency management officials throughout the storm, and that they gave sufficient warning for residents and business owners along the river to move property and evacuate before the floods reached. But officials also said the water appeared to have knocked out a communications line that supplied Internet and e-mail service to the Corps' office at Old Hickory Dam for 10½ hours on May 2 — the Sunday on which record-breaking rainfall swamped the region's flood control system. During that time, Corps workers had to use smart phones and direct readings of river gauges to assess how quickly the water was rising.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100521/NEWS02/5210340/1001/news/Feds+say+public+given+sufficient+warning>

### **[Corps Of Engineers Defends Actions During Record Flooding \(City Paper\)](#)**

Amid public scrutiny of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' actions during record flooding, the agency released descriptions of the steps officials took to lessen flooding in the Cumberland River basin. "It is not the Corps' intent to publicly refute criticisms or questions raised, but to merely state the facts," said Lt. Col. Anthony Mitchell, commander of the Nashville District. "Rainfall from the weekend of May 1-2 set and shattered records throughout the region," he said. "With the amount of rain that fell in uncontrolled parts of the Cumberland River Basin, flooding was inevitable. "This was a natural disaster, but our dams did their job by holding back much of the rain water, and with controlled releases of water that actually lowered the crest of the river through Nashville." To determine whether the Corps could have improved, the agency is working with the National Weather Service and other public agencies to launch an after action review and lessons learned investigation. <http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/city-news/corps-engineers-defends-actions-during-record-flooding>

### **[Army Corps Is Criticized for Actions in Flood \(New York Times\)](#)**

Responding to criticism from lawmakers, the Army Corps of Engineers on Thursday defended its release of water from Tennessee and Kentucky dams during deadly flooding in Tennessee this month that left large sections of Nashville underwater. Two Tennessee legislators, Senator Lamar Alexander, a Republican, and Representative Jim Cooper, a Democrat, have called for a Congressional investigation into communication between the corps and the people outside the agency — residents and local officials — over water releases at several corps-managed lakes that feed into the Cumberland River, which runs through downtown Nashville. In addition, Mr. Cooper has asked whether the corps could have better managed water levels at its lakes, controlling the flow of water through dam floodgates so that the flooding would have been less destructive. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/21/us/21flood.html?ref=todayspaper>

### **[Repairs "Progressing Very Nicely" at Water-Treatment Plant: Official \(WPLN-Radio\)](#)**

Metro officials say efforts are on track to repair a water-treatment plant damaged by the floods. Officials have been asking Nashvillians to limit water use until the plant — which is one of the city's two for drinking water — comes back online at the end of May. Metro Water Director Scott Potter says workers will soon begin refilling a 9-million-gallon clean-water storage tank. It's called the clear-well. "We've got to start a disinfection process and that takes awhile. And then once we get the disinfection complete in the clearwell we can start disinfecting the filters, and at that point we're really in the plant start-up phase." Potter says even then every system in the plant must be checked and re-checked before it's certified for use. He says that process should be done and the plant restored at the end of the month. <http://wpln.org/?p=17874>

### **[Homes In Floodway Will Get First Buyouts \(Tennessean/Rau\)](#)**

Mayor Karl Dean's administration is still working out the specifics of a buyout plan for homes damaged in this month's record flood, but a top official said Thursday the first phase of buyouts would include the approximately 500 homes located within the floodway. "I think that it makes sense," Metro Water Services Director Scott Potter told Metro Council members at a special meeting Thursday. "The probability of additional flooding is for homes within the floodway." Federally designated floodways are the areas of land immediately next to rivers and creeks. Potter said the buyout program would move forward in three phases. The first phase would include purchasing homes in the floodway. The second phase would include purchasing homes located within the 100-year floodplain requiring repairs worth more than 50 percent of their pre-flood assessed value. And the third phase would include purchasing homes located within the floodplain that have sustained less than 50 percent damage. <http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100521/NEWS0202/5210341/1001/news/Homes+in+floodway+will+get+first+buyouts>

### **[Some Homeowners Won't Be Allowed to Rebuild, Worrying Others \(WPLN-Radio\)](#)**

Metro Councilmembers say many constituents in flood-hit areas of Nashville are afraid they won't be allowed to rebuild their houses. That's because homes that both took significant damage and lie directly in the floodway can't receive building permits. Metro Codes Director Terry Cobb told council members most of the 11 thousand properties hit by the flood shouldn't have any problem getting permission to rebuild. "If 8 thousand of the 11 thousand are just fine, you've got 73 percent of them are fine; that leaves 3 thousand. A substantial number of that, probably the majority of those, are just fine." But Councilman Michael Craddock says some people in the floodway are still trying to repair. Craddock pointed to homes right along the river in the Pennington Bend neighborhood. He called on city officials to warn homeowners efforts to rebuild there are probably wasted. <http://wpln.org/?p=17880>

**[Homeowners Look For Answers On Buyout Program \(WTVF-TV Nashville\)](#)**

The road to recovery may mean starting over for some Metro families. The city plans to buy out homes in flood prone areas to prevent another crisis. The only question facing some homeowners is whether or not to start rebuilding. In a meeting Thursday, Metro leaders answered questions from council members. The conversation centered on people who want to know if their home will be bought out or if they should simply go ahead and rebuild. On Thursday, department leaders were only able to make an educated guess but they said it made the most sense to buy out homes in flood ways first since they're most likely to flood again in the future. "It's most probable that your home will be bought if you're in the flood way. The next step is if you're in the flood plain and you experienced 50 percent or more damage to your house and the third is if you're in the flood plain and you're less than 50 percent. That's the strategy we're going to employ," said Scott Potter with Metro Water Services. <http://www.newschannel5.com/global/story.asp?s=12518634>

**[Flood Victims May Receive Money From IRS \(WTVF-TV Nashville\)](#)**

If you suffered damage during the flooding crisis, the Internal Revenue Service might owe you some money. Special tax rules go into effect for federally declared disaster areas. "It's going to cost a lot to rebuild, and every little bit would help," said East Nashville flood victim Theresa Lemley. Lemley's Barclay Drive home suffered severe damage during the early May flood. She is considering amending her 2009 federal tax return. Certified Public Account Vic Alexander said the IRS allows disaster victims to file for casualty losses which give the taxpayer a tax break. When the taxpayer lives in a federally declared disaster area, he or she may receive more money from Uncle Sam. "You will make an inventory of everything you lost including renovating your house or your home or tearing out drywall and carpet," said Alexander. All of the information can be included on an amended 2009 federal tax return. <http://www.newschannel5.com/global/story.asp?s=12518424>

**[National Coal Corp. Completes Sale of Rail Line \(Market Watch\)](#)**

National Coal Corp. ([NCOC](#) **0.37**, -0.03, -7.50%), a Central and Southern Appalachian coal producer, today announces the sale, by its wholly-owned subsidiary NC Railroad, Inc., of 42-miles of rail line between Oneida and Devonia, Tenn. to R.J. Corman Railroad Property LLC for a purchase price of approximately \$3 million. [http://www.marketwatch.com/story/national-coal-corp-completes-sale-of-rail-line-2010-05-20?reflink=MW\\_news\\_stmp](http://www.marketwatch.com/story/national-coal-corp-completes-sale-of-rail-line-2010-05-20?reflink=MW_news_stmp)

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