When the Rain Came to Big Sur, so did Public Works

While our recent rain was badly needed due to California’s and Monterey County’s drought situation, it’s a different story in Big Sur, where the Pfeiffer Fire did extensive damage to hillsides in December 2013. Heavy rain can create mudslides in the area left scarred by the fire. So when the weather forecast predicted heavy rain in the area last week, a solution was needed.

That solution came in the form of a joint effort between the Resource Management Agency – Public Works (RMA-PW), U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), private property owners in the area and Don Chapin, general contractor.
The group came together to organize temporary protective measures to divert water and possibly mudslides and debris flow around the Sycamore Canyon Road properties in the burn area as well as endangered wildlife in Sycamore Creek and Pfeiffer Lagoon.

This team worked 24 hours straight on February 27th to put protection measures in place before the strongest part of the rainstorm hit the area.

The construction team mobilized in the very early hours Thursday with 10 pieces of heavy equipment and 20 personnel to work around-the-clock, through the wind and rain, to complete the project shortly after midnight Friday morning. Crews installed 900 lineal feet of K-Rail concrete barriers, 450 sand bags and 100 lineal feet of gabion baskets of riprap (rocks, stones or similar materials) to form a wall system to direct water and debris flow away from the affected area.

Thanks to the hard work by all involved, the protective measures safeguarded homes and sensitive areas from run off, as the storm did bring significant rain to the area.

The project was funded by a federal emergency grant of $112,500 from the NRCS which covered 75% of the cost of the work. Property owners will finance the remaining cost of the project, $37,500, since all the work was done on private property.

Enrique Saavedra and Billy Issa served as the County’s Project Managers/Resident Engineers with Alberto Mejia and Jose Gomez as Project Inspectors.

“This project shows outstanding team work and dedication of all involved to assist those affected in the aftermath of the most recent fire damage,” says Saavedra.
Emergency Communications Sends its Pros to the AT&T

The AT&T Pebble Beach Pro Am golf tournament draws some of the most famous professional golfers, athletes and celebrities in the world. Monterey County Emergency Communications sends its best too.

For the last 10 years, the County’s Emergency Communications Department (ECD) has sent its ‘pros’ to the event, providing emergency dispatch services for which the tournament reimburses the County. This year’s event lasted from February 6th-9th, and the ECD Support Team was responsible for the dispatching and coordination of emergency responses during that time.

A glamorous job? No. But it was all in a day’s work for ECD staff.

While celebrities are on the greens, emergency operations are based in a small trailer which serves as a Communications Command Post (CP) in the Pebble Beach Community Services Department Conference Room. Two dispatchers were on duty each day. Staff who took part in this effort were Shift Supervisor Ron Teats, Acting Shift Supervisor Amy Ramos and Dispatchers Stephanie Knutsen and Anna Helms.

Emergency communication equipment on hand included multiple radio systems, lap tops and remote connection to the main 9-1-1 dispatching infrastructure at the Monterey County Emergency Center in Salinas. ECD staff was able to maintain contact with the Monterey County Sheriff Department Special Detail, Cal Fire units, AMR resources and AT&T event volunteers.

Coordination for this work began months in advance. Operations Supervisor Leslie Ragghianti and Shift Supervisor Ron Teats were responsible for ensuring that operational logistics and plans were in place. Information Technology Department’s Radio Shop provided support, to upgrade the radios and adjust the radio antennas for optimum performance. Coverage gaps on the golf course were resolved by using event staff radios to communicate with the event field units and AMR resources.

While certainly a job well done, what people really want to know from ECD staff involved is if they met any celebrities. Not this year they say, but in past years they’ve chatted with celebrities such as Josh Duhamel, Bill Murray, Kevin Costner, George Lopez, Oscar De La Hoya and Luke Wilson.
Probation Celebrating Completion of Office Renovation

A $1.4 million renovation of the Probation Department’s new offices at 20 East Alisal in Salinas has just been completed this week, and probation employees are likely feeling like homeowners who have lived through a renovation – pleased with the results and glad it’s over.

The department is praising the Architectural Services Division of the Resource Management Agency – Public Works for its expert handling of the renovation and great results.

“I have been an employee of this County for 24 years and have never witnessed a county project of this size run so close to plan in terms of completion date and cost,” says Assistant Probation Chief Marcia Parsons. “More importantly, the level of communication between the contractor and our staff was unbelievable. It allowed for the continuation of operations with very little down time.”

In 2009, the county entered into a lease/purchase agreement for the Alisal Street building, which the County purchased in April 2012. Probation staff began moving from its 1422 Natividad Road facility in the fall of 2010, when the Adult Division moved into the first floor of the building. The Administrative Division moved into the second floor in July 2012. Probation’s Juvenile Division remains at the Natividad Road offices, near Juvenile Hall and Juvenile Court.

Renovations to the building were done for the first phase of the move in 2010, but for the second move that began in 2012, upgrades were focused on the second floor of the building to reconfigure the space for additional services for Probation clients, organizing staff and to do extensive upgrades to mechanical and electrical systems.
Architectural Services oversaw the remodel and contracted work. The building was built in 1981 and needed many upgrades due to the old equipment, what clients and staff don’t see behind the walls. Mechanical and electrical systems had to be replaced such as air systems, chillers, piping, temperature controls, boilers and water heaters – a huge job but now these systems run at 95% efficiency, saving resources and money. Contractors were also able to make seismic adjustments during the renovation process as well.

Among the many improvements to the building, the newly configured space makes room for additional services for Probation clients. The Transitions to Recovery Program can now offer programs on site and a space was created to house Behavioral Health, Employment Training and Housing services.

“Now when clients report in, they can be directed to needed services right on the premises,” explains Parsons.

Despite the extensive work, the Probation offices were only closed a few days over the last year and a half due to renovation work. Parsons says everyone got used to working with people in the walls and overhead and survived a few days without heat when that system was being replaced.