

# OPINION

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## GUEST COMMENTARY

### Levee repair project result of team work

*(The following Guest Commentary was submitted by the Tillamook Bay Habitat and Estuary Improvement District.)*

The 500-foot levee repair along the Josi property on the Wilson River is a perfect example of what the community accomplishes working together.

The levee was breached during the November flood, when thousands of cubic yards of dike material washed into fields, creating a new major river channel and causing flooding of farms, businesses and homes. The Wilson River Loop Road emergency route was closed for the first time and record flooding occurred on the northern edge of downtown Tillamook along North U.S. Highway 101.

Property owners are still assessing damages, remodeling, relocating, closing and selling because of the flood.

In December, a second flood was imminent during the windstorm. Loten Hooley, the new owner of Rosenberg

Builders Supply, said, "I don't know how we could have survived through another devastating flood. We were still trying to recover from November."

Emergency actions by Tom Manning, Tillamook County's emergency management director, and the Tillamook County Board of Commissioners prevented the second flood with the emergency levee repair that was completed during the storm.

Manning had obtained U.S. Army Corps of Engineers detailed preliminary needs immediately after the November flood. The commissioners hired an independent surveyor, Terry Jones, who completed key cross-section work in two days. Easements and agency approvals had been obtained. Using the surveying, county commissioners approved emergency funds for local drainage contractor Leo Kuntz of Nehalem Marine to do the repair.

Kuntz's crew, including workers pulled from a Northern California job, were able to complete the emergency

project in three days, moving out of the project area ahead of threatening flood waters during the wind storm.

The levee breach required some 600 dump truck loads of rock and clay, furnished by Don Aufdermauer and George Hurliman rock pits and hauled by local truckers Aufdermauer Trucking & Excavation, Robert Warren Trucks, and Frank Clausen Trucking. The Tillamook County Roads Department kept access roads maintained during hauling. Landowners Don and Bill Josi donated materials and labor.

Kuntz described the final work day. "By the time we got a layer packed into place, the water rose up to it," he said. "It went that way until the river reached its peak."

Manning said, "One more day of delay and we would have had another disaster."

Doug Rosenberg, TBHEID president said, "The quick action during an emergency shows the capability of this county. The district is very apprecia-

tive of the extra effort of the county and local contractors in solving this emergency." The commissioners' leadership, in particular Mark Labhart's project lead, saved the public from a second emergency and further economic loss.

Labhart gives credit to Nehalem Marine for several days of "standing by" before mobilizing immediately, once the repair was approved.

Manning noted, "This success was a result of excellent cooperation and collaboration from the county commissioners, the county Sheriff's Office, state and local agencies and the many local contractors and property owners."

The emergency repair, start to finish, was done in five days and under budget at \$83,574. A reimbursement of 75 percent of the cost is being requested by the county through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and 25 percent of the final cost through the City of Tillamook.



COURTESY PHOTO

A load of rock is deposited at the Josi levy on the Wilson River.