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Damage tally from flooding \$14.5M so far

Figures preliminary, cover mostly Little River County

by [Jordan Gass-Pooré](#) | July 16, 2015 at 3:35 a.m.

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Preliminary reports show late-spring storms and flooding in Arkansas caused at least \$14.5 million in damage in two counties -- mostly in Little River County -- although final calculations have not been made in all counties.

About half of Little River County's 361,000 acres were covered by floodwaters from the Red River and the Little River after severe weather and subsequent flooding throughout Arkansas from May 1-June 15.

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County road damage estimates are not included in the \$14,192,000 amount tallied in a recent preliminary report from Little River County's emergency management coordinator and the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

Little River County is one of 29 Arkansas counties eligible for federal disaster aid after storms, tornadoes and flooding.

President Barack Obama made the disaster-area declaration in June, which allows residents to seek grants and loans to pay for temporary housing and home repairs, and to cover losses to uninsured property. It also allows local governments to obtain reimbursement for the cost of debris removal and infrastructure repairs.

The counties listed in the declaration are Clark, Crawford, Dallas, Franklin, Garland, Hempstead, Howard, Independence, IZard, Jefferson, Johnson, Lafayette, Little River, Logan, Madison, Marion, Miller, Montgomery, Nevada, Newton, Ouachita, Perry, Pike, Polk, Scott, Searcy, Sebastian, Sevier and Yell.

Chicot, Conway, Faulkner and Pope counties were declared state disaster areas but were not included in the federal declaration.

Additional counties may be included at a later date if requested by the state, said Krista Guthrie, a spokesman for the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management.

Although all counties considered disaster areas have submitted damage estimates to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, some have not made final calculations.

Dennis Gilstrap, director of the Crawford County Department of Emergency Management, said his county's damage estimate report from Arkansas River flooding includes only the location of disaster-stricken areas, not the cost for repairs there.

The same for Jefferson County, which reported 142 damaged homes mostly from Arkansas River flooding.

Some homes there had between 2 feet and 4 feet of water inside, said Karen Blevins, Jefferson County's emergency management coordinator.

"The water stayed inside for at least 10 days, some longer," Blevins said.

Garland County estimated \$383,959.27 worth of damage in its preliminary report, said Bo Robertson, director of the county's Department of Emergency Management.

Robertson said that includes flash-flood damage to roads and bridges.

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Most of the destruction in Garland County occurred in Hot Springs, when severe weather damaged a 2-megawatt generator that supplied power to a water plant, Robertson said.

He said the city spent more than \$35,000 to rent a backup generator until the original one can be repaired at an estimated \$75,000 plus labor.

The total number of Garland County residents affected by the severe weather and the costs associated with it are unknown, Robertson said. So far, FEMA has contacted people in 54 residences there, he added.

"It was an extremely quick turnaround," with residents receiving financial aid within three days of applying, Robertson said.

Teams from Guthrie's office and with FEMA completed preliminary statewide assessments in May, showing that storms and flooding caused more than \$6 million in damage to more than 370 homes and public infrastructure.

Of that amount, \$3 million is estimated for repairing roads and bridges washed out by flooding. Another \$1.04 million was estimated for debris removal. The total doesn't include damage to insured property.

FEMA spokesman Rita Egan said teams will help eligible residents statewide who have flood damage register for the \$755,223 worth of federal aid to help pay for repairs that range from replacing furniture and medical supplies to mold removal.

Of this federal aid, FEMA spokesman Bettina Hutchings said households may be eligible for up to \$32,900 to use for rebuilding or replacing lost or disaster-damaged private property.

Egan said that as of Wednesday, FEMA and the state have received 393 applications for federal financial assistance tied to the severe weather that took place May 7-June 15.

Disaster recovery centers have opened in Crawford, Howard and Jefferson counties to help people whose homes or businesses were affected by the severe weather.

FEMA representatives will be at the Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative Building in Van Buren from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. Sunday; as well as the Carter Day Training Center in Nashville, and at the Pine Bluff Convention Center from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

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