



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

(831) 454-2000 WWW.SANTACRUZCOUNTY.US

CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Jason Hoppin

Jason.Hoppin@santacruzcounty.us

BOARD TO HOLD HEARING ON DEBRIS REMOVAL ROAD DAMAGE

On Tuesday, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors will hold a hearing and take testimony from impacted residents on millions of dollars in unresolved damage to public and private roads throughout the CZU Fire burn scar.

The road damage is the result of debris removal activities by a subcontractor for CalRecycle, which provides no-cost debris removal services to survivors following major wildfires. In this case, San Francisco-based Anvil Builders used heavy equipment and repetitive heavy loads to modify and damage rural roads, including Last Chance Road, Whitehouse Canyon Road, Swanton-area roads and more.

To date, 71 damage claims have been filed by individual property owners and small road associations. Most have been denied by the State. The County has already filed damage claims and appeals for 17 public roads with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which denied initial claims and signaled that appeals are not likely to succeed due to damage being caused by a state contractor. Anvil operated under an approximately \$225 million contract to remove debris across several 2020 lightning complex fires.

The total damage estimated on public roads is \$4.4 million, an amount which does not include damage to privately owned roads. The total damage sustained along Last Chance Road alone is estimated at \$2.7 million, which includes the loss of critical drainage culverts and features necessary to keep the road passable during winter storm weather.

The County has held discussions with CalRecycle and the California Office of Emergency Services regarding the damage due to Anvil's inadequate preventative maintenance and use of equipment that was inappropriate for local conditions, including the use of steel-tracked machinery.

However, those negotiations have not resulted in support for local residents asking for their roads to be returned to their original condition. The hearing will be held as part of the Board's regular 9 a.m. meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 16th, 2021.