



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE – OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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TUESDAY'S STORM FORECASTED TO BRING ENOUGH WATER TO FILL AND SPILL LOPEZ LAKE

Arroyo Grande, CA– Lopez Lake is expected to spill earlier than previously thought due to the National Weather Service's adjusted predictions of increased rainfall. Back-to-back storms this winter has brought the lake from 24 percent capacity at the beginning of January to full capacity less than three months later.

Since Lopez Lake is a water supply reservoir for drinking water – with smaller-diameter pipes than a flood-control site would have – it was not designed and constructed to quickly release water downstream. This means the County was unable to release water in advance of the last few storms to accommodate future rainfall. Once the lake reaches full capacity, water will overtop the reservoir and move through the spillway, as it's designed to do. From there, it will flow into the Arroyo Grande Creek. The creek has risen to levels which caused flooding in prior storms, and the flows from behind the dam will contribute additional flows to the creek.

The spillway itself is in good shape. The County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department regularly inspects and maintains the site. However, there are neighborhoods below the dam and in the City of Arroyo Grande that may experience increased flood and debris flows with the spilling reservoir. Tally Ho Creek is not on the mainstem of Arroyo Grande Creek and is not expected to be affected. Public Works will have road crews staged at areas upstream of the City of Arroyo Grande to free debris from culverts and bridges. It is advised that property owners who abut the creek take measures to prevent potential flooding, such as placing sandbags around their property.

In Oceano, where a levee breach occurred on January 9, storm flows could rise to levels that warrant evacuation. Prior evacuations were due to rain below the dam, but with Lopez Lake spilling into Arroyo Grande Creek, this additional water increases the chance of levee failure. Public Works staff will be on the job 24/7 monitoring stream gauges and the condition of the levee system.

Lopez Lake was constructed in 1969 and has spilled 18 times since that date. The last spill was 25 years ago in 1998. Lopez Lake provides drinking water for residents of Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Pismo Beach, Oceano, and Avila Beach. It is a popular South County recreation site for boating, swimming, and fishing. ###

County of San Luis Obispo Government Center

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