

RESOLUTION

ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Towns and Supervisor
Sweeney
INITIATED BY



2/21/2024
DATE DRAFTED

Requesting that the Governor and State and Federal Representatives and Agencies Maximize the Availability of Resources to Assist Rock County Residents in Tornado Recovery Efforts

WHEREAS, on February 8, 2024, two tornados caused significant damage in Rock County, primarily affecting the residents of the Towns of Porter, Union, Magnolia, and Fulton, and the cities of Evansville and Edgerton; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service has currently classified one of these tornados as a high EF 2, with winds ranging just under 135 miles per hour; and

WHEREAS, current residential property damage is estimated around \$2.5 million, with agricultural property and equipment damage estimates not yet completed; and

WHEREAS, private property insurance may cover a portion of these losses, but additional resources will be needed to help affected residents rebuild their homes and agricultural operations; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Disaster Fund is an important state-funded reimbursement program that allows local governments to recoup costs incurred while responding to and recovering from disaster, but does not cover individuals, businesses, the agricultural sector, or costs covered by insurance, making it unavailable for resident recovery for this event; and

WHEREAS, debris from this event has impacted the Yahara River and Badfish Creek in northwestern Rock County, and Rock County does not have the specialized equipment and resources necessary to conduct waterway restoration to make these waterways safe for recreational use.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Rock County Board of Supervisors on this 22nd day of February, 2024, does hereby request that, to the extent allowed by State and Federal law, the Governor seek a federal disaster declaration and/or advocate for access to state and federal programs to assist Rock County residents recover from this event.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Rock County Board of Supervisors requests that the County's federal representatives advocate for access to federal programs, such as through the Small Business Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture, that may assist residents in the recovery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Rock County Board of Supervisors requests that the Legislature and Governor consider amending state law to allow the Wisconsin Disaster Fund to be used to provide funding directly to residents that are in need of assistance to recover from disasters, as is the case in other states.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Rock County Board of Supervisors requests the Department of Natural Resources provide support to assess the impacted waterways, immediately conduct operations to remove life safety hazards and make the waterways passable for kayaks and canoes, and provide oversight and leadership of debris removal operations to restore the waterways to pre-storm conditions. The Rock County Board of Supervisors further requests that the Department of Natural Resources establish a formal program to provide this assistance in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Clerk is directed to provide copies of this resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Rock County's state legislative representatives, and Rock County's Congressional representatives.

FISCAL NOTE:

This resolution has no fiscal impact on the County as a government. It is requesting an emergency declaration in order to aid residents in accessing fiscal disaster assistance.

Sherry Oja
Finance Director

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to Wis. Stat. §§ 59.02 & 59.51.

Richard Greenlee
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

While this tornado event is unlikely to qualify for a federal disaster declaration based on federal criteria, it is important to advocate for access to programs and resources that could assist County residents in recovery efforts.

Josh Smith
County Administrator

Committee Action
Public Safety & Justice Committee