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Update on Forest Fires, Recovery Efforts, and Long-Term Impacts

Fire and Flooding Status

- As of July 18, the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire has burned 341.7 thousand acres and is 93 percent contained, and the Black Fire has burned 325.1 thousand acres and is 70 percent contained.
- As wildfire suppression efforts in the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fires have progressed, a top concern now is the impact of the fire damage on flooding and water quality for Las Vegas and the surrounding areas. Flood damage due to the burn scar poses significant dangers to the city's primary water supply.
- Flooding is not as high of a concern in relation to the Black Fire due to lower levels of rain expected and the location of the burn area, which does not pose similar water supply concerns, but is still a risk.

Emergency Declarations and Funding

- Since the beginning of April, the governor has issued 83 executive orders related to wildfires and wildfire debris related to the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon fire (Mora and San Miguel counties), the Black fire (Sierra County), and other fires impacting Colfax, Lincoln, Mora, Sandoval, and Valencia counties.
 - The executive has allocated a total of \$59.3 million in emergency funds for wildfire response, including \$51 million to the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), \$6.8 million to the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), and \$1.5 million to the Department of Military Affairs/New Mexico National Guard.
 - The executive has also allocated an additional \$1 million to the National Guard for both wildfire and Covid-19 response efforts.
 - The governor has not issued an executive order declaring an emergency related to flooding in these areas as of July 18.
- The Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire was declared a major disaster by the federal government on May 4, and the federal government has taken responsibility for both components of the fire.

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- The 25 percent state/local match for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) public assistance funds has been waived, and FEMA will fully fund emergency response efforts taken prior to August 2.
 - All categories of public assistance have been authorized, including emergency work on debris removal and emergency protective measures, as well as permanent work on roads and bridges; water control facilities; public buildings and contents; public utilities; and parks, recreational, and other facilities.
 - The Black Fire has primarily impacted federal lands, making public assistance funds largely unnecessary, as the federal government is incurring those costs directly.
 - Flooding as a result of the fires has not been added to the federal major disaster declaration. DHSEM plans to request it be added.
 - As of July 18, FEMA has disbursed \$10.6 million in individual assistance to people impacted by the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fires as well as fires impacting Lincoln and Valencia counties. This includes 58 awards for individuals whose homes were completely destroyed; notably, the maximum funds FEMA provides for such a loss is \$37.9 thousand.
 - The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Hermit's Peak Fire Assistance Act to establish an office to review and pay full claims related to the wildfire, including uninsured or underinsured property losses; property devaluation; damage to infrastructure; loss of businesses or wages, temporary housing, financial effects of post-fire flooding losses from hunting, fishing, timbering, grazing and other agricultural activities conducted on land damaged by the fire; increased mortgage costs; debris removal and cleanup; and initiatives to reduce the risk of wildfires. This would include costs above the maximum FEMA payment. It is not clear where the funding for these payments will come from.
 - There is still significant lack of clarity around exact expenditures that will or will not be covered by the federal government agency and which agency or agencies will cover them.
 - At its May 27 meeting, the Emergency Response Subcommittee was advised that the federal National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) was developing a recovery plan for the fires, which was expected to be released shortly. DHSEM planned to review the plan and report on additional recovery items not covered by the plan to LFC. However, at this time the status of the NIMO report is unknown, and does not appear to have been released publicly.

Next Steps

- LFC staff will conduct a fact-finding trip to the Las Vegas area on July 29.