

Flood: Too much water cripples drainage systems

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Public Works Director Collin Stelzig.

The Warrenton-Hammond School District sent children home early Jan. 6 and then the district, along with schools in Knappa, Astoria, Gearhart, and Seaside, remained closed the following day.

Crews throughout the county struggled to keep up with flooded or washed away roads, landslides, and residences and businesses that flooded.

In Warrenton, the city declared a state of emergency

when its stormwater system was so overtaxed it caused widespread flooding and sewer problems across the city.

"It was near a 700-year flood event," Stelzig said. "We had some massive events."

Residents of Alder Creek Village kept a nervous watch as water rose to the tops of levees that protect them and the rest of the city from flooding. Some vulnerable areas were underwater anyway.

Southwest Second Street between Elm and Cedar avenues was closed. Skipanon Drive

between Trina & Ron's Place and Hampton Lumber flooded and was closed.

The peninsula and camping area behind Warrenton Marina's offices disappeared under water as did a portion of Seafarer's Park in Hammond. The sewer/drainage system overflowed through the sewer manholes on South Main Avenue.

"There's a certain amount of fighting nature that we can't do," Mayor Henry Balensifer told residents in a Facebook Live post detailing the emer-

gency last Friday.

After seeking help from the county and receiving none, Warrenton activated an emergency operations center, declared a state of emergency, and called on the state for help.

The Oregon Military Department activated troops from Camp Rilea who assisted Public Works crews and Warrenton volunteer firefighters in filling and laying sandbags, cleaning out storm drains, and pumping water back behind the city's levees.

"One thing, I guess, came into sharp focus and that was



Flood water erodes the base under Highway 202 in Astoria.

that all the roads seem to lead to Alder Creek. It seemed like that was the crux of the city's problem," the mayor said at Tuesday night's commission meeting.

"People may not realize that water from near the high school ends up in Alder Creek," Commissioner Rick Newton said.

"And all the lakes south of us," Stelzig added.

Even before the recent storm, the city had applied for grants to study flooding problems and potential fixes, he told city commissioners.

A \$200,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and a \$100,000 grant from Business Oregon would be used to solve problems associated with Alder Creek.

Filing a flood claim

Immediately contact your insurance company to report damage.

Once the loss has been reported, an adjuster will work with the property owner to calculate the value of the damage and prepare a repair estimate.

Take photos of water in the house and any damaged property; make a list of damaged or lost items and their value, if possible; and keep samples of damaged items for the adjuster.

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