



SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

It has been 13 months since the February 2007 Presidential disaster ice storm was declared and eight months since the last Presidential disaster flood of 2007 was declared for Grant County. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wants all permanent disaster repairs made within 12 months from the date of declaration. This has been a very difficult task due to several facts.

First a “kick off” meeting must be scheduled with FEMA, as well as the Oklahoma Emergency Management Agency (OEMA), some time after each and every declaration is made. Paperwork is then completed to determine each county’s eligibility. Once a determination is made and if a county qualifies, a FEMA project specialist and an OEMA project officer are assigned. The larger, harder hit counties generally receive priority, but assistance is also given on a first-come, first-served basis. Once the project specialist and project officer arrive at the county, all damaged sites must be viewed, measured and assessed. A report is then written for approved sites. For each site, the paperwork includes an estimated and itemized log of all equipment (trucks, trailers, pickups, packers, graders, backhoes, trackhoes, etc.), all product (culverts, steel, rip rap, fill dirt, shale, rock, etc.) and manpower (non-paid regular hours or paid overtime hours). The county commissioner, the FEMA project specialist and OEMA Project officer approve this paperwork, and it then sent to FEMA program assistance coordinator for additional approval. Generally, funds for smaller projects (less than \$50,000) distributed as soon as the paperwork is approved. All large projects must be 100 percent completed and 100 percent approved before receiving any funds.

For Grant County, this first part took months and months to complete. District 2 has received FEMA funds (75 percent) for all its small projects (as originally filed) and is waiting on the OEMA (12.5 percent) funds. The County provides the other 12.5 percent of costs. If small projects exceed the estimated costs, documents must be submitted with final prices reflected. These “over cost” claims may or may not receive approval and funding. District 2 has submitted “over cost” claims, and the County is yet to receive reimbursement.

The second obstacle to disaster repair is the excess rainfall that began in March 2007 and continued through October 2007, which hindered the completion of many projects. In December the rain, snow, and/or ice began, and today, Grant County continues to be in a “wet cycle.”

The third and largest obstacle to disaster repair is that Grant County District 2 has 682 road miles, and not all of these roads were eligible for FEMA funds. However, all 682 miles needed and continue to need repairs and attention.

Repair of six of the 17 miles of road that received ice damage has been completed. Unfortunately, the other 11 miles have not been completed; therefore, District 2 applied for a 6-month extension to complete these repairs. What remains to be finished includes adding rock to five miles on the Jefferson road, two miles on the Renfrow road, and four miles on the ARM road. No monies have been received for any of these projects because these 17 miles were written up as one large project, which is estimated to cost \$88,000.

Possibly the most challenging aspect of large FEMA projects is that the county must front 100 percent of the cost with FEMA and OEMA reimbursing the county at 75 percent and 12.5 percent after the work has been done. This is very difficult on such limited funds.

One reason that the 11 miles are not finished is that District 2 chose to work these rock roads in between building roads and hauling shale in the Renfrow area as well as laying shale and rock on other roads in poor condition. You have to give and take to TRY to make as many improvements as possible. I know I have failed in making everyone happy but I have been fair to everyone involved.

Another large project that District 2 is currently working on is the repair of the State Line Bridge over the Chikaskia River. The repairs to the bridge have been engineered, bids were released and a bid was accepted. The bid was awarded to Graham Excavating and Construction out of Stillwater, Okla. Their work is to be completed on or before May 1, 2008. Additionally, District 2 applied for an Emergency Watershed Project (EWP) grant to rep rap both the east and west banks and on both north and south sides. More information will be available about this project later.

When determining the success or failure of a project, I think Winston Churchill said it best: "Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm."

I am very enthusiastic about Grant County and the improvements that have been and continue to be made. No – they are not as fast as I would like or as fast as you desire, but District 2 employees give 200 percent effort every day for you. District 2 employees include Bryan Brown, Robert Moss, Jon Trenary, Rich Donaldson, Bob Werneke, Steve Wilson, Tom Phillips, Richard Metcalf, Jeremy Bellin, Ronnie Cambron, Gene Clayton, Bruce Shook, Joey Hayes, Jimmie Loveall, Greg Doty and David Cink.

As always, for more information check out our website at www.grantdistrict2.com. Questions and comments may be made by calling me at the office at 580-395-2859 or by e-mail at gtcomm2@wiredok.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy R. Bobbitt, Commissioner

Grant County District 2