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## **Significant damage as Coastal California braces for another storm**

By

Tim Linden, editor at large

March 13, 2023

With most of Monterey County already dealing with significant impacts from a series of rainstorms, today (March 13) the area was bracing for another atmospheric river that is expected to dump even more rain on the deluged county tonight.



“From the southern part of the Monterey County where the Salinas River has overtopped its banks and flooded the community of San Ardo and agricultural land to the northern part of the county where there has been a levee breach on the Pajaro River, which has put that town underground, virtually everyone is affected,” said Nicholas Pasculli, Monterey County communications director.

He added that in between much of the Salinas Valley’s rich farmland is underwater. “It looks like a lake behind the T&A (Tanimura & Antle) building in the Spreckels area,” he said. “No one has done a damage estimate yet. We currently are doing drone surveillance to get a bird’s eye view and make some type of assessment. It’s fair to say it (the damage to agriculture) is significant. Anecdotally, there are a lot of fields underwater. They are going to have to dry out for a specific number of days and then they are going to have to be tested” before growers can go in and try to salvage any crops or replant.

Pasculli told *The Produce News* on Monday morning that Monterey County was expecting a large tropical storm overnight that is expected to be accompanied by 60-70 mile per hour winds, which will probably topple trees and lead to power outages. In the Pajaro Valley, he said engineers are trying to stop the breach from expanding with no chance for repairs until there is a break in the weather. “The original breach was 100 feet wide; then it grew to 120 feet and then 150 feet,” he said. “Now it is 400 feet wide.”

That area is home to many fields of strawberries as well as workers who work those fields. The town of Pajaro was evacuated over the weekend because of the levee breach.

Pasculli said the low-lying parts of the country are underwater with some housing developments

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being impassable with residents sheltering in place.

A quick survey of agricultural industry people also revealed a wait-and-see attitude as everyone is just trying to get through the current storms.

“All of Coastline’s employees are fine; three are working from their homes this morning (Monday) due either to road closures, or ‘shelter in place’ orders issued by Monterey County,” said Mark McBride of Coastline Family Farms in Salinas. “Sounds like the area between Gilroy on the north and San Ardo to the south caught the worst of the last rain storm. This contributed to the Pajaro River levee break and the updated flood advisory all along the Salinas River. Monterey County’s website shows the extensive area that potentially may flood over the next few days.”

McBride said it is too early to know the exact impact these storms will have on the upcoming Salinas Valley vegetable deal, but it is going to be long lived. “We are contacting growers to see what their updated situation is,” he said. “With more rain scheduled to hit the area starting tonight through tomorrow, the problems just keep coming. All of this translates to more interruptions to all growers’ planting schedules into the summer.”

Jeff Cardinale?, director of communications for the California Strawberry Commission, noted that it was much too early to discuss the acres lost and the season impact. “Damage assessment hasn’t even begun,” he said via email on Monday morning. “Right now, the immediate attention is on the residents of the Pajaro community, many of whom work as laborers in the strawberry industry and have been evacuated and may not return home for weeks. The residents and the community of Pajaro are facing an incredibly difficult recovery.”

He continued: “There is also the chance for more flooding and the commission is monitoring. Once there is an opportunity, damage assessments will begin.”

Ron Pelger, a columnist for *The Produce News*, is watching the storms as they exit California from his perch in Reno, on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe. “The weather out here on the West Coast is a disaster,” he said. “The rain, snow and wind keep coming over the Sierra Range with no end in sight.”

[Tim Linden](#)

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## About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join

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Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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