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San Mateo and Santa Cruz County residents will benefit from a declaration making 17 California Counties federal major disaster areas. FEMA announced last night that the President has declared a Major Disaster for the State of California triggering the release of federal funds to help communities recover from the severe storms, flooding, mudslides and landslides that occurred March 29 to April 16, 2006.

The critical federal funds that will flow as a result of this declaration will help alleviate the damages from the storms of spring 2006 and will help prevent damages from future storms.

After assessing the severity of the storm's damage within the 14th Congressional District, Rep. Anna G. Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, called upon California's Governor to assist with the repair of East Palo Alto's levees which were in danger of breaching and flooding the City. Later, she called upon the Governor to use the opportunity of his April meeting with the President to discuss federal funding for disaster relief for California. On May 15th she wrote to the President, requesting a federal disaster declaration for the California counties affected by the storms. She and 22 of her California colleagues then called upon the President to support the Governor's call for federal disaster relief.

The declaration making the 17 Counties major disaster areas is a big step toward recovery. Storms with heavy sustained rain damaged property, closed the coastal highways, caused mudslides and resulted in extensive flooding. The economic costs alone are enormous. The Governor identified nearly \$70 million in damage to public infrastructure, and a need for \$121 million in emergency transportation repairs. The storms led to more than \$300 million in losses in agriculture, a figure that is likely to grow.

In the 14th Congressional District, San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties have experienced significant damage and loss, totaling more than \$36 million. Effective response to this damage far exceeds local and state capabilities, and timely federal assistance will provide help to those affected as quickly as possible. The declaration provides for a 75 percent reimbursement by the Federal government for eligible repairs. The assistance will help communities repair buildings, highways and bridges, flood and water control structures, and other critical infrastructure and help rebuild businesses and agriculture.

"I'm grateful to the City, County and State officials and emergency responders for their work to keep their communities safe," Eshoo said. "I applaud everyone who has assisted in this effort. This is an example of collaboration at its best."

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