
HAVASUPAI TRIBE

MEDIA FLOOD DISASTER UPDATE

CONTACT: ABBIE S. FINK, 602-957-8881
afink@hmapr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Havasupai Tribal Council Passes Declaration of Disaster Resolution

The Havasupai Tribal Council passed a Declaration of Disaster (Resolution #39-18) declaring a state of emergency for the Havasupai Indian Reservation trails leading into Supai, Village in Northern Arizona. On July 11, 2018 several waves of flooding hit Supai village and Havasu Campgrounds. The storm caused catastrophic damage in the form of mud and rock slides to the Hualapai Hilltop trail, including the dislocation of large boulders which are blocking the only access for food, medical and mail supplies in and out of Supai Village. The United States Postal Service has temporarily ceased mail delivery by mule train to Supai (this is the last location in the US to be served in this manner). In addition, critical food and supplies are cut off to the Village except through helicopter.

The declaration states, due to flood levels and rock slides the main trail leading into Supai, Village has been declared dangerous and needs major repairs. Currently, Hilltop Trailhead is closed to all hikers and mule trains into the Village out of concern for the life, health, safety and well-being of the residents and animals in Supai.

“The unstable and dangerous conditions of the affected areas and our Tribe’s limited resources necessitate the need for federal assistance,” said Chairwoman Muriel Coochwyte. “The Tribal Council, in consultation with The Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (AZ DEMA) and Coconino County Emergency Management, have determined that the cost of emergency repairs is expected to exceed \$250,000. With our limited resources, we are unable to undertake this effort without federal assistance.”

An initial assessment by State and County Emergency Officials the disaster requires major remediation and recovery efforts. The Tribe is taking steps to qualify for disaster assistance from the United States.

According to Chairwoman Coochwytewa, the Tribe's primary source of revenue is the tourists who travel from all over the world to experience the Reservation's unique blue-green waterfalls. The closure of Tribe's tourist economy will be devastating to the economic status and directly affect tribal members employed by the Tourism Department as well.

"The immediate and extended closure of Havasu Canyon will cause severe financial harm to the Havasupai Reservation and our Tribal members," said Chairwoman Coochwytewa. "The trail from Hualapai Hilltop is unsafe and due to these conditions, will remain closed allowing the Tribe to ensure that the area is safe. The campgrounds and the lodge will re-open on September 1, 2018."

Visitors with confirmed reservations at the campground or the lodge that are impacted by this closure are encouraged to contact the Tourist Office to reschedule, 928-448-2141. Please be patient as the Tourist Office works to accommodate all requests.

The flooding necessitated the activation of the Havasupai Tribal Emergency Response Team who initiated the relocation, housing, clothing, feeding and evacuation of all visitors. This was done at the Tribe's own expense, totaling an estimated \$25,000.

The Havasupai people reside primarily in Supai Village, remotely located in the bottom of a canyon in Northern Arizona adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park. At the time of the flood, it is estimated that 400 tribal members as well as an additional 10-15 people who are contracted tribal or federal employees were in the area.

"The Tribe would like to thank all the agencies and individual tribal members that responded during the Emergency including the Havasupai Tourist Office staff, BIA-Law Enforcement, Supai Café/Store/Lodge staff, IHS-Indian Health Service, BIE-Bureau of Education, Papillion Helicopters, Airwest Helicopters, and DPS-Department of Public Safety, and the Hualapai Tribe," said Chairwoman Coochwytewa.

The Tribe is currently accepting monetary donations. Donations can be made to the Havasupai 2018 Flood Relief Fund at www.havasupaireservations.com/donate.

Donations of supplies are also accepted and may be delivered to Hualapai Hilltop or the Tribe's office in Flagstaff at 5200 E. Cortland Blvd, Ste. D-5, Flagstaff, AZ 86004.

A list of needed supplies: <https://bit.ly/2JKaRZZ>. Additional information will be updated on the Tribe's website at <http://theofficialhavasupaitribe.com/>.