



JAMES RESERVE CLOSURE!

Catastrophic Events: From Fire to Flooding

Extreme weather has left its mark on "The Hill," the local nickname for several unincorporated Riverside County communities situated in the foothills of the San Jacinto Mountains, including Idyllwild and the James Reserve. First there were fires and now floods.

With 21.49 inches of precipitation February 2019 is the second wettest month ever recorded since 1944, and it has nearly met the record set in January 1993 (23.72 inches). Considering that the annual average precipitation for the same 75-year period is 24.1 inches, the magnitude of this event becomes strikingly evident. The rate to which the rainfall occurred was also remarkable. Nearly 7.5 inches fell at the James Reserve between the night of February 13 and the afternoon of February 14 in less than 24 hours. February 14 alone, set the new daily highest record in any season with 6.75 inches!

While this is undoubtedly beneficial for the forest and will produce rare and colorful flowering in the surrounding desert, it also originated serious road damage, severely restricting access to and from



Fig. 1. Sinkhole on SR 243, 4.5 miles north of the James Reserve.

Idyllwild, and completely isolating the James Reserve.

The high intensity of the rainfall initiated a cascade effect, by quickly thawing the abundant snow that was covering the slopes above and creating oversaturated soils, mudslides, rockslides, and raging waters that washed SR243 and SR74 away in several spots. SR243 in particular, collapsed about four miles north and south of the James rendering it inaccessible by vehicles (Fig. 1).

Unfortunately, the James will remain closed for at least another two months, the time that Caltrans officials estimate will be needed to repair the highway.

Should we stay or should we go?

On February 15, 2019, Andrea was escorted to the James by CHP Officer Bell to help Jen and her dog Dexter evacuate the Reserve. The following day was hectic and intense. Jen and Andrea were able to get another ride with Officer Bell. They had 15 frantic minutes to rescue Bug (Jen's cat), and make sure everything was in order to close the Reserve. They came back just in time for Caltrans to put huge K-rails on the road to close it indefinitely, and for another storm front to hit, dumping more snow.

On March 3, Andrea was able to hike in to the James to perform required maintenance on the solar power equipment and to

evaluate damages resulting from the storms. We will have some major maintenance work to do with our water supply system, as debris flow has severely damaged our bridge and some pipes (Fig. 2.). That said, the James carries on, and the forest is looking great as a result of this incredible precipitation!

The UCR and UCNRS Family

The past few months (and probably the next few months to come) have taken a substantial financial, emotional, and functional toll on the James Reserve, its staff, and users. It has been unusually difficult; however, we feel extremely lucky and grateful for receiving the support of the University of California Natural Reserve System family. As was the case during our evacuation for the Cranston Fire last summer, we receive an incredible amount of emotional support from staff across all the reserves and at UC Riverside. We are constantly in contact with the NRS Director and other staff at UCR who are helping us solve all the associated problems including, but not limited to, searching for alternative housing, providing support to work remotely, and ensuring our salaries.

Current Conditions and Reports

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8 provided the following information which is preliminary and subject to change:



- SR 243 remains closed from I-10 to Idyllwild for at least two (2) months due to extensive damage and road loss. Ames Construction is the emergency contractor for the \$8 million project which is combined with SR 74 emergency work.

- SR 74 remains closed from Valle Vista at Borco to Mountain Center for at least one (1) month due to road loss and storm damage. Ames Construction is the emergency contractor for the \$8 million project which is combined with SR 243 emergency work.

The James Reserve staff will post updates at <https://james.ucnrs.org/breaking-news-at-the-james-reserve/>,

and will remain available by email to anyone who wants to offer their help, contribution, or who plans to schedule a visit to the Reserve when it can reopen.

Please note that we currently do not have access to our offices and telephones at the James Reserve, and are unable to respond to telephone messages.

Flood Relief Fund

If you wish to support the James Reserve as we make repairs to re-open, you can make a donation in the following ways:

To make a gift online, please visit the following link:
https://myadv.ucr.edu/19CNA_SEM1/200330

To make a donation by check, please make checks payable to the "UCR Foundation" and write in the memo line "James Reserve-200330." Do include a note if your gift is in honor or in memory of a friend or loved one.

Mail checks to the UCR Foundation, PO Box 112, Riverside, CA 92502-0112.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity in preserving this special place!