

The Daily Triplicate

Wednesday, July 5, 2006

Storm damage restoration brings jobs to Del Norte

By Ryn Gargulinski

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Crescent City's Jack Collard has a surprise for his longtime girlfriend – he's got a job.

Collard's usual workfare has consisted of odd jobs here and there, but an emergency state grant to repair local damage from last winter's storms is going to give up to 40 local folks a steady paycheck for the next few months.

"This will help my family," Collard said. "We have a pretty large family with five kids. It will be nice to have a paycheck again."

The grant comes about thanks to California's Department of Labor to Del Norte's Rural Human Services.

Overall, Del Norte County suffered at least \$5 million in damages from the brutal December and January storms that pummeled the North coast. More than 60 sites around the county were identified as damaged by the storms.

Funds from the DOL grant are sufficient to employ up to 40 people for 1,040 hours or \$12,000 each, which ever comes first, according to Tim Hoone, director of the Del Norte Workforce Center.

This pans out to approximately 40 hours per week for three to six months. Wages range from \$8.50 to \$ 9.50 per hour.

"We only have 15 employed right now," Hoone said, "and are actively seeking other local people who need jobs."

Collard and a crew of two other guys start work today at the Crescent City Harbor.

"It's hard to put a dollar value on the amount of damage to the harbor," said Harbormaster Richard Young, adding funds that came earlier from the Federal Emergency Management Agency helped clean up the major issues.

NEED A JOB?

The Del Norte County Workforce Center is still accepting applications for workers and looking for projects for the storm and flood damage restoration projects. Contact the Del Norte County Workforce Center, 286 M St., 464-8347. Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to noon on Friday. Closed daily noon to 1 p.m.

"We had a lot of erosion, that kind of damage. We didn't have any big catastrophic failure," He said.

Young said the crew's agenda will include minor dock repairs, a lot of cleanup and smaller projects missed during the FEMA assessment.

"We are very pleased to have the work crew down her," Young said. "We'll start with three and hope for more."

The Harbor isn't the only Del Norte area in need of some tender loving repair. Hoone said a crew will also be starting work this week on Yurok tribal lands and other damage in and Klamath. And they're looking for more.

"We are actively seeking public agencies and organizations that have storm damage and would like a crew to go to work," Hoone said.

He said the agencies provide the supervision of the workers, while the Workforce Center takes care of the cost of the crews, insurance and gloves.

The grant lasts through next March, but Hoone said he hopes to have all crews hired and working within the next two weeks.