



John Cruikshank, Mayor  
Eric Alegria, Mayor Pro Tem  
David L. Bradley, Councilmember  
Barbara Ferraro, Councilmember  
Paul Seo, Councilmember

February 20, 2024

California Office of Emergency Services Disaster Analysis Unit  
3650 Schriever Avenue  
Mather, CA 95655

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR THE GREATER PORTUGUESE BEND LANDSLIDE COMPLEX**

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the approximately 42,000 residents of Rancho Palos Verdes and the approximately 67,000 residents of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council is requesting Governor Newsom invoke his emergency powers pursuant to the Emergency Services Act, Gov't Code § 8550 et seq., and proclaim a State of Emergency for the Palos Verdes Peninsula region to assist the City to stabilize land movement in the greater Portuguese Bend Landslide Complex (Landslide). For reference, see attached map to show the boundaries of the Landslide.

As a result of the 2023 and 2024 winter storms, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes has been impacted by substantial precipitation that has caused an unprecedented acceleration of land movement equating to an annualized rate of 10 feet per year. This significant and sudden increase in land movement is causing severe damage to Palos Verdes Drive South – a major arterial roadway and evacuation route for the Palos Verdes Peninsula; damage and disruption to utility infrastructure including water, sewer, gas line and utility pole breaks; closures of approximately 8 miles of public trails due to slope instability; fissures and sink holes throughout the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve; the closure of residential intersections due to sink holes and ground separation; the temporary closure of the Wayfarers Chapel - a federal and state designated historic landmark; and the red-tagging of homes with many more homes on a watch list due to foundation and structural damage.

On October 3, 2023, the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council adopted a Local Declaration

of Emergency pursuant to Section 8630 of the Government Code, which has been renewed several times as required by that law; the Local Emergency is still in effect.<sup>1</sup> This action was intended to provide immediate access to resources and to assist in expediting remediation measures to stabilize and manage land movement that poses an imminent threat to the public's health, safety, and property. The City's Geologist and Geotechnical Engineering team and the two state-recognized Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts' geologists (Abalone Cove Landslide Abatement District and Klondike Canyon Landslide Abatement District) propose to stabilize land movement by immediately implementing the following:

- Filling fissures to prevent surface water from directly recharging the water table and further lubricating the slip plane.
- Constructing drainage swales, lining certain canyons with non-penetrable membrane, and/or installing flexible drainage pipes to properly convey surface water to the ocean and/or sanitary lines to prevent recharging the water table.
- Installing dewatering wells in the form of horizontal hydraugers and/or vertical dewatering wells to extract groundwater from the slip plane and reducing the local water table.

As the City continues its response and recovery operations, we have determined that these remediation measures must be implemented immediately to minimize the threat to the public's health, safety, and property. Therefore, the City Council requests, pursuant to the authority provided by the Act, and specifically by Sections 8571 and 8625 of the Government Code, that the Governor declare a State of Emergency for the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, waive and/or suspend certain state laws and permits required by local and state agencies that include, but are not limited to, the California Coastal Commission, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the State Water Resources Control Board, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, and other State agency permits or review processes. Finally, the City Council requests the Governor waive any requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act and its implementing regulations related to the approval and implementation of the remediation measures set forth above. Additionally, the City is requesting that the Governor submit a request to the President of the United States for a Federal Emergency Declaration pursuant to the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207.

The City has identified that permits would be required by the aforementioned state agencies prior to proceeding any landslide stabilization work. Suspension of these requirements will allow the City and the Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts to immediately proceed with construction and installation of the enumerated measures to stabilize the Landslide without the costs and time delays typically experienced with obtaining permits. It is imperative that the City and two Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts are able to expedite the installation of dewatering wells and surface drains knowing that we are in an El Niño winter pattern with repeated atmospheric rivers

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<sup>1</sup> The City also adopted an Interim Urgency Ordinance pursuant to Section 65958 of the Government Code, which effected a moratorium on all construction in the Landslide, with some limited exceptions.

forecasted to extend into spring, and every rain event is exacerbating the rate of land movement.

Please contact City Manager Ara Mihranian at [aram@rpvca.gov](mailto:aram@rpvca.gov) or by telephone at 310-544-5202.

Sincerely,



**John Cruikshank**  
Mayor

Attachments:

- Portuguese Bend Landslide Complex Map
- Information on the Portuguese Bend Landslide including resolutions adopting and extending the City's Proclaimed Local Emergency can be found on the City's website at: [www.rpvca.gov/landslide](http://www.rpvca.gov/landslide)

cc:

Laphonza Butler, U.S. Senator, California  
Alex Padilla, U.S. Senator, California  
Ted Lieu, U.S. Representative, 36<sup>th</sup> Congressional District  
Ben Allen, Senator, 24<sup>th</sup> State Senate District  
Al Muratsuchi, Assemblymember, 66<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
Janice Hahn, L.A. County Supervisor, 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Kevin McGowan, Director, L.A. County Office of Emergency Management  
Brandy Villaneuva, Disaster Manager Area Coordinator, L.A. County Area G  
Rancho Palos Verdes City Council

