

MEDIA RELEASE
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SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich.

Sault Tribe receives road repair funding for Sugar Island

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. - The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) recently approved the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians up to \$820,000 in Emergency Relief funds to help the Chippewa County Road Commission repair Sugar Island Roads damaged by flooding in the natural disaster last September. Roads, driveways and culverts were washed out and homes were damaged due to strong storm system that that slowly moved through the area overnight dumping between 4 and 6 inches of rain in a 4-hour time span.

"I am so proud that our tribal team was able to contribute onsite during the disaster," Sault Tribe Chairperson Aaron Payment said. "In times of need, community comes together. I wish to acknowledge and thank Sault Tribe Law Enforcement and Emergency Preparedness, Chippewa County Sheriff's Dept., Michigan State Police, Sugar Island volunteer Fire Department, Chippewa County road crews, Chippewa County Road Commission, Kewadin Cares and everyone involved in helping out."

He added, "I am grateful for our Transportation Planner Wendy Hoffman's great skill and diligence in seeking out grant funds in these circumstances."

After Sugar Island roads were damaged due to the flooding that occurred on Sept. 9, Sault Tribe requested Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) funds through the BIA- Midwest Regional Office. The Tribe was able to apply because several of the damaged roads are on the Tribe's road inventory.

J. Eric Wright, ERFO Coordinator with Federal Highways Administration, confirmed that funding is forthcoming to assist with repairs. Wright, BIA engineer Jeffrey Bradley, Chippewa County Road Commission Superintendent Bob Laitinen and Hoffman were on site in mid-October to assess the natural disaster. BIA engineers developed a repair plan with cost estimates for each road project. The Tribe will continue to collaborate with the Road Commission to complete identified upgrades and assist with costs.

After Sugar Island roads were heavily damaged in flooding caused by heavy rainfall on Sept. 9, Sault Tribe requested Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) funds the community cover road repair costs. The tribe was able to apply because several of the damaged roads are on the tribe's road inventory.

The regional BIA office approved the ERFO funds after assessing the natural disaster. BIA engineers will develop a repair plan with cost estimates for each road project.

"I'm excited we received the funds to help the Sugar Island residents and County Road Commission," said Hoffman. "The residents really pulled together to help each other and the dedicated road crews and superintendents put in countless hours on site to establish emergency access right after the flooding. Everyone involved worked diligently to restore full access to the roads."

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