

Thanksgiving Day Storm

November 22, 1984

Overview

Thanksgiving 1984 was exceptionally stormy in much of Southeast Alaska. A storm surge produced coastal inundation in areas unaccustomed to such flooding. High winds flipped airplanes, downed trees, caused widespread power outages, sunk boats, destroyed roads, and ruined houses. Downtown Juneau experienced 92 mph wind gusts, the highest ever recorded." Residents recall cooking Thanksgiving turkeys on wood stoves due to power outages. In Tenakee Springs, nearly half the homes were either damaged or destroyed.

Weather Woes

The Thanksgiving Day storm was the 3rd in a series of storms to impact Southeast Alaska in mid-November. The storm formed about 800 miles southwest of Sitka on November 21 and tracked rapidly northeastward. Sustained winds of 50-60 mph were recorded in Juneau. The storm coincided with the 1984 "King Tide," the highest astronomical tide of the year. The timing of this high tide was partially responsible for the coastal flooding that occurred during the storm.



Disaster Declared:

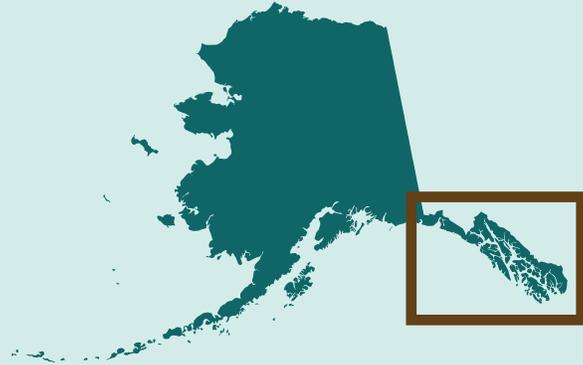
Nov 22 Tenakee Springs Mayor Debbie Lockhart declared disaster

Nov 26 Governor Sheffield declared state disaster for impacted communities. Request for a Presidential disaster declaration declined

Public & individual assistance grants and temporary housing provided in Juneau, Kake, Sitka, Angoon, and Tenakee Springs
Total damages in the region estimated to be around \$3.4 million (in 1984 dollars)

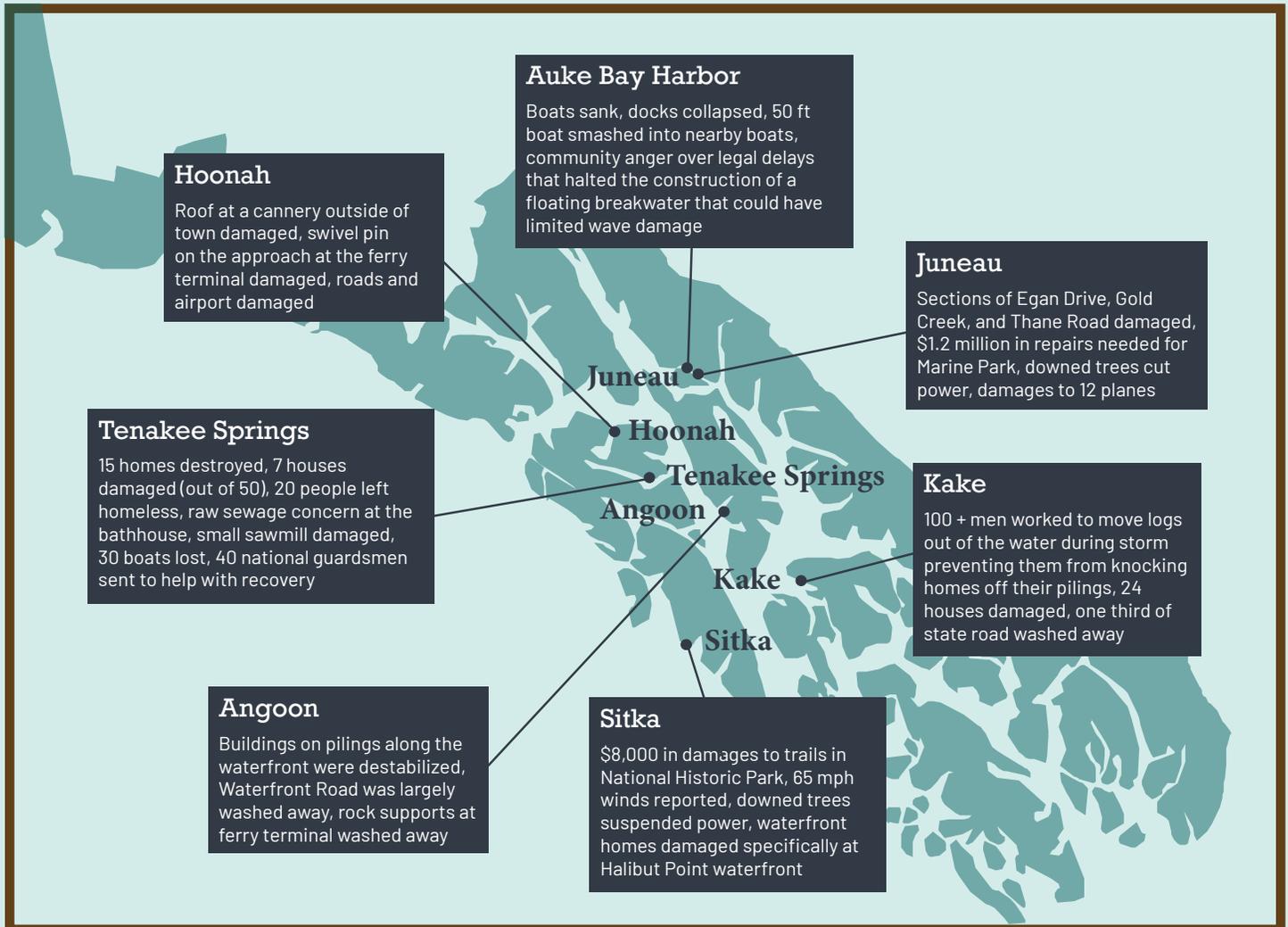
Tenakee Springs waterfront in 1997, photo by Gillfoto

Community Specific Impacts



Lingering Impacts

Impacts to communities remain long after flooding recedes and debris is cleared away. In Tenakee Springs, the 1984 storm lasted only one day but it had a profound impact on subsistence activities. Both deer hunting and winter crabbing were limited due to the loss of boats and infrastructure. Only 39 deer were harvested in 1984 compared to 55 deer in 1983. This represents a 41% decline according to a report published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after the storm.



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Sources: Anchorage Daily News, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Juneau Empire, Alaska State Disaster List, National Parks Service, WSFO Juneau, Administrative History of Sitka National Historic Park, Timber Management and Fish and Wildlife Utilization Tenakee Springs, Alaska Technical Paper No. 138

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