

Next storm assault slated to hit Wednesday

By The Associated Press

While storm-weary Northern Californians reeled from the loss of homes, businesses and crops, officials tried to organize a recovery today in the perennial battle to protect the state's aging levees, ravaged hills and dwellers by the sea.

The next storm assault is expected Wednesday, according to National Weather Service forecaster Glenn Trapp, allowing a break after a week of Pacific storms that hammered the coast at 30-hour intervals.

"The next storm may be capable of producing ½-inch rains with higher amounts in the coastal mountains, but I don't think it will be nearly as strong as last week's," the weatherman said. "But you never know."

"This one- or two-day respite with some showers Tuesday will probably help us considerably by giving the soil a chance to dry out and handle a little more water

from future storms," Trapp said.

Officials used the weather break to assess the situation.

"They'll be meetings in San Francisco and Los Angeles Monday among the state and federal agencies and the Red Cross to try and find out how bad the situation is," Bob Hill, assistant chief of law enforcement for the Office of Emergency Services, said Sunday.

"While they're meeting, crews will be sent out to try and determine if there's a basis to ask President Reagan to declare a state of emergency," Hill said.

"The situation would have to be above and beyond what the state can handle before a federal declaration could be made," Hill said.

"There may be enough information within a day or two to know where we stand," he said.

The agencies could then offer low interest loans to businesses and home-

owners and assistance to restore public property including roads, bridges and buildings.

Although Hill said state officials didn't have enough information to estimate restoration costs, Gov. George Deukmejian declared disaster areas of Marin, San Mateo, San Diego and Los Angeles counties. The status has been requested by Sonoma and Santa Clara counties.

At least 2,000 people were forced out of their homes in California since Jan. 22, 24 houses have been destroyed, 2,660 others were damaged and 496 businesses were hit, officials estimate.

Crews of youths from the California Conservation Corps worked round the clock trying to shore up an aging lacework of peat-based levees in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta where three island agricultural tracts were flooded in a week-long series of storms — Mildred, Fay and Shima tracts. Asparagus and

other crops were lost when swept by record tides of 10 feet, three inches Thursday and 10 feet, four inches Saturday.

The eighth levee break in four days happened this morning at Grizzly Island, one of the largest in the delta. Jake Hopp, a spokesman for the Office of Emergency Services, said there were cattle on the island, and officials were concerned that the flooding might endanger any calves.

"There is some concern over the safety of the young ones," he said. "The cows might be able to stand in two feet of water, but the calves might not."

Two vacant homes turned into heaps of rubble when they slid from their foundations in the rain-sodden Oakland hills, where they began their descent in last year's rainy season.

But despite the certainty of future storms, many coastal dwellers refused to submit.

"No. We're not thinking of leaving — ever," said Ray Collishaw, whose Monte Sereno home near Santa Cruz was flooded and its picture window was punched out by the sea. "We love it here," he said.

Nearby, Norm Snyder was also determined not to give ground. He saved his home with a wall of boulders.

"It may look pretty bad here now, but this is a beautiful place. We've never thought of leaving," he said. "The kids have loved this place, and we want them to be able to keep coming here, to have this for themselves someday."

But there is the view that while the people are hardy, the sea is indifferent. Dave Bogaard, who builds seaside homes for a living, looked over the area as the destructive tides retreated.

"The only thing I've learned from this is that no matter how strong you build them, if the sea gets angry enough, it will wipe them out."

Slutmeel 1/31/83