

County of Santa Cruz⁵⁶⁷

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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SUSAN A. MAURIELLO, J.D., COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

July 26, 1999

Agenda: August 3, 1999

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: PAJARO RIVER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

Members of the Board,

At your Board's direction, County staff has been working with our local, State and Federal elected representatives to aggressively address the ongoing flood threat resulting from the deficiencies in the Pajaro River Flood Control Project constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. These deficiencies of the Pajaro River Levee System expose residents of the City of Watsonville, the town of Pajaro and surrounding agricultural areas to a major ongoing threat of flooding.

As part of our effort to have the Army Corps reconstruct the Pajaro River Levee System, Congress Member Farr scheduled a meeting in Washington D.C. with Assistant Secretary of the Army, Dr. Joseph Westphal on July 13, 1999. A copy of the agenda is attached as Exhibit "A". The meeting gave County staff the opportunity to present concerns about Pajaro River Flooding at the highest levels of the Army. Congress Member Farr was personally present at the meeting and provided an introduction underscoring the significance of the issue. A video (Exhibit "B", on file with the Clerk of the Board) documenting the history of Pajaro River flooding, providing information about the impacted community, identifying the deficiencies of the levee system and detailing the County's request for assistance was presented at the meeting and will also be shown to your Board today. A summary video narrative is attached as Exhibit "C".

Staff also presented a report which included past correspondence from Congress Member Farr, project location maps, a project chronology, a summary of Army Corps flood fight expenditures, a litigation summary, a statement of risk and the assistance request. A copy of the report is included as Exhibit "D", also on file with the Clerk of the Board.

At the conclusion of the meeting Dr. Westphal committed to scheduling a follow up briefing with the US Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District to assist in formulating a response to the County's request. Dr. Westphal indicated that a written response from his office would be forthcoming.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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PAJARO RIVER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

On a related matter, the County was just informed that Congress Member Farr has successfully included funding for three Pajaro River related studies in the recently approved Energy and Water Appropriations Bill. The \$100,000 for the Pajaro River mainstem, \$500,000 for Salsipuedes/Corralitos Creek and \$100,000 for the Pajaro River Basin, when included in the final year 2000 Federal budget, will allow the Army to continue design work on the Pajaro River Levee System Improvements, while we continue to work toward resolving the ultimate project construction funding issues.

As your Board is aware, it is critical that the Army Corps not only redesign the Pajaro River Flood Control System, but that they support a cost sharing approach to the project construction which is locally affordable. Standard cost share criteria would require an estimated \$50 million local match which is far more than the approximately \$3 million to \$5 million which we believe might be a feasible local cost. County staff strongly believe the Pajaro River Flood Control Project to be "deficient" as defined in the Army Corps regulations. Furthermore, we believe that as a deficient project, reconstruction should be accomplished under the original 100% federal cost sharing criteria which required that local agencies only provide easements, rights of way and similar costs which are more likely to be locally affordable.

A further meeting is being scheduled with the US Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District in early August. We will continue to keep your Board informed on the status of the Pajaro River Flood Control Project. A report to the Zone 7 of the Flood Control and Water Conservation District is scheduled for September 21, 1999.

It is therefore recommended that your Board accept and file this report.

Very truly yours,



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
County Administrative Officer

cc Congress Member Farr
Assembly Member Fred Keeley
Dr. Westphal
Lt Col Peter Grass
Zone 7
City of Watsonville
Monterey County
Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Public Works

17- SAMFARR
DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0517

AGENDA
PAJARO RIVER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

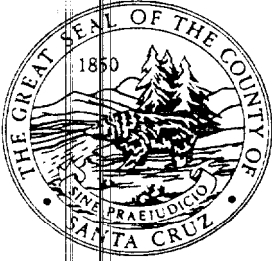
Congress Member Farr / US Army Corps of Engineers / County of Santa Cruz

Date: July 13, 1999

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Location: Office of Congress Member Sam Farr

1. Introduction by Congress Member Farr
2. Background
 - o Video Presentation
 - o Recent Correspondence
 - o Project Location
 - o Project Chronology
 - o Flood Fight Efforts
3. Current Project Status
 - o Litigation Summary
 - o Summary of Risk
4. Request for Federal US Army Corps of Engineers Assistance



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PAJARO RIVER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

A Request for Federal Assistance

Located in Steinbeck Country in the heart of the Central California Coast, the Pajaro River drains a basin of over 1,300 square miles, emptying into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary six miles west of the City of Watsonville. The Basin is approximately 88 miles long and 30 miles wide and covers portions of four Counties including Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Clara .

Normal annual precipitation ranges from 13 to 44 inches. Approximately 25% of the basin is cultivated, 45% is range land, 25% is covered by brush or forest and 5% is developed. Major tributaries to the Pajaro River include Corralitos and Salsipuedes Creeks, which have a basin area of approximately 57 square miles. The creeks drain the southern slopes of the Santa Cruz Mountains. They join with the Pajaro River in Watsonville. Less than 10% of the total Pajaro River Basin lies within Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties, yet the full basin runoff funnels through the City of Watsonville and the town of Pajaro bringing with it each winter the treat of more flooding and destruction.

There is a long history of flooding along the lower Pajaro River. In response to these recurring floods, the US Army Corps of Engineers in 1949 completed construction of approximately 13 miles of levees along both sides of the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks. Beginning at the Monterey Bay and progressing upstream, under a Congressional Authorization the levees were designed and constructed to provide 100 year protection to urban areas and 50 year protection to rural areas.

Despite construction of the levees, in 1955 the first of many subsequent flood events overtopped the levees resulting in major damage to the City of Watsonville and the surrounding agricultural areas. There have been a total of six separate flood events on the Pajaro River in the past half century. Three of these events have occurred between 1995 and 1998. The most recent flood events have resulted in litigation claims for damages approaching 50 million dollars. In addition, over 20 million dollars in federal US Army Corps of Engineers flood fight fundshavebeenexpended.

In 1963 a US Army Corps of Engineers Report concluded that the Pajaro River Levee System was “inadequate”. Despite the Congressional intent to provide 100 year flood protection to urban areas, the Army has concluded that the existing levee system only provides approximately 25 year protection along the Pajaro River and 7 year protection along Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks. Improvements to the Pajaro River Levee System are urgently needed. While current studies and discussions take place, local residents are living in fear. Each winter brings the treat of more evacuations, loss and destruction.

The County of Santa Cruz strongly believes **the Pajaro River Levee Project is deficient.** There are three key deficiencies:

- Levee System Capacity - The levee system is incapable of containing more than a 25 year storm on the Pajaro River and a 7 year storm on Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks.
- Levee composition - The existing levees are highly permeable and subject to erosion and washout.
- Levee Subgrade - Significant subsidence of the levees has occurred in many areas.

The local communities impacted by these flood events are economically disadvantaged and are not able to provide the estimated 50 million dollars in local match funds which would be required under current Army Corps cost share criteria. The Army Corps needs to make good on meeting the original authorization of Congress:

- Find the Pajaro River Flood Control Project to be deficient.
 - Expeditiously redesign and reconstruct the project.
- Utilize the original (100% Federal) cost share criteria.