

To: Board of Supervisors
From: Julia R. Bueren, Public Works Director/Chief Engineer
Date: May 10, 2011



Contra
Costa
County

Subject: Status report on Creek and Channel Safety Awareness, Countywide. (100% Flood Control Zone 3B Funds) Project No. 7520-6B8311

RECOMMENDATION(S):

ACCEPT the following status report from the Public Works Department and the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (FC District) on the Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program; and

FISCAL IMPACT:

The data collection, assimilation, and development of implementation recommendations for the CCSAP will cost approximately \$140,000 to be funded by Flood Control Zone 3B funds. Implementation will be funded by the FC District funds and/or regional Flood Control Zone funds.

APPROVE OTHER
 RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **05/10/2011** APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

AYES _____ NOES _____
ABSENT _____ ABSTAIN _____
RECUSE _____

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: May 10, 2011

David J. Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Contact: Tim Jensen (925) 313-2390 By: , Deputy

RECOMMENDATION(S): (CONT'D)

ACCEPT the following status report from the Public Works Department and the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (FC District) on the Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program; and

DIRECT the Public Works Department and the FC District to continue its outreach, development, and implementation of a sustainable Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program (CCSAP); and

REFER this effort to develop a CCSAP to the Transportation, Water, and Infrastructure Committee (TWIC); and

DIRECT the Public Works Department and the FC District to report to the TWIC upon completion of data assimilation and report back to the Board upon development of implementation recommendations by October of this year.

BACKGROUND:

On March 1, 2011, the Board of Supervisors directed the FC District to develop a sustainable, impactful outreach program to promote creek and channel safety throughout the County. In response, the FC District formed a Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program (CCSAP) team that developed a strategy to achieve this goal.

The Walnut Creek schools and community have been the primary resource of the information gathering process. Although the program will be implemented countywide, we have chosen to work first with this group following the February 2011 drowning incident.

Purpose

In an effort to seek input from a broad spectrum of people and organizations, the CCSAP team has identified five (5) major focus groups. The five groups are students, school administrators, partner/technical agencies, the community at large, and individuals with a special interest in the topic. A web link to the County website was established and all public noticing has been posted at www.cccounty.us/creekandchannelsafety.

The goal and purpose of this process is to increase public awareness about creek and channel safety in the most efficient and effective manner. To this end, the FC District is working to develop a sustainable program that leverages existing safety programs to deliver a message that resonates with the focus audiences.

Process

The CCSAP has been categorized into three phases: Data Gathering, Assimilation of Data, and Implementation.

Phase I – Data Gathering

To date, the FC District has met with representatives from each of the five focus groups to educate them about the process, gather their input, and document their concerns about a sustainable Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program. Below is a summary of the data gathering phase to date:

Students:

1. Met with the Las Lomas High School Principal, students, and school newspaper editor on March

2, 2011, to brainstorm methods of outreach and receive input from high school students on a safety awareness program. A follow-up meeting with the Las Lomas High School students is scheduled for May 16, 2011.

2. Met with the Walnut Creek Intermediate School (WCI) Principal to discuss outreach to middle school students followed by a presentation and brainstorming session with the student leadership class on April 19, 2011.

School Administration:

1. Attended Las Lomas Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) meeting on April 11, 2011, and presented information on FC District channels and creeks. Received input from the PTSA on ways to outreach to students and a request to hold a “Parent Education Night” that might include other high schools in the area.

2. Sent a letter to the County Office of Education and all County School District Superintendents requesting information on safety programs already in place as well as input on our safety awareness program.

3. Communicated with teachers at Walnut Creek’s Murwood Elementary School who volunteered to be part of the education process.

Technical/Partner Agencies: Contacted several public agencies to request input about what types of safety programs they have in place and their effectiveness. Agencies included Contra Costa Water District, US Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Bay Area Flood Protection Agencies Association, Bay Area Watershed Network, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Contra Costa Watershed Forum, East Bay Regional Park District, American Public Works Association, County Engineers Association of California, Contra Costa City-County Engineering Advisory Committee, Contra Costa Public Managers’ Association, Walnut Creek Police Department, Contra Costa County Sheriff, Consolidated Fire District, and others.

Community: Held a community meeting on March 29, 2011, in Walnut Creek, hosted by the City of Walnut Creek and the FC District. The meeting was attended by 34 community members as well as City of Walnut Creek, Public Works, and Board of Supervisors and Senator DeSaulnier’s staff. The community meeting was filmed and has been rebroadcast several times on CCTV.

Individuals: Received e-mails and voice mails from individuals with a desire to help with the process and provide input. We received a technical report, links to various internet videos, as well as an offer of free radio time and production.

The information gathering process for the students, school administration, and community has typically involved a meeting format where a general description of the FC District is explained, followed by a Power Point presentation that shows local creeks and channels, both empty and full. The discussion includes an explanation of the natural creek environment compared to a concrete channel and drop structures. The discussion is then opened up to a brainstorming session with the audience in an effort to answer the “who, what, where, when, and how” of developing and implementing a sustainable program that resonates with the appropriate audiences.

In general, the suggestions to date have included: more and different signage; a video showing the journey through the channel and particularly over the drop structure; more education at all levels; annual and storm related advisories; alternate adventure recommendations; and structural changes,

including more barriers to entry and methods of escape. The outreach method that naturally manifests at each meeting is the existing school communication networks, including websites, newsletters, and safety classes. Broadcasting a safety message on local access television stations is also in consideration.

Phase II – Assimilation of Data

The FC District has been collecting and categorizing the data received to date. This phase, already underway, will identify the main elements to be included in the Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program. The following steps will be used to select the best elements to include in the program:

Existing safety program: The FC District’s existing safety program will be evaluated. It generally consists of chain-link fencing, “No Trespassing” signs, and safety education for those granted permission.

Address the various messages: Determine how to best address the various messages to the public. For example, the painted messages on some flood control structures say “STAY OUT; STAY ALIVE,” yet in other areas, the public is encouraged to enter the creeks for cleanup days.

Identify knowledge gaps: Identify areas where we may need to do further outreach, such as to new residents in the area, parents that may not be aware of the dangers (and, therefore, don’t know to communicate this to their children), and to private schools.

Facility review:

1. **Signs:** Investigate and determine the need for new or different signage and appropriate locations.
2. **Entry points:** Evaluate potential entry points (person or vehicle) and methods to limit entry and/or provide additional notice.
3. **Rescue operations:** Work with rescue personnel to evaluate their rescue operations needs.
4. **Channel modifications:** Investigate the possibility of modifying channels to increase safety; for example, install safety ropes at key locations or retrofit drop structures to reduce turbulence.

Educational: Based on known and available avenues/media, determine the best methods to effectively disperse information to our focus audiences.

Feasibility test: Investigate and determine if each concept and implementation strategy is reasonable, possible, and necessary and if it achieves the goals of increased awareness and sustainability.

Phase III – Implementation

Based on the results of the first two phases, the FC District will recommend appropriate actions to take to implement the CCSAP. This phase will be further divided into categories, such as direct outreach, media outreach, and facility modifications. These categories will each have their own focus audience, timeline, and budget. Each element of this phase will include a feedback loop to measure the success of the implementation. This final phase will be developed in coordination with the Transportation, Water, and Infrastructure Committee, and the recommended actions will be reported to the Board of Supervisors no later than October. The goal is to have several, if not all, outreach actions implemented for the rainy season starting in October.

CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Members of the public may not receive important information about creek and channel safety.

CHILDREN'S IMPACT STATEMENT:

The FC District will continue to work with the schools and youth-based groups within the County to educate children about safety regarding creeks and flood control channels.