

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: TRANSPORTATION, WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
DATE: October 4, 2011



Contra Costa County

SUBJECT: DECLARE October 2011 as Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Month and DIRECT the Public Works Department and Flood Control District to implement the Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program, Countywide. (100% FC District Funds) Project No. 7520-6B8311

SPECIFIC REQUEST(S) OR RECOMMENDATION(S) & BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

RECOMMENDATION(S):

DECLARE October 2011 as Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Month; and

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

APPROVE the implementation plan and DIRECT the Public Works Department and the FC District to continue with implementation and the annual campaign of a County-wide sustainable Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program (CCSAP) including a follow-up report to this Board within one year.

CONTINUED ON ATTACHMENT:

SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
APPROVE _____ OTHER _____

RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

SIGNATURE(S):

ACTION OF BOARD ON _____ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED _____ OTHER _____

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS:

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF AN ACTION TAKEN AND ENTERED ON MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON THE DATE SHOWN.

UNANIMOUS (ABSENT _____)

AYES: _____ NOES: _____

ABSENT: _____ ABSTAIN: _____

Contact: Tim Jensen (925) 313-2390

MP:zz

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ATTESTED

DAVID TWA, CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

cc: D. Twa, CAO, David.Twa@cao.cccounty.us
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BY: _____, DEPUTY

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FISCAL IMPACT:

The development of the CCSAP will cost approximately \$100,000 to be funded by Flood Control Zone 3B funds. Implementation is estimated to cost \$250,000 and will be funded by FC District and Flood Control Zone funds. Ongoing notices and maintenance will be incorporated into existing programs funded by the FC District.

BACKGROUND:

On March 1, 2011, the Board of Supervisors directed the FC District to develop a sustainable and impactful outreach program to promote creek and channel safety throughout the County, after the drowning of two high school students in the Walnut Creek channel. In response, the FC District formed a Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program (CCSAP) team that developed a strategy to achieve this goal. Safety program elements will be implemented in FC District facilities and other county facilities maintained by the County Public Works Department.

On May 10, 2011, the CCSAP was directed by this Board to develop program elements, continue its outreach, development and implementation; and referred the item to the Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee.

On June 23 and September 14 respectively, the team met and reported to the Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee (TWIC). Updates and discussions during these meetings were used to develop the implementation phase and finalize the program. The process to develop the program elements and gather information and the raw data and input from a myriad of sources is described in the attached June 23 TWIC report (Exhibit C).

Development of the CCSAP was divided into four phases which are listed below with their status:

Phase I – Data Gathering (complete)

Phase II – Assimilation of Data (complete)

Phase III – Develop Program Elements (complete)

Phase IV – Implementation (in progress as detailed below)

The following describes the program elements and activities that have been done or will be done as part of our Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program. The program elements and activities are broken down into three categories. Direct Outreach and Media is safety information to individuals, organizations and agencies or districts, or to the various media outlets. Facility Upgrades includes modifications to our signing, stenciled messages and maintenance, plus enhanced swiftwater rescue planning and training and investigation of our drop structures.

Direct Outreach:

Direct outreach to school-aged children and their parents, in the form of an annual information packet (Exhibit A), includes a cover letter explaining our safety program, a school newsletter insert, and a schoolyard safety announcement. The information packet is designed to be easy for the schools to implement. This year's packet was sent through school communication channels in September 2011. This bilingual packet was sent directly to and/or made available to over 95 school groups (19 school district superintendents representing 240+ public

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schools; 75 private schools and several homeschool group e-mail networks). Feedback requested from the schools will be used to make any necessary adjustments for the following year's packet. Our target schedule is to send the information packet to the schools just before October of each year.

Direct outreach to technical/partner agencies who were contacted during the information gathering phase will take place this Fall. The Flood Control District maintains a presence in at least 15 such organizations and will include a statement regarding implementation of the CCSAP at regularly scheduled meetings.

The Contra Costa Water District has agreed to include the CCSAP message in their newsletters and school assembly presentations. They are also a potential partner when they create their new safety video in the near future. Staff from both agencies will continue to meet and finalize the details for implementation.

The County Watershed Program has placed the CCSAP message into their 2012 calendar that will be sent to all residents in the unincorporated County this fall (over 50,000 households).

The FC District will include the CCSAP message in their informational brochure when it is revised, which is scheduled for 2012.

Media Outreach:

The kickoff event each year for our outreach efforts will be the Board declaring October as Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Month. Media outreach will take the form of an annual press release, articles in local publications throughout the County, and media sound bites coordinated by the County Public Information Officer. These pieces will be timed for distribution in early October each year as part of the Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Month. In addition, samples of the articles will be available on the Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program page on the County website in a downloadable format for use by any organization. Links to the website and the web address will be part of all publications.

Media outreach will also take place via video and social networking sites. Staff will work with Contra Costa Television, students, and volunteers to develop a visual media outreach plan to be implemented by February 2012, in conjunction with the one-year anniversary of the two teenagers drowning in the flood control channel.

Facility Upgrades:

New signs (Exhibit B) will be installed this fall in phases beginning with the downtown Walnut Creek area. The new signs will be installed next to the existing "NO TRESPASSING" signs and at other locations visible to the general public, as well as specific sites where illegal entry is likely to occur. Additional new signs will be installed as maintenance crews work through the remainder of the flood control system (75 miles of channels and 30 detention basins) performing regular maintenance in 2012. The proposed sign design was sent out to all interested parties for feedback. Comments received were positive and expressed general approval of the design. There were three responses that questioned the meaning of "the hand" on the proposed design.

The existing "STAY OUT/STAY ALIVE" stenciled messages within the channels will be refreshed and additional messages will be located and positioned to be more visible to the general public as well as at specific sites where attempted entry would likely occur.

New interpretive panels discussing the benefits and dangers of flood control channels will be developed for installation next year at locations where public uses are adjacent to the channel. Currently, East Bay Regional Park District manages public trails along creeks and channels county-wide, so they will be involved in the development, installation, and maintenance of new interpretive panels.

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Notification of needed repairs to fencing, signs, and stenciled messages will be tracked via the department's customer service tracking program and given priority for response. Repeat incidents will be investigated and followed up on to determine if modifications should be made to increase public awareness or public safety. The fencing, signs, and stenciled messages will be inspected biennially throughout FC District channels and basins and replaced as needed.

A formal agreement between Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (CCCFFPD) and the FC District will be submitted for approval by the Board in October 2011. This proposed agreement will allow rescue personnel access to FC District channels within their service area (Central County) for swiftwater rescue planning and training. It is anticipated that the CCCFFPD will include other first responders within their service area as part of their rescue planning and training. The FC District will also contact rescue agencies outside the CCCFFPD service area to determine their interest in developing a similar program and assist as needed.

Proposed channel modifications to facilitate escape or reduce risk at drop structures will be investigated via outside technical consultants. The scope of work will be determined this Fall and the consultants will be hired in Spring 2012 with recommendations anticipated in Summer of 2012. These recommendations will help to determine feasibility, funding needs, and potential implementation of any modifications.

Staff recommends the Board declare October as Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Month, accept the above report, approve the proposed implementation plan, and direct the Public Works Department and FC District to implement the plan, including a follow-up report to the Board within one year.

CONSEQUENCES 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.