

Calaveras County to study \$5M flood plan

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SAN ANDREAS - Valley Springs residents would find it easier to keep their feet dry under a proposed \$5 million plan to control flooding and build a parkway with trails through the sprawling unincorporated town.

Calaveras County Supervisors said Tuesday that they would cooperate with the Calaveras County Water District to study a proposed project along Cosgrove Creek.

The workshop on the issue came after weekend storms again submerged part of Hogan Dam Road and other areas along the creek.

According to the Army Corps of Engineers, 400 residents and 100 buildings are at risk in the so-called 100-year flood plain along Cosgrove Creek.

Some of the properties flood every three or four years. And the risk is growing as more houses and businesses get built there.

That risk is why the federal government is willing to fund 65 percent of the roughly \$5million construction cost of the project. The rest of the cost would have to come from local sources, although part of it could be in noncash contributions, such as the land along the creek next to Hogan Dam Road that Calaveras County Water District owns.

Creating huge catch basins on that land and elsewhere could greatly reduce the intensity of floods and the damage they do downstream along the Calaveras River - including areas where that river flows through Stockton and eastern San Joaquin County.

Jeff Davidson, a director for Calaveras County Water District, said the manicured greens of La Contenta Golf Course are among areas that get inundated.

"When the water comes up and recedes, it takes all those (turf) chemicals down the river with it," Davidson said.

Davidson asked county supervisors to share the \$600,000 to \$700,000 cost of the feasibility study necessary to design the project. He said federal officials would pay half, and local agencies would have to come up with the rest. Some of the match could be in in-kind services by planners and analysts.

County supervisors generally praised the project and agreed to work with CCWD on the study. But supervisors also said they were uneasy with dumping extra work on the county's Planning Department and asked why county planners hadn't prevented people from building homes in the flood plain in the first place.

"I'm very disappointed to see we've allowed so much building to go on in the flood plain," Supervisor Tom Tryon said.

The Army Corps estimated it would cost \$13.5million to relocate 150 homes and other structures from the Cosgrove flood plain. Lifting all those buildings above the flood level would cost \$8.4million.

The Corps concluded that digging basins to hold floodwater in combination with restoration of flood-plain habitat along the creek is the alternative that has the greatest payback, saving more in future damage than the cost of the project.

Such a project could and probably should include habitat restoration and trails that would allow walkers and cyclists access from downtown Valley Springs to the outlying La Contenta and Rancho Calaveras subdivisions, according to a Corps report.

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