

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Agenda Number:

Prepared on: 06/25/03
Department Name: Flood Control/Public Works
Department No.: 054-04-03
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If Yes, date from:
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TO: Board of Directors
Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

FROM: Phillip M. Demery
Public Works Director

STAFF CONTACT: Thomas Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, Ext. 3436
Karl Treiberg, Engineering Environmental Planner, Ext. 3443

SUBJECT: **Environmental Impact Report for the Carpinteria Salt Marsh
Enhancement Plan, First Supervisorial District**

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Directors:

- A. Certify that the Final Environmental Impact Report (03-EIR-02) for the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Enhancement Plan has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- B. Certify that the Board has reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final EIR, 03-EIR-02, as well as information presented during the public hearing prior to the approval of the project, and adopt the CEQA Findings included as Attachment 1;
- C. Approve the project identified as the Environmentally Superior Alternative (Alternative 4A) in the Final EIR, 03-EIR-02 with a modification to allow the floodwall component to be designed to an elevation between 8' and 10' mean sea level;
- D. Adopt the project description (Alternative 4A as modified) and mitigation measures, with their corresponding monitoring requirements, as the monitoring program for this project;
- E. Direct the District to apply for local, State and Federal permits to the extent required by law;
- F. Authorize the Flood Control District to proceed with negotiations and acquisition of an easement or fee title for construction of the project; and
- G. Authorize the Director of Public Works to advertise the project and receive bids.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendations are primarily aligned with Goal No. 2. A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

Background

Carpinteria Marsh is a 230-acre estuary located in southern Santa Barbara County, adjacent to the City of Carpinteria. The Marsh lies within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Carpinteria, the County of Santa Barbara, and the State of California, since a portion is owned by the University of California. Most of the project is located within the California Coastal Commission's original permit jurisdiction.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh Enhancement Plan (Enhancement Plan) consists of a combined flood control and wetland restoration project. The flood control element is the final phase of the Carpinteria Valley Watershed Protection Program (CVWPP), a Federal Flood Control project with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a comprehensive watershed program that designed to reduce erosion and flooding in the Carpinteria Valley. The Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) agreed to prepare a comprehensive EIR for all of the projects within the Marsh and act as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The University of California is a trustee agency since a portion of the Marsh (120 acres known as the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve) is part of the University of California's Natural Reserve System (UCNRS). The UCNRS is responsible for certain elements of the Enhancement Plan and for purposes of CEQA is considered a responsible agency. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is also a trustee agency due to the presence of state-listed species at the Marsh, and is a responsible agency, as well. The California Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy) and NRCS are also identified as responsible agencies. The Conservancy has provided funding to the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County (LTSB) to design and implement a restoration plan for portions of the Marsh (Basin 1 and the South Marsh). The NRCS may provide funding for the flood control improvements associated with the project.

Portions of Carpinteria Marsh are presently considered degraded wetlands due to high sedimentation rates, inflow of nutrient-rich water from upstream areas, past dredging/filling activities, poor tidal flushing, and occasional closure of the estuary mouth. In addition to this degradation, the high sediment loading can reduce channel capacity in the estuary and increase the flooding hazard for nearby residential and recreation areas.

The project consists of actions to contain flood flows through Carpinteria Marsh to the ocean as well as enhancement and restoration of several areas throughout the marsh.

Public Process

The concept of a Carpinteria Salt Marsh Enhancement Plan was originally conceived in the early 1980s. Dozens of meetings have been held with stakeholders since then. Staff sought input from

the public and other agencies. Prior to preparing the Draft EIR and throughout the EIR process, staff has met with interested parties including the Silver Sands Mobile Home Park, the Sandyland Cove HOA, the Sand Point HOA, the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, the University of California Natural Reserve System, the NRCS, and the City of Carpinteria.

During these meetings, the District agreed to advance the LTSB and the UCNRS' project objectives through the environmental review and permitting process. In addition, the District agreed to modify the preferred alternative (Alternative 4A) to allow the floodwall component to be designed to an elevation of between 8' and 10' mean sea level.

Upon approval of the Final EIR, the District will apply for all of the appropriate permits and begin preparation of engineering plans, specifications and bid packages. Depending on the expediency of the regulatory agencies and the permit process the District, the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, and the UCNRS, are attempting to begin the first phase of the project in the summer of 2004.

Proposed Project

The proposed project is also the environmentally superior project. Alternative 4A meets the project objectives of the Flood Control District, the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, and the UCNRS and is the preferred alternative.

The flood control components of the project include increasing the height of an existing berm along the east bank of Franklin Creek to 10' msl. Additional flood control components include constructing a floodwall along the existing concrete channel on Franklin Creek between Carpinteria Avenue and the UPRR as well as along the north side of Del Mar Avenue to provide a 100-year level of flood protection. This floodwall along Del Mar Avenue will be designed to an elevation between 8' and 10' mean sea level in response to concerns raised by the Sandyland Cove HOA after the public comment period closed. Sediment management on an as-needed basis is also included in the project description.

The proposed project includes a comprehensive plan to enhance and restore Basin 1 and the South Marsh (Appendix A in the FEIR). The LTSB using grant funds provided by the Conservancy will implement the Basin 1/South Marsh Plan. The District will continue to work with the LTSB to secure permits for the project and possibly coordinate construction.

Several project components include restoration actions on property within the Carpinteria Salt Marsh owned by the UCNRS. The District has agreed to support UCNRS staff to identify potential funding sources for the UCNRS to complete their portion of the work and to coordinate construction as appropriate.

Alternatives

The FEIR considered eight main alternatives. Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4C, and 8, were not carried forward for analysis for a variety of reasons including excessive impacts to biological and visual resources that could not be mitigated.

Alternatives 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6A, 6B, and 7, as well as the No Project alternative were all carried forward for analysis. Alternative 7 has the fewest environmental impacts but does not meet the flood control objectives. Alternative 4A has the fewest environmental impacts and meets all of the project objectives. Although Alternative 4B has the same environmental impacts as Alternative 4A, it does not meet the flood control objective of providing a 100-year level of flood protection as well as Alternative 4A.

EIR Issues

Upon review of the Draft EIR, interested agencies and individuals raised several issues. The comments and corresponding responses are contained in Appendix C of the Final EIR. The most significant issues are described below:

Endangered Species

The CDFG commented that the DEIR did not include adequate discussion of tidewater gobies and Belding's savannah sparrow. The FEIR includes a more detailed discussion of potential impacts to those species and appropriate mitigation measures.

Project Goals

UCSB suggested modifying the project goals (objectives) to include those goals included in the Management Plan for the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. The project objectives were modified to include specific objectives for flood control, LTSSB, and the UCNRS. The goals contained in the Management Plan pertinent to the proposed project were included as project objectives.

Alternatives Eliminated From Further Consideration

UCSB commented that Alternatives 1-3 should have received full analysis in the EIR. Their reasoning was that the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Enhancement Plan would result in a healthier marsh despite a permanent change in habitat types within the marsh. For example, they believe that exchanging pickleweed habitat for open water habitat should be allowed since it may be ecologically better for the marsh as a whole. In addition, they suggested expanding the project to other areas of the marsh that may be degraded and conducive to restoration thus providing additional mitigation for the increased impacts associated with Alternatives 1-3.

Based on extensive experience with regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Coastal Commission, the District does not agree with UCSB's position. These regulatory agencies typically require like-kind mitigation at a 3:1 ratio. The District has developed a project description that provides mitigation that would typically be required. Exchanging habitat types for the greater good of the marsh has not previously been supported by these agencies with respect to permitting and District staff made an informed and conscientious decision to avoid spending over \$100,000 on environmental review and processing for a project that most likely would not receive permits.

Floodwall/Berms

Comments were received concerning the location and configuration of the floodwall and berms. The dimensions of the proposed berm take into consideration the need to access and maintain the berms. District staff has had several meetings and conversations with representatives of the Sandyland Cove HOA regarding the floodwall. The County's CEQA guidelines and thresholds of significance do not protect private views and the FEIR does not identify significant impacts to

aesthetic (visual) resources that require mitigation. Nevertheless, the FEIR includes a recommended mitigation measure (AESTH-1) suggesting the floodwall be designed to blend in with the marsh. The District has agreed to provide texture and coloring that not only blends in with the setting but considers the HOA's visual resource concerns. In addition, District staff has met with representatives of the HOA and LTSB to identify the horizontal location of the floodwall.

Mandates and Service Levels:

Implementation of the flood control elements of the Enhancement Plan will reduce flooding in the Carpinteria area. The enhancement projects conducted by the UCNRS and the LTSB will help improve the health and functions of the Marsh.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Costs for the flood control elements of the plan will be funded by the District and possibly by the NRCS. Costs for the other elements of the plan are the responsibility of other respective agencies.

This project was included in the Adopted 2003/04 Budget and costs were allocated in the Design Cost Center under the Water Resources Division of the Public Works Department as shown on page D-322 in the budget book. Costs from this project will be paid from Dept: 054, Acct: 8700, Fund: 2610, Program: 3005. This project is also identified in the County's Capital Improvement Plan.

Special Instructions:

Direct the Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the minute order to the Flood Control District office, attn: Karl Treiberg.