



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Flood Control  
**Department No.:** 054  
**For Agenda Of:** March 2, 2021  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Time:** N/A  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Directors, Flood Control and Water Conservation District

**FROM:** Department  
Director(s) Scott D. McGolpin, Public Works Director, (805) 568-3010

Contact Info: Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, (805) 568-3436

**SUBJECT:** **2021 Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Management Plan, Romero Creek, Colds Springs, and San Ysidro Debris Basins Improvement Projects, First and Second Supervisorial Districts**

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Directors:

- a) Find that pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15162, no new effects will occur and no new mitigation measures would be required as a result of the project and therefore pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Section 15168 (c)(2), that the Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Management Plan is within the scope of the project covered by the Program Environmental Impact Report for the Updated Routine Maintenance Program (01-EIR-01) approved in 2001 and no new environmental document is required;
- b) Consider the addenda to the previously certified Program Environmental Impact Report (01-EIR-01) and determine that the addenda contained within the Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Management Plan have been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and adopt the mitigation measures included for each project as the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan pursuant to State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15168 (c)(3);
- c) Adopt the California Environmental Quality Act Findings included in the Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Management Plan;

- d) Approve individual projects described in the Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Removal Plan; and
- e) Authorize the Public Works Director to advertise and receive bids for the Romero Creek Debris Basin, Cold Springs Debris Basin, and San Ysidro Debris Basin Improvement Projects.

**Summary Text:**

This item is on the agenda in order to approve the Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Management Plan (DBMMP), which includes projects defined within the scope of the impacts identified by the 2001 Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for Routine Flood Control Maintenance Activities, and to authorize the Public Works Director to advertise and receive construction bids for the Romero Creek Debris Basin, Cold Springs Debris Basin, and San Ysidro Debris Basin Improvement Projects.

In 2017, the Flood Control District (District) Board of Directors approved the DBMMP and the District has been implementing routine and long-term maintenance under that Plan since then. Previously, the District modified the Gobernador Debris Basin to allow passage of smaller sediments and allow fish passage. In the 1-9 Debris Flow event, the Gobernador Debris Basin performed as planned and retained large rocks and debris while allowing finer grain sediments through. As such, the District has chosen to implement this design on other basins to allow the passage of sediments, while retaining larger rocks. The updated designs would be in line with the requirements of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as well. This DBMMP describes updated designs for four debris basins and updates the general history of the basins between 2017 and 2021.

The 2021 DBMMP provides updated descriptions of the seventeen debris basins located on the south coast of Santa Barbara County between Goleta and Carpinteria, describes the routine and long-term maintenance that will occur at each basin, and incorporates plans and descriptions for five debris basin modifications that will occur between 2021-2025.

Projects within the scope of the PEIR are described as individual Addenda to the PEIR for each drainage where a debris basin is located. The routine and long-term maintenance, as well as basin modifications, utilize appropriate maintenance practices described and analyzed in the PEIR and the mitigation measures incorporated into each of the projects become the mitigation and monitoring program to ensure that impacts are mitigated to the fullest extent feasible.

The District has current long-term permits for routine maintenance with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The ACOE and RWQCB permits include provisions for basin modifications and the District is in the process of obtaining an amendment for the CDFW permit to address changes in basin modification designs.

The basins subject to modifications such as removal of the Dam will remain in District right-of-way and as such can be reactivated following fires in their respective watersheds to their original intended purpose. In non-fire years, the basins often accumulate large amounts of fine grain sediment that is costly to excavate and move to a suitable disposal site. Disposal sites are increasingly difficult to locate

and costs for this maintenance work is extremely expensive. Modifying the basins will allow for the passage of finer grain sediment and also restores the natural process which will benefit coastal beaches from being starved of these sediments.

The Romero Debris Basin Improvement Project is scheduled for construction in the Summer of 2021. Cold Springs and San Ysidro Debris Basin Improvement Projects are scheduled for construction in the summer of 2022. These three projects are partially funded by grant funds.

**Background:**

The District owns and maintains 17 debris basins along the south coast between Goleta and Carpinteria and has conducted routine and long-term maintenance of these basins since 1996 under the PEIR which was originally approved in 1992 and subsequently updated in 2001. All but two of the basins were constructed after the Coyote Fire in 1964, the Romero Fire in 1971, and the Painted Fire in 1990. Santa Monica debris basin is part of the Carpinteria Valley Watershed Project, and Montecito Debris Basin was built after the 1995 and 1998 flooding events.

The first DBMMP, tiered off the PEIR, was written in 1996 and updated in 2003 and 2017. This DBMMP further updates the maintenance of the debris basins and includes modification plans for three debris basins. Prior to 1996, the debris basins were maintained on an as-needed basis. The District generally conducts annual routine debris basin maintenance between August and November.

As part of debris basin maintenance permitting with the ACOE, the District received a Final Biological Opinion (B.O.) issued by the NMFS in 2016 for a consultation for Southern California steelhead trout. The B.O. requires the District to modify five debris basins within the 10-year permit duration (2016-2026), with three of the five removals to occur within the first five years. The District completed modification of two Goleta basins in 2019; Maria Ygnacio Main Branch and East Branch Basins. The remaining three basins selected for modification are Romero Debris Basin, San Ysidro Debris Basin, and Cold Springs Debris Basin.

Modifications of the debris basins will eliminate barriers to steelhead habitat and will restore natural sediment delivery that has been interrupted for over 50 years while retaining the flood control function of the facilities. This will also reduce maintenance costs for these five basins. If there is a fire in a watershed where a basin has been modified, temporary pipe debris rack(s), similar to the racks that were installed after the Gap and Jesusita Fires, could be installed within the basins to trap debris, while allowing flows and sediment to continue through the system.

Romero Debris Basin will be the third basin to be modified by installing outlet control structures similar to that of the Gobernador Debris Basin built in 2008. The outlet control structures will be designed to withstand some larger debris, to facilitate sediment delivery downstream, and to restore federally-endangered steelhead trout habitat.

The District was awarded a CDFW Proposition 1 Grant to help fund design costs of this Project. The District has applied for grants from FEMA to help fund construction of the projects, and have applied for additional grants to help with design and implementation costs. Costs associated with the design are expected to be applied to matching funds for project construction grants.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

**Fiscal Analysis:**

Narrative:

Environmental costs are budgeted in our capital improvement project costs. No General Fund monies are associated with this plan.

**Special Instructions:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to email the minute order of these actions to Christina Lopez at [clopez@cosbpw.net](mailto:clopez@cosbpw.net).

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: 2021 Updated Debris Basin Maintenance and Management Plan

Attachment B: 2001 Program EIR for the Updated Routine Maintenance Program

**Authored by:**

Maureen Spencer, Environmental Manager, (805) 568-3437