



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: Public Works  
Department No.: 054  
For Agenda Of: 10/23/07  
Placement: Set Hearing on 11/06/07  
Estimated Tme: 30 minutes on 11/06/07  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: Majority

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TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Scott McGolpin, Public Works Director, 568-3010  
Director(s)  
Contact Info: Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, 568-3436

SUBJECT: Update regarding Watershed Impacts relating to the Zaca Fire

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: No

**Other Concurrence:** N/A

As to form: No

**Recommended Actions:**

Set November 6, 2007 (Estimated Time: 30 minutes) on the departmental agenda to receive a report from the Public Works Department on Watershed Impacts of the Zaca Fire and the Status of the County's Response Program in preparation for this coming winter.

**Summary Text:**

The Zaca Fire burned two major watersheds in Santa Barbara County, the Sisquoc River Watershed, and the Santa Ynez River Watershed.

**Sisquoc River**

The Sisquoc River is the major tributary to the Santa Maria River. Unlike the Cuyama River, which has Twitchell Dam on it, the Sisquoc River is unregulated and represents the major contributor of flood flows in the Santa Maria River.

The Santa Maria River Levees have been an issue for the past several years, in particularly when recently in March of 2006 Colonel Dornstauder of the Corps of Engineers described the condition of Santa Maria River Levees as "Critical and Urgent". For several years the City of Santa Maria and the County have petitioned the federal government to allocate funding to strengthen the Levee.

The Zaca Fire has now burned approximately 78,800 acres of the Sisquoc Watershed, or roughly 25% of the watershed. In 1966, the Wellman Fire burned 88,347 of the Sisquoc Watershed or 29% of the

Watershed. A striking correlation exists between the Zaca Fire and the Wellman Fire. Following the Wellman Fire, the Santa Maria River saw a major flow on December 6, 1966 after a relatively modest rainfall. In the absence of any impacts associated with a Fire, the Sisquoc River Watershed generally requires 10 -15 inches of seasonal rain prior producing runoff. In 1966, the December 6<sup>th</sup> flow occurred with much less prior seasonal rainfall.

The Zaca Fire has some differences from the Wellman Fire. The Zaca Fire burned more of the upper reaches of the Sisquoc Watershed, and the Manzana Creek area, while the Wellman Fire burned more of the middle portions of the Watershed. The upper reach of the Sisquoc River is further from the Levee areas, which is good, but is typically in a wetter portion of the watershed.

Under the current conditions, staff considers there to be a much increased threat to high river flows this winter. To address these conditions, staff has taken the following steps to prepare for the winter. The steps are:

- Conduct weekly coordination meetings with Local, State, and Federal interests;
- Construction of pilot channels in the Santa Maria River;
- Stock pilings of emergency rock;
- Locating strategic equipment staging areas near the River;
- Advanced procurement of contractors for possible emergency assistance;
- Construction of channel sediment basins to address increased sediment potential;
- Preparation of an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with the Corps of Engineers;
- Increase stream gauging for flow warning and quantification; and
- Staff preparation and training for expected levee patrols during river flows.

### Pilot Channels

In the 2007-08 Flood Control Annual Maintenance Plan, three pilot channels were already included in the plan, one at Suey Rd in Santa Maria, one downstream of Bonita School Road, and one near HWY 1 at Guadalupe.

Last year, staff arranged a reverse contract whereby the upper two Pilot Channels would be excavated by Contractors in need of fill. This work would be completed at no cost to the Flood Control District, and perhaps generating revenue. This year, however, the demand for fill was not present to the extent it was last year and no proposals were received for the upper two channels. Staff re-bid the work as a typical paid contract for the Pilot Channel at Suey Road.

The Pilot Channel at Guadalupe serves to remove obstructive vegetation and was planned from the start to be completed by County staff. During the end of the Zaca Fire, staff amended the Guadalupe Pilot Channel to clear an additional 200 feet in response to the Fire. At this time, permits for this work are still pending. In addition, the County is requesting assistance from some of the agricultural interests in the area who expressed a desire for the wider channel clearing.

### Rock Stockpiles

Currently 3 rock stockpiles exist along the Levee. The first is at Bonita School Road, rock that was the result of rebuilding the Levee in 1998 following the breach in that year. The second is along the Santa Maria City Landfill. This stockpile is a combination of pre-existing rock, and the addition of 1,300 tons of rock purchased by the City of Santa Maria. The last stockpile is located by Fugler Point. This rock is now located in an area of little strategic importance and is subject to being moved.

#### Equipment Staging Areas / Advanced Procurement of Contractors

As is typical, each winter, staff has set up purchasing contracts with a variety of contractors. This established equipment rates and clears the insurance requirements.

If identified, equipment can be staged almost anywhere along the Levee as the County owns 200 feet of property along the Levee. However, in addition, equipment can be staged at both the City of Santa Maria's landfill and in the Union Asphalt complex off Donovan Road. Union Asphalt graciously approved our request for this help; the site is a secure area protecting the equipment from vandalism.

#### Sediment Basins

Thanks to the aggregate mining of the River by Union Asphalt and the City of Santa Maria, four large in channel sediment basins will be completed. Two of these are located strategically upstream on the Sisquoc Ranch as a part of Union Asphalt's mining activity, one located near Fugler Point, again a Union Asphalt project, and one located at the City of Santa Maria Landfill constructed by the City.

#### Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

During the Fire, the Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District prepared an EAP and worked with the County to complete it. The EAP establishes communication with the Corps, sets up a mechanism for emergency assistance if needed, provides for Corps office space in Santa Maria, and establishes monitoring protocols throughout the winter.

#### Increased Stream Gaging and Staff Preparedness

In a heightened state of readiness, an additional stream gauge is planned on the Sisquoc River far upstream of Santa Maria. In addition, patrol training is being provided to additional County and City staff. The State Department of Water Resources will be visiting Santa Maria to offer follow up training as well.

Staff intends to aggressively monitor any river flows this winter.

### **Santa Ynez River**

The Zaca Fire also burned a significant amount of the Santa Ynez River Watershed above Lake Cachuma. A total of 118,246 acres of watershed above Cachuma was burned or 44% of the Watershed. In addition to Cachuma, the Watershed above Gibraltar Reservoir was also seriously burned. Gibraltar is owned by the City of Santa Barbara and the City is currently looking into options to address debris control.

After a fire, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) assembles a Burn Area Emergency Response Team, or BAER Team. The BAER team’s goals are to address the impacts of the fire including flooding, sedimentation, and public protections, and ecosystem protection. Unfortunately, the BAER Report for the Zaca Fire currently dismisses any opportunity to address these concerns.

To attempt to address the floating debris issue on Cachuma Reservoir, staff is completing the installation of two new debris booms on Cachuma Lake. The booms will be located on Santa Cruz Bay and the Narrows (main Santa Ynez River inlet). These are the two watersheds burned in the fire.

**Background:**

The Zaca Fire burned an unprecedented 240,000 acres and is the second largest fire in California history.

The fire burned two major watersheds in Santa Barbara County, the Sisquoc River Watershed (76,800 acres), and the Santa Ynez River Watershed (118,246 acres). These two watersheds offer a variety of concerns.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Partially \*

**Fiscal Analysis:**

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u>
General Fund			
State			
COMB	\$ 30,000.00		
Water Agency funds	\$ 120,000.00		
SMRL FZ	\$ 250,000.00		
Total	\$ 400,000.00	\$ -	\$ -

**Narrative:**

While the emergency efforts during the Fire are mostly covered, following the fire the funding options disappear quickly. Avenues for funding include: USFS BAER Team work, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP), the Corps of Engineers (Corps), Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau), State Department of Water Resources (DWR), and State OES.

Of the federal agencies, the USFS BAER Report suggested no substantial work in the burn area or outside the fire perimeter but still inside USFS land. Like fighting the fire, they have funding to do work. The USFS cannot do work outside the Forest boundary, the NRCS is the authorized federal agency with that responsibility, however the NRCS EWP Program has no money available.

The Corps has a program called Advanced Measures, however, the request for help on the Levee was denied in Washington D.C.

The Bureau has no funding to assist with the Cachuma work.

DWR has several billions of dollars for levee repair and levee work but apparently the challenges of the Santa Maria emergency situation does not fit in any of their programs. DWR has two grant programs that will soon accept applications, but these programs all require a 50% match. The Levee Flood Zone lacks the funds to match any substantial project.

State OES can pay for impacts directly relating to the fire. As such, the costs of the Cachuma Debris Barriers may be eligible for a 75% State cost share. It should also be noted that the Cachuma Operations and Maintenance Board (COMB) approved a \$30,000 contribution to the Cachuma Debris Boom work. A budget revision to accept the unanticipated revenue will be processed once the \$30,000 has been received by COMB.

The City of Santa Barbara is responsible for the work associated with the Gibraltar Reservoir issues. A substantial percentage of the little remaining storage in Gibraltar may very well be lost in the next rainy season or two. The City also has no outside funding for any work and the BAER Team proposed no work to help protect Gibraltar.

On September 18, 2007, the Board approved a budget revision to release designations in the Santa Maria River Levee Flood Zone. Designations were released to cover costs for the pilot channel work, rock stock piles, equipment staging, and increased cost in staff time to patrol the levee. While the District is still pursuing state and federal funding for this work as well as larger more costly projects, the District released designations to cover work that needs to be done immediately and that we can no longer wait for state and federal assistance.

The Water Agency will be paying approximately \$120,000 towards the debris boom project at Cachuma Lake. Funding allocated for the Cloud Seeding Program that the Board has suspended for this winter will be used to pay for these costs.

**Staffing Impacts:**

**Legal Positions:**

**FTEs:**

**Special Instructions:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the minute order of this item to the Flood Control District office, attn: Christina Lopez.

**Authored by:** Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, 568-3436

**cc:**