

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



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

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 9/28/05
Department Name: Public Works Department
Department No.: 054
Agenda Date: 10/4/05
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time: 45 Minutes
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Phillip M. Demery, Director
Public Works Department

STAFF CONTACT: Phillip M. Demery, Director, Ext 3010

SUBJECT: Channel Maintenance of the Santa Ynez River,
Third Supervisorial District

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Authorize the Chair to sign attached letters requesting State and Federal legislators to seek permit exemptions for Santa Ynez River clearing.
- B. Direct staff to prepare necessary CEQA document using the existing Flood Control Program EIR to the extent possible and pursue any and all necessary State and Federal Permits to maintain the current Santa Ynez River width.
- C. Continue to maintain the current Board approved and permitted 100 foot Santa Ynez River width.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

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

Executive Summary and Discussion:

History:

Prior to 1988, the historic practice of the Flood Control District was to doze the Santa Ynez River in the lower Lompoc Valley pushing the cleared vegetation and sediment to the river banks. In 1988, the Flood Control District was no longer able to conduct similar maintenance without permits. Permitting agencies asserted their authority over the work, requiring additional CEQA document preparation.

The Flood Control District prepared two draft EIR's for the river clearing, one in 1990 and the other in 1992. The 1992 EIR was finalized and adopted by your Board for a 100 foot-wide mowing project. Although the Board approved the project and certified the EIR, the State Department of Fish and Game would not grant the necessary streambed alteration agreement. In 1991, the Board declared an emergency upon the

expectation of flooding and directed staff to clear the river according to the approved project without having the Fish and Game Agreement.

In 1997, the Flood Control District again conducted a 100 foot-wide mowing project along the Santa Ynez River near Lompoc. Vandenberg Airforce Base was instrumental in this effort acting as the Federal Lead for Endangered Species Act consultation.

In 2001, the Flood Control District Program EIR was updated. As part of the update, a 100 foot-wide mowing project on the Santa Ynez River was included. The EIR was certified and the projects contained were approved by the Board. Due to time constraints with our Corps Permit for the programmatic EIR, the Regional Water Quality Control Board has not yet permitted the 100 foot-wide mowing project.

River Condition:

Fortunately the high flows caused by Cachuma spills have scoured the river channel in the lower Lompoc Valley. The current channel capacity is comparable to the capacity provided in the 1970's and early 1980's. Now that the active river channel is much wider than the Board approved 100 foot-wide project, it is the desire of many interests including Public Works staff to be able to maintain the cleared river width that Mother Nature has provided.

The Santa Ynez River maintenance options previously discussed at recent Board meetings are as follows:

- Ask for Permit Exemptions:
This option would seek legislative relief from permitting authorities in perpetuity to perform channel clearing on the Santa Ynez River.
- Maintain existing river channel configuration:
This option requires amendment of the current flood maintenance program, and additional CEQA compliance utilizing the existing Program EIR. The Flood Control District would apply for any and all necessary permits. No river clearing would be necessary until vegetation encroached within the current cleared river channel.
- Maintain the Board approved 100 foot project width:
This option requires the Flood Control District to obtain necessary permits from Resource Agencies that have previously granted permits for the same work. No river clearing would take place until vegetation encroached within the 100 foot-wide channel delineation.

Mandates and Service Levels:

Since the early 1990's, the maintenance program on the Lower Santa Ynez River consisted of a 100 foot-wide mowing project. Increasing the projects size, either by an increased project scope or Exemptions, will increase service levels.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Should a new or supplemental CEQA document be needed, additional costs will be incurred. Contract information for this work will come back to your Board after Staff has determined the exact document needed. Additionally, clearing a wider path in the river, or increasing the work frequency will result in additional maintenance costs. The Lompoc Valley Flood Zone receives approximately \$200,000 per year in revenues and has several other maintenance obligations in the Zone.

Special Instructions:

None

Concurrence:

County Counsel