

**SANTA BARBARA  
COUNTY AGENDA  
BOARD LETTER**

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
Room 407 105 E. Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
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Agenda Number:  
Board letter date: 06/06/02  
Department: Public Works/Flood Control  
Budget Unit: 054-04-03  
Agenda Date: 06/25/02  
Placement: Departmental  
Estimated Time: 45 Minutes  
Continued Item:  
Document Name: BRDJUN25.AMP02.DOC

**TO:** Board of Directors  
Santa Barbara County Flood Control & Water Conservation District

**FROM:** Phillip M. Demery, Public Works Director

**STAFF CONTACT:** Thomas Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, ext. 3436  
Larry Fausett, Ph.D., Operations and Maintenance Manager, ext. 3437

**SUBJECT:** ANNUAL MAINTENANCE PLAN, FISCAL YEAR 2002/03  
ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** C.A. Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

That the Board of Directors:

- A. Approve the individual CEQA exempt projects and direct the Clerk of the Board to file the attached CEQA Notice of Exemption for each of the projects described in Section 1 of the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Maintenance Plan (POST);
- B. Certify that the addenda to Program EIR (01-EIR-01) contained within Section 2 of the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Maintenance Plan have been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- C. Certify that the Board has reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final Program EIR and individual addenda contained within the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Maintenance Plan as well as information presented during the public hearing prior to the approval of the individual projects presented in Section 2 of the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Plan and adopt CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations included in Section 4 of the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Maintenance Plan;
- D. Adopt the Mitigation and Monitoring Programs attached to the addenda for individual projects described in Section 2 of the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Maintenance Plan; and
- E. Approve individual projects described in Section 2 of the Fiscal Year 2002/03 Annual Plan.

**ALIGNMENT WITH BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The recommendations are primarily aligned with Goal No. 2. Ensure the Public Health and Safety and Provide Essential Infrastructure.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & DISCUSSION:**

In December 2001, the Board of Directors adopted a revised Routine Creek Maintenance Program which included: a) Maintenance Practices and Mitigation Measures; b) associated District Policy Statements; and c) an annual planning and project approval process (identified on Attachment No.1).

Generation of the annual maintenance plans provides multiple benefits. The plan serves as a basis for demonstrating need, analyzing alternatives, proposing mitigation and selecting the most effective and least environmentally damaging District maintenance practice. The plan also allows the District to prioritize maintenance efforts and expenditures early on, which not only helps in preparation of budgets but also helps in the management of individual projects.

The annual planning process as adopted by the Board requires that the District assess the maintenance needs, prepare preliminary project descriptions with appropriate engineering analysis, and conduct public workshops to hear public/agency input and concerns about the proposed Annual Plan.

The District provided notice of workshops in the "Santa Maria Times" and the "Santa Barbara News-Press" for June 4, 2002 in Santa Barbara and June 5, 2002 in Santa Maria.

A summary of the proposed Annual Plan projects was available at the workshops and on May 20, 2002, copies had been mailed to individuals in the community who had previously expressed an interest. One person attended the South County workshop to talk about planned maintenance on two creeks and one person attended the North County workshop just asking general questions about the District's activities.

Since this is the first year that the Annual Plan is being prepared using the newly adopted Program EIR a brief description of elements from the new EIR which are different from the old EIR are listed below.

- **New information about threatened and endangered species**

Since the adoption of the previous EIR in 1992, several species that reside in the County have been designated as endangered or threatened by the federal government, including the tidewater goby, western snowy plover, California red-legged frog, southern steelhead trout, southwestern arroyo toad, and California tiger salamander. The new EIR includes specific environmental protection measures for these species.

- **Water Quality**

In the past several years, there has been an increased awareness of human-induced pollution, particularly in the South Coast watersheds, as exhibited by high coliform levels at local beaches. In addition, there is a greater recognition of the effects of wetlands and riparian corridors in reducing pollutant loading through natural processes. The 1992 EIR only addressed water quality impacts related to sediments and herbicides, and did not address impacts to "biofiltering" effects of in-stream vegetation due to maintenance activities.

- **New analytic tools for assessing channel capacity and geomorphology**

In the past 10 years, there has been a growing interest in the field of fluvial geomorphology – the science of the interaction between watershed characteristics, flows, and channel geometry. Geomorphological concepts are being applied to river and creek restoration projects with greater frequency, particularly the concept of the “bankful capacity” and sediment transport equilibrium. The previous Program EIR did not conduct a rigorous analysis of the applicability of these concepts to the maintenance program. The District is interested in determining if such concepts and associated analytic tools will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance planning and implementation program.

- **Include the Lower Santa Ynez River maintenance into the annual program**

The District has included the maintenance activities along the Lower Santa Ynez River into the Maintenance Program for the sake of efficiency and consistency.

- **Improve the standard maintenance practices**

The previous Maintenance Program included 77 Standard Maintenance Practices (SMPs) that were developed based on the 1991 Final Program EIR and input from the Interagency and Public Advisory Committee (IPAC). While these practices have proven to be very effective in minimizing and mitigating environmental impacts, there is an interest in modifying the practices to consolidate many individual practices, reword the description of certain practices, and re-organize them in order to increase the efficiency when referring to the practices in annual maintenance plans, and to reduce ambiguity in certain measures. In addition, the effectiveness of the habitat restoration measures have been assessed in the updated Program EIR, including an evaluation of the use of the function-based methods for assessing riparian habitat impacts and determining appropriate mitigation.

- **Include a variety of bank and grade stabilization measures in the program**

In the past 5 to 10 years, there has been a tremendous increase in the development and application of environmentally sensitive slope stabilization methods. “Bio-technical” methods emphasize the use of plants and biodegradable materials rather than concrete and rip-rip. Routine maintenance may require limited slope stabilization. The District is interested in the feasibility and applicability of such methods within the context of the Maintenance Program.

- **Assess the Impacts of the Los Carneros Mitigation Bank**

The District recently proposed a 28-acre riparian and wetland mitigation bank at Lake Los Carneros, a City park in Goleta. Credits accrued from restoring habitats at the site will be used for mitigation for maintenance activities, and possibly for future District capital projects.

- **Assess the impacts of the District’s Herbicide Spray Program**

The District’s new Program EIR identified herbicide use as a Class II impact on Water Quality. Associated mitigation measures address these impacts, in addition operational modifications help

reduce the overall herbicide use. These operation changes include the use of backpack sprayers with inherent volume limitations that result in a minimal amount of volume used and result in application to the desired target, and identification of less critical applications that can be addressed by other means (mowing, mulching, etc).

Another mitigation measure is to provide water quality testing before and after herbicide application to determine the level of herbicides as a result of the work. Six creeks were sampled in the Fall of 2001, Winchester Creek, Tecolote Creek, San Ysidro Creek, San Pedro Creek, Orcutt Creek, and Atascadero Creek. This work was also documented in the New Program EIR. A vast majority of the samples detected no glyphosate, and after 96 hours, all locations detected no glyphosate.

This year extensive testing for glyphosate will be done in Carpinteria Creek, Mission Creek, San Jose Creek, Tecolotito Creek, Atascadero Creek, Orcutt Creek, and Upper Green Canyon as part of the District's ongoing effort to ensure that the minimum amount of herbicide is used.

Over the years, use of herbicides by Flood Control has been reduced. As a point of reference, glyphosate use in 2001 was 27% less than the 1995 use and over 38% less than 1980 usage.

To continue reductions in herbicide usage, a 20% reduction has been set for our current year (2002) or no more than 986 gallons. This reduction will be accommodated by modifications to our operation as discussed above. Staff will be reviewing alternatives to herbicide use and will be determining equipment needs, namely mowing equipment. Staff believes that several mowers exist that can address the weed control along access roads, levees, and basins that would reduce herbicide use. Additionally, some areas may function without mowing or herbicides.

Upon completion of this year's program, staff will evaluate opportunities for additional reductions next year. Staff will address this in the 2003 Green Team report in which your board has directed to be on the departmental agenda next May.

- **Project Approval**

Pursuant to the annual planning process outline (Attachment No. 1), the next step requires a public hearing regarding projects included in the Annual Plan. The Annual Maintenance Plan summary listing (Attachment No. 2) consists of CEQA exempt projects (EXEMPT), projects defined within the scope of impacts identified by the Program EIR requiring addenda (PEIR) for FY 2002/03 and projects beyond the scope of the Program EIR requiring further environmental documentation to address impacts (ND or EIR).

The CEQA exempt projects are described in Section 1 of the Annual Plan and are based on CEQA Section 15301 (b) "Maintenance of existing facilities" or Section 15061 (b)(3) "No significant effect on the environment". Projects that are exempt fall into one of the following five categories:

- \* Removal of rubbish or other unnatural material from riparian corridors or estuaries, but only where there is no impact to any significant resource at the site, down-stream, or adjacent to the site.
- \* Maintenance activities in existing non-perennial, fully concrete-lined stream channels, but only where there is no impact to any significant down-stream or adjacent resource.

- \* Clearing, repair, and replacement of such flood control devices as check structures, drop structures, levees, chute structures, culverts, weirs, or stream flow measuring stations, but only where there is no impact to any significant resource at the site, down-stream or along access routes.
- \* Maintenance activities on access ways outside of estuaries and riparian corridors, but only where there is no impact to any significant resource.
- \* Maintenance activities on earthen channels, which have been developed to convey urban stormwater, agriculture stormwater, or agriculture tailwater and have little or no vegetation in them.

The described fiscal year 2002/03 exempt projects have been exempted in prior years with Planning and Development Department concurrence.

Projects within the scope of the Program EIR are described in Section 2 of the Annual Plan. Each of the 19 projects are presented as addenda to the Program EIR, utilizing appropriate maintenance practices described and analyzed in the Program EIR. Each of these PEIR projects has a mitigation and monitoring program attached to the addendum to ensure that impacts are mitigated to the fullest extent feasible.

Projects beyond the scope of the Program EIR require additional environmental documentation. Individual hearings will be utilized to consider these projects. Projects within this category are identified within the Annual Plan for reference and disclosure purposes only and are listed in Section 3.

Once the Board has approved projects described in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Maintenance Plan, application can be made to the State Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Coastal Commission, and other regulatory agencies for environmental permits or approvals. Applicable permits will be obtained from local, State and Federal regulatory agencies prior to project implementation.

**Under this heading, state the reasons for your recommendations.**

**MANDATES & SERVICE LEVELS:**

Mandates have been discussed in previous Board letters regarding the Revised Creek Maintenance Program. The District's authorities under State Law allows the District to undertake these projects for the public's benefit. Several projects constructed in cooperation with the Federal Governments have mandated levels of maintenance associated with them. The District's projects are subject to compliance with Environmental laws and regulations.

**FACILITIES AND FISCAL IMPACTS:**

Attachment No. 3 summarizes the annual maintenance costs based on current needs within each of the flood zones and compares the costs to the proposed operations budget for FY 2002/03. The costs for our annual maintenance plan are in the 2002/03 Proposed Budget under the Maintenance cost center of the Water Resources Division as shown on page D-300 in the budget book. If there is heavy rainfall, emergency work will be required and these costs will be much higher as was the case with the

District's expenditures in the 1995 and 1998 floods. This will result in a reprioritization and will undoubtedly defer additional maintenance projects to future years.

There are maintenance needs that cannot be addressed with current funding sources. There are significant differences between available funds and needed funds in the Bradley, Guadalupe, Lompoc Valley, and Santa Maria Levee flood zones.

In the Bradley zone several agricultural tailwater ditches and basins require desilting to prevent the flooding of productive fields next winter. Those that are most in need of work will be addressed as funds allow.

In Guadalupe, the Santa Maria River has vegetation in various areas. It is estimated that it would cost \$200,000 to prepare an EIR/EIS, provide mitigation, and clear the river. However, the maintenance budget for the zone is less than \$30,000/year and there are other maintenance needs as well. The District is continuing a small-scale project, to alleviate potential flooding in the vicinity of Guadalupe. This will postpone a major project on the Santa Maria River and cause all other projects in the Guadalupe Flood Zone to be phased. This project is the minimum that District staff feels can be done within the zone budget while balancing environmental protection and flood protection. The District is working with other agencies to provide mitigation acreage in anticipation of a larger project in the future.

After the start of the new fiscal year the District will immediately work on the highest priority projects in the Lompoc Valley Zone which includes maintenance of federally constructed facilities which have existing operation and maintenance agreements associated with them. Lower priority needs will be deferred until future years.

It is estimated that it will cost \$1,886,240 to implement the FY 2002/03 annual plan in which environmental costs would comprise 12% of the total South Coast costs and 4% of the total North County costs. Mitigation costs are remaining nearly constant in the North County but are up slightly in the South Coast Zone because of the opportunities to do more mitigation this year than strictly needed to offset impacts. This "banking" opportunity is afforded to the District because of the provisions of the new Program EIR. In the long run this will provide better habitat along the creeks the District does maintenance in. This cost does not include projects outside the scope of the Annual Plan such as desilting in lower Devereaux Creek or work in the Carpinteria Salt Marsh.

Generation of the FY 2002/03 Annual Plan has saved the District an estimated \$170,000 in environmental documentation costs. However, the greatest benefit derived from the Annual Plan is measured by the District's ability to streamline the State and Federal environmental permit process, which in turn allows the District to provide needed maintenance prior to the next storm season.

#### **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to post the attached CEQA Notice of Exemption and to send a copy of the minute order of these actions to the Flood Control District, Attn: Christina Lopez. **Describe the fiscal impacts of the recommended Board action(s). Address the following questions:**

- m What are the current year costs of the recommendation(s) and are they included in your current budget? If not, how do you propose to fund the recommendation(s)?**
- m If a transfer is needed to implement the recommendation(s), what**

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**changes will the transfer make?**

**m What are the annualized costs of the recommendation(s)?**

**m What are the fiscal effects on other departments?**

**NOTE: For new positions, first year costs should be based on actual plan;  
future year (or annualized costs) should be based on E step.**

Attachments: 2002/03 Annual Maintenance Plan  
Attachments Nos. 1-3