



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Maria River Levee is Topic of City TV Show

Vigorous ongoing attempts to fix the Santa Maria River Levee's flawed design – and the looming issue of flood insurance for property owners - are discussed in the new episode of *Santa Maria Today*, a City government television program airing on Comcast public access Channel 23 now through mid-May.

Most of the show is a presentation by Tom Fayram of the Santa Barbara County Flood Control District explaining the Levee's history and what the City and County are doing to get Federal assistance.

The 26-mile-long levee was built between 1959 and 1963 by the Corps of Engineers and then ownership and maintenance were transferred to the Santa Barbara County Flood Control District. The City and County have maintained that the problem is not with maintenance but design.

In March 2006, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers declared that the Levee could no longer be certified to withstand major storm flows in the Santa Maria River. It was placed on a nationwide list of levees at risk of failure. This month, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) shared with City officials its preliminary revised flood maps that would put about 80 percent of the City and a significant portion of the Santa Maria Valley in the 100-year flood zone.

FEMA identified 20,000 parcels and 17,000 structures within the City that would be in its revised flood plain. Most of the City's property owners would be required to buy flood insurance, based on the preliminary Federal maps. The cost could be hundreds of dollars or thousands of dollars per year, per property. The approximate area covers land from Betteravia Road north and east to the Santa Maria River Levee. FEMA's preliminary maps are expected to be released to the public this fall in public hearings.

Santa Maria Today is broadcast at 7 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays and at 3 p.m. Saturdays on public access television Channel 23 to Comcast subscribers throughout the Santa Maria Valley. The monthly show focuses on City departments, programs and services, and is hosted by Management Analyst Mark van de Kamp of the City Manager's Office. This is the 19th episode.

Questions may be directed to the City Manager's Office, 925-0951, ext. 372.

Department: City Manager's Office
Contact Person: Mark van de Kamp, Management Analyst II
Telephone Number: (805) 25-0951 ext. 372
Email Address: mvandekamp@ci.santa-maria.ca.us