



NEWS RELEASE

March 2, 2009

Santa Maria River Levee Trail Closed this Week for Engineering Tests

Starting Tuesday, March 3, 2009, the Santa Maria River Levee Trail will be temporarily closed for subsurface investigations of the levee by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These tests are an integral part of the design process that will ultimately lead to permanent repairs of the levee if sufficient funds become available.

Popular with walkers and cyclists, the trail runs along the top of the levee from Suey Crossing west to Blosser Road. There are several public access points along that stretch, including near the City's Preisker Park.

The Army Corps of Engineers will be conducting the geotechnical work - which will include drilling into the levee in several locations. The planned closure will include that portion of the bikeway from U.S. 101 to Suey Crossing and all points in between. As soon as the work is complete and the site is safe, the trail will reopen. This may take one week.

The City of Santa Maria and the County of Santa Barbara staff have been working closely with the Army Corps of Engineers to expedite the planning process for the levee repairs and most recently have lobbied heavily for funding to begin construction of repairs. Last week, nearly \$6.7 million to repair the Santa Maria River Levee was included in the fiscal year 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act. President Obama may sign the document this week.

Currently, an approximately seven (7) mile length of the levee is planned to be reinforced. The Santa Maria River Levee was designed and built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1959 to 1963 and is owned and operated by the County of Santa Barbara Department of Public Works' Flood Control District. The levee is built of river sand and faced with rock on the river side.

The levee is the nationwide list of levees at risk of failure. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has remapped the Santa Maria Valley with a flood plan map. Repair of the levee is crucial to avoid flood insurance for approximately 12,000 properties.

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

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