



NEWS RELEASE

April 28, 2009

TWO PAGES

Santa Maria River Levee Receives \$40.23 Million in Federal Funding

Today the City of Santa Maria was informed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will make available \$40.231 million for the Santa Maria River Levee repair project. Combined with the previously approved \$6.7 million for repairs, this means the project is fully funded over its two-to-three-year construction period.

“This is just tremendous news for the City of Santa Maria,” Mayor Larry Lavagnino said, after receiving the notification shortly before noon in a personal call from Rep. Lois Capps. The Congresswoman earlier received a phone call from Col. Thomas Magness of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers informing her of this exciting announcement.

The funding is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which President Barack Obama signed into law on Feb. 17, 2009, to help in the recovery of the U.S. economy.

“It is a wise use of Federal recovery funds because this project is shovel-ready and will improve safety for tens of thousands of people in the Santa Maria Valley,” the Mayor said. “This has been a top priority for the City, the Army Corps, and the County for several years, and we look forward to construction commencing this fall. This project will protect 20,000 parcels in the City and create hundreds of jobs.”

The \$40.23 million in funding is in three phases of \$9.031 million, \$10.05 million and \$21.15 million. Combined with the \$6.7 million already in-hand, the Army Corps is ready to commence construction this fall. The Army Corps has presented a timeline indicating this project will be completed in the summer of 2011.

Rep. Lois Capps, Rep. Elton Gallegly, and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer all were supportive of the City and County’s efforts to obtain Federal funding to repair the levee. The Mayor, Utilities Director Rick Sweet, and County Deputy Director of Public Works Tom Fayram traveled to Washington, D.C. at least five times in the past three years to meet with those respective elected officials. The City also engaged the services of Greg Burns of Van Scoyoc Associates, who served very effectively as the City’s legislative advocate.

“We are proud to have them as our elected representatives because they listened and they acted,” the Mayor said. “I also want to give credit to Colonel Magness for his leadership in making the Santa Maria River Levee his top priority.”



PAGE 2 of 2

An analysis of the levee system in 2006 concluded that the levee did not meet the original design criteria at certain locations, and that does not meet the current rip rap (rock) protection criteria at many locations. The design works when the river flows parallel to the levee, but did not account for the angle of approach of meandering, lower volume flows that chew away at the levee.

The levee was designed and built by the 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 City of Santa Maria does not own or operate or maintain the levee.

The levee is built of river sand and extends for 17 miles along the south side of the Santa Maria River from Fugler's Point to the Highway 1 Bridge. The levee also consists of a 5-mile-long portion on the north side of the river, between the Highway 101 bridge and the Highway 1 bridge. The levee provides flood protection to the Santa Maria Valley and to the City of Santa Maria. The portion of the levee facing the river is covered with a layer of protective rock.

Following the Hurricane Katrina Disaster in August 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers began a systematic assessment of flood control structures and facilities throughout the United States to measure their risk of potential failure. After its assessment of the Santa Maria River Levee, in March 2006, the Army Corps of Engineers placed the Santa Maria River Levee on the nationwide list of levees at risk of failure and declined to certify that it could withstand a 100-year flood. Subsequent to that, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) then began preparing revised flood maps. Preliminary results of FEMA's effort appears to place most of the City and a large portion of the Santa Maria Valley in the 100-year flood zone which likely will lead to mandatory flood insurance for thousands of property owners.

FEMA plans to release its final flood maps the summer of 2010. For more information about the Levee project, visit the City's webpage: <http://www.ci.santa-maria.ca.us/RiverLevee.shtml>

Questions may be directed to Utilities Director Richard Sweet, at, 925-0951, ext. 7211.

Department:
Contact Person:
Telephone Number:
Email Address:

Utilities
Richard Sweet, Utilities Director
(805) 925-0951 ext. 7211
rsweet@ci.santa-maria.ca.us