



**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**  
Inter-Departmental Correspondence  
Public Works



**Date:** February 1, 2016  
**Board Meeting Date:** February 23, 2016  
**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** 4/5ths

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** James C. Porter, Director of Public Works

**Subject:** Improving Flood Control in San Mateo County's Areas of Responsibilities

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- A) Accept the report entitled "Improving Flood Control in San Mateo County's Areas of Responsibilities"; and
- B) Approving an Authorization Transfer Request in the amount of \$200,000 from Non-Departmental ERAF Reserves to various expenditure accounts in the Department of Public Works to begin implementing its recommendations.

**BACKGROUND:**

The County of San Mateo is responsible for flood control in the three flood control zones within the San Mateo County Flood Control District (SMCFCD), and in unincorporated areas of the County. The three flood control zones include: San Bruno Creek, Colma Creek, and San Francisquito Creek. In addition, County assets within certain incorporated areas, such as Coyote Point County Park in the City of San Mateo, are also at risk of flooding. While these flood zones and other areas have flooded on numerous occasions in the past, and are subject to greater flood risks with sea level rise and anticipated extreme storm events resulting from climate change, the County currently has neither the funding nor available staff to address these flooding risks.

The SMCFCD, which is embedded in the County's Department of Public Works (Public Works), receives approximately \$3.1 million annually through pre-Proposition 13 property tax assessments. The SMCFCD does not have any dedicated flood control staff and Public Works staff assigned to flood control projects collectively equal less than one full time employee. Other than in the Colma Creek Flood Control Zone, SMCFCD revenues are barely sufficient for maintenance of the creeks and provide little funding for capital improvements. San Mateo County is one of the lowest staffed and lowest funded flood control districts in the Bay Area.

Other areas prone to flooding that are not located within a SMCFCF flood zone, but where the County has responsibility to protect unincorporated areas or County assets, include the Bayfront Canal (North Fair Oaks), Belmont Creek (Harbor Industrial Area), Butano – Pescadero Creek, the Coyote Point area, and the Daly City Vista Grande Canal (Broadmoor). With the exception of Butano – Pescadero Creek, the County has invested minimal resources and staff time to address flooding problems in these areas.

The County's limited flood control resources also place the County at a severe disadvantage in applying for state and federal grant funding. In addition, the County is not currently in a position to effectively coordinate its efforts with affected cities on specific flood control projects, or develop more extensive expertise in flood control management.

### **DISCUSSION:**

Public Works is requesting approval for a total of \$6.2 million, over three years from the General Fund, to address flood risks in the County's areas of responsibility, with \$200,000 to be budgeted for the remainder of this fiscal year and \$2 million per year budgeted in the subsequent three fiscal years. These funds are to be used to hire two full time staff members, a project manager and a technical staff member, and to retain consultants to assist in planning, engineering, and design of flood control projects. Funds will also be used to install and maintain stream gauges in various creeks where the County has responsibility, and, where feasible, to deploy an early warning system website and notification process to alert residents of flooding risks.

Public Works is not proposing to work on flood control projects outside of the County's areas of responsibility, nor to operate as a countywide water management agency. Our intent is to work on projects that benefit unincorporated County areas and our current three flood control zones within the SMCFCF. In areas where the watershed includes other jurisdictions, we intend on partnering with those jurisdictions to develop flood control solutions that benefit all parties. To that end, and given the high cost of flood control projects coupled with limited funding, we will only work on multijurisdictional projects with willing partner agencies.

The City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) has formed a Water Committee to facilitate a discussion on countywide approaches to water related issues, including the potential creation of a new agency, or modification of an existing agency to accomplish countywide collaboration. The County is participating in those discussions and the staff funded by this proposal would be available to support the Water Committee's work.

Staff will report back to your Board annually on progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the report. During that period, we will investigate means of funding the enhanced flood control work by other funding sources, including grants, benefit assessment districts to fund capital projects, or other local funding measures as approved by affected property owners. At the end of the three year period, we will assess the success of the program and determine whether additional funding is

warranted based on results over the prior years and progress made to identify any outside funding sources.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the appropriation transfer request as to form.

Approval of this action contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of an Environmentally Conscious Community by expanding our ability to provide flood control services incorporating the latest flood control techniques and also availing all opportunities to incorporate “green infrastructure” and groundwater recharge into the projects.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The impact to the General Fund this fiscal year is \$200,000. The allocation will be used to fund two staff positions this fiscal year and begin work. During the next three fiscal years, we will include \$2,000,000 per year in the Department’s budget to fund staff and consultants and implement the work plan contained in the report. Although the total request of \$6,200,000 over roughly three years is less than the roughly \$16,000,000 value of work identified in the report, staff will prioritize the work and begin making progress on these needed projects.

The total fiscal impact to the General Fund over the next roughly three years is \$6,200,000.

Attachment A: Improving Flood Control in San Mateo County’s Areas of Responsibility Report