



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

File #: 23-743, Version: 1

Approve use of County Service Area (CSA) 50 funds for maintenance of the Maintained Flood Conveyance Areas (MFCAs) under the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) project.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors (Board) approve use of County Service Area (CSA) 50 funds for maintenance of the Maintained Flood Conveyance Areas (MFCAs) under the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) project.

SUMMARY:

CSA 50 was formed in 1967, with the purpose to allow extended county services to be performed. Active CSA services currently include storm drainage/surface water maintenance and levee maintenance. The CSA is located within a flood hazard area and damaging flood events occurred on two occasions in 1995, during the months of January and March.

Available funding in CSA 50 consists of \$1,138,435 in fund balance and an estimated \$125,413 in annual assessments for a total amount of \$1,263,848. If this report is approved by the Board, \$30,000 will be used for maintenance of the Maintained Flood Conveyance Areas (MFCA) under the CRFREE project. This funding is included the FY 2023-24 adopted budget and the proposed use of funds is within the allowable use of these funds.

DISCUSSION:

The CRFREE Project is a comprehensive effort to improve flood control and restore native riparian habitat, floodplain habitat, and hydrologic function to a portion of the lower floodplain along the Carmel River. The entirety of CSA 50 receives a flood risk reduction benefit from the CRFREE Project, including a reduction in 100-year flood elevation levels of up to two feet. Over 150 properties will be removed from the 100-year floodplain in their entirety following the CRFREE Project completion. Key aspects of the CRFREE Project are to: 1) Create notches in the levees along the south bank of the lower Carmel River, 2) Restore the south lower Carmel River floodplain, and 3) Build a causeway along Highway 1, restoring connectivity between the lower Carmel River Floodplain and the south arm of the Carmel Lagoon. Completion of the CRFREE Project is projected by mid-2027 if construction is able to begin in 2025.

The Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) is managing the CRFREE project and is coordinating with the landowners Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, California State Parks, Big Sur Land Trust, and the Clinton Eastwood, Jr., Trustee of the 1988 Clinton Eastwood Trust U/D/T dated May 16, 1988, as to an undivided 1/2 interest, and Margaret Eastwood, as Trustee of the Margaret Eastwood Trust U/D/T dated August 21, 1990, as to an undivided 1/2 interest ('Eastwood family trust') to complete a long-term maintenance agreement (LTMA) for various CRFREE project components. That LTMA will be presented to the Board in late 2023. One of the LTMA components involves Maintained Flood Conveyance Areas (MFCAs) to ensure that these areas provide anticipated flood reduction benefits (See Attachment A).

Long term maintenance needs for flood conveyance include maintaining approximately 35 acres of flood

conveyance channels. Actions involve mowing the grassland habitat, clearing the causeway opening, and pruning/clearing levee notches. It is crucial to CSA 50's flood risk reduction that the MFCAs receive appropriate maintenance to maintain the flood conveyance capacity as designed. This will require regular (annual or bi-annual) mowing to prevent the colonization of woody plants in the flood conveyance channels. The planting in the flood conveyance channels will be mixed native grasses. Trees may repopulate in the flood conveyance channels, but frequent mowing will help keep this to a minimum. Mowing is anticipated to be needed at most every Spring and Fall (twice per year). In the event mowing is needed and/or needed more than twice per year, landowners could notify the County of the need to mow, and the County could utilize on-call mowing contractors or procure contractors through the Request for Proposals Process (RFP). The cost of annual mowing, pruning, and biological monitoring is estimated at approximately \$30,000 per year which includes mowing within the flood conveyance channels twice per year. The earliest year to begin mowing is anticipated to be Spring 2026.

On April 5, 2023, staff from HCD and Public Works, Facilities and Parks (PWFP) provided an update to the CSA 50 Advisory Committee on the CRFREE project and recommended that the Committee support use of CSA 50 funds to provide maintenance of the MFCAs. The CSA 50 Advisory Committee concurred with staff's recommendation. Accordingly, PWFP staff recommends Board of Supervisor's approval to use CSA50 funds for this ongoing maintenance effort. The CSA 50 budget has sufficient funding, and this will be included in future annual CSA 50 budgets.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Environmental review is complete for the CRFREE Project. The Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified by the Board during a public hearing on January 20, 2020. The CRFREE Project was subsequently approved by the Board on June 15, 2021. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as lead federal agency for the floodplain restoration portion of the Project, issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on October 30, 2020. Caltrans, as the lead federal agency for the causeway portion of the Project, issued a FONSI on April 23, 2021. Federal environmental review was complete when Caltrans concurred with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and issued a FONSI on April 23, 2021.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

On April 5, 2023, staff from HCD and Public Works, Facilities and Parks (PWFP) provided an update to the CSA 50 Advisory Committee on the CRFREE project and recommended that the Committee support use of CSA 50 funds to provide maintenance of the MFCAs. The CSA 50 Advisory Committee concurred with staff's recommendation. The Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) is co-sponsor for the CRFREE Project. Through a cooperative agreement with Caltrans, the County of Monterey is acting as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act for the Project. The landowners of the CRFREE Project area include BSLT, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, as well as the Eastwood Family Trust and the California Department of Transportation.

FINANCING:

Based on the November 2022 90% Design Engineer's estimate, CRFREE is expected to cost approximately \$55.6 million to complete the final design, construction, and restoration efforts, and will be entirely grant funded. Maintenance of the MFCAs estimated at \$30,000 shall be financed by CSA 50 Fund 077-3200-8566-PFP031 (Attachment B).

The cost of annual mowing, pruning, and biological monitoring of the MCFAs is estimated at approximately \$30,000 per year which includes mowing within the flood conveyance channels twice per year. The earliest

year to begin mowing is anticipated to be Spring 2025. The CSA 50 budget has sufficient funding to cover annual costs of approximately \$30,000 per year. This amount will be included in future annual CSA 50 budgets.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

If approved, this action supports the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Initiatives for Administration and Infrastructure. The Project will provide sustainable physical infrastructure and associated flood risk reduction and habitat benefits to promote the safety of area residents and visitors.

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

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Reviewed by: Tom Moss, PG, Senior Water Resources Hydrologist

Approved by: Randell Ishii, MS, PE, TE, PTOE, Director Public Works, Facilities and Parks

The following attachments are on file with the Clerk of the Board:

Attachment A - CRFREE Maintained Flood Conveyance Areas (MFCAs) Map

Attachment B - CSA 50 FY 2022-23 Budget