



County of Monterey Planning Commission

Item No.5

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

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March 12, 2025

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REFERRAL 22.7 - PAJARO RIVER LEVEE IMPROVEMENTS AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

- a. Consider receiving an update from the Pajaro River Flood Management Agency regarding repair and improvements to the Pajaro River Levee;
- b. Consider receiving an update from staff regarding the Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning.
- c. Provide direction to staff.

Project Location: North County Inland Area (Pajaro Community)

Proposed CEQA action: Statutory Exemption pursuant to Section 15262 of the CEQA.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive a status update from the Pajaro River Flood Management Agency regarding repair and improvements to the Pajaro River Levee;
- b. Receive a status update from staff regarding the Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning.
- c. Provide direction to staff.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION

This report provides updates regarding Planning Commission Referrals No. 22.7 (Pajaro River Levee Improvements and Recovery efforts) since the previous quarterly report provided to the Planning Commission on December 11, 2024 (PC File # 24-120).

Pajaro River Levee Repairs and Improvements

Staff received the following updated information from the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) regarding Pajaro River Levee repair and improvements.

Reach 6:

PRFMA is in ownership of the three full fee take of the residential and business parcel acquisitions necessary for the Project within Reach 6. Two of the three parcels have been demolished and readied for construction of the new levee and floodwall system: 2215 East Lake Avenue and 290 Green Valley Road, Watsonville. PRFMA Staff anticipates that 2233 East Lake Avenue will be demolished in approximately 3 weeks. In order for the USACE to perform construction in other agricultural areas in Reach 6, additional soil testing for remnant and legacy pesticides, as well as for hazardous waste, will be performed to certify that PRFMA is providing the necessary Project LERRDs (Lands, Easements, Rights-of-Way, Relocations, and Disposals) under the Project Partnership Agreement (PPA).

PRFMA staff are working towards legal possession and signing of purchase and sale agreements with owners of agricultural properties that PRFMA has not yet acquired. Staff anticipates securing legal possession of all parcels and rights required for Reach 6 to satisfy LERRDs certification requirements with USACE by the beginning of March 2025.

Reaches 5, 4, and 2/3:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is fast-tracking design of the remainder of the Project, which includes design (in order of implementation) for Reaches 5, 4, and 2/3 (combined). Reach 5 is currently at 30% design. The USACE has hired a new consultant team to take the Reach 5 30% designs to 100% over the next 1-2 years. The new consultant team is scheduling the completion of 60% designs for Spring 2025. In order to support the design and construction of Reach 5, cultural resource surveys and consultation with tribes will be required, as was done for Reach 6.

Simultaneously, the USACE will be designing Reach 4 in-house, including making modifications to the so-called “tie-back levee” which connects a shortened levee setback improvement along the Monterey County side of the Pajaro River to high ground along the southern periphery of the floodplain. Several alternative configurations for the tie-back levee will be developed, analyzed, and designed, with the objective being to avoid facility intersection with San Juan Road and the Union Pacific Railroad track alignment and right-of-way, as well as to protect more area of floodplain. Lastly, USACE will be developing another consultant contract in early 2025 to conduct the design of Reaches 2 and 3 combined.

Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning

The County, working through the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), continues a Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning effort to support the community’s needs and vision for a resilient and sustainable recovery. HCD staff will continue to participate in the recovery planning Pajaro Revitalization Committee meetings as needed. The Pajaro Revitalization Committee brings together a broad coalition of resident leaders, organizations, and agencies to take a collaborative approach critical to developing a comprehensive and effective recovery plan.

As of February 2025, The Department of Emergency Management continues to support Pajaro residents impacted by the 2023 flooding and funded by state monies. The Pajaro Disaster Assistance Program is comprised of two phases: Phase 1: Evacuation Food Spoilage; and Phase 2: Unmet Needs for Flood Recovery. Phase 1 has now been completed and successfully distributed \$450,000+ in financial assistance. Phase 2 continues underway, and applications are constantly being processed for applicants who are eligible. Residents who have begun the Phase 2 process are encouraged to continue to work with and connect with their assigned caseworker. A Pajaro Recovery webpage which provides residents key information on steps to take to apply for funding and the steps for tracking the status of a submitted application accessible at <https://www.readymontereycounty.org/recover/pajaro-recovery>.

The Pajaro Recovery webpage also offers a list of projects funded part of the Pajaro long-term recovery plan as approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 6th, 2023 (Board File # RES 23-212). The projects on the webpage list the funding allocated to each project and designates one of the following statuses: In Progress, Under Development, Pipeline or Uninitiated. The Pajaro Recovery webpage and general County of Monterey Emergency Readiness, Response, and Recovery can be

found at readymontereycounty.org and is offered in both English and Spanish.

Projects In Progress:

The County has allocated \$1,200,000 funding for Pajaro Park repairs/ replacements as part of the Board approved list of projects, which may include the replacement of the artificial turf field, playground refurbishment, and/or replacement or addition of benches, tables, and/or park infrastructure and equipment. On February 18, 2025, the County has executed an agreement between the County and the Pajaro Sunny Mesa Community Services District (PSMCS D) for the completion of repairs/replacements at Pajaro Park.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This report is Statutorily Exempt pursuant to Section 15262 of the CEQA Guidelines as an early discussion of possible future actions that do not involve a commitment to a project. The Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan will require a CEQA determination prior to adoption.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Multiple County departments are involved in the long-term recovery planning efforts in Pajaro: Department of Emergency Management is leading these efforts; Health Department's Environmental Health Bureau and its Planning, Evaluation and Policy Unit; Civil Rights Office; County Administrative Office's Sustainability Program and Office of Community Engagement and Strategic Advocacy; and the Public Works, Facilities and Parks Department.

PRFMA is a joint powers authority which includes membership by the County of Monterey and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency. PRFMA was formed in 2021 to plan, finance and implement projects and programs to reduce flood risk from the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties.

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cc: Monterey County Department of Emergency Management, Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau, Monterey County Civil Rights Office, Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers, Monterey County District 3, Monterey County District 2