



# County of Monterey Planning Commission

Item No.4

## Agenda Item No. 4

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

Legistar File Number: PC 24-120

December 11, 2024

Introduced: 11/26/2024

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: Planning Item

### **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 September 25, 2024 (PC File # 24-103).

#### *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.

#### River Mile 8-10 Levee Rehabilitation Project,

PRFMA has completed the River Mile 8-10 Levee Rehabilitation project which introduced free, high-quality levee material to the upper segment of the Monterey County side levee, above the town of Pajaro, and restored the levee crown and side slopes to their original configuration, with substantial improvements to the material quality. The partial levee restoration work of the Pajaro River Monterey County River Mile 8 - 10 Levee Project is meant to be an interim solution that is expected to provide a design life of roughly 5 -10 years and a cost saving measure. In contrast, during the 2023 winter storms PRFMA installed a temporary “muscle wall” along the levee. The wall had to be removed after each winter making it an unsustainable solution, since installation and demobilization together cost approximately \$400,000. The River Mile 8-10 project will ensure that no part of the levee will remain open or vulnerable before the rainy season begins until the more permanent Pajaro River at

Watsonville project is implemented. PRFMA expects the authorized levee reconstruction project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Pajaro River at Watsonville Project) will afford the adjacent Monterey County floodplain, including the Town of Pajaro, protection against the so called “100 year flood” or 1% Annual Chance Exceedance event.

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. Residential relocations at these parcels are now complete and business relocation is ongoing but proceeding in an amicable and constructive fashion. While the vacant residential structures remain attractive nuisances to the homeless population, security patrols will continue at a reduced rate to ensure neighborhood safety. Demolition awaits environmental Phase I site assessment results which will inform PRFMA of what steps it must lawfully take to demolish and dispose of the structures safely and legally. PRFMA staff remain in negotiation with several of the agricultural parcels and are working with owners to relocate wells that fall within the construction footprint of Reach 6. Simultaneously, staff and consultants are working with PG&E to relocate their utilities. USACE has also been engaged with PG&E to ensure the utilities are moved in time for construction. Early construction activities required in advance of earthmoving began on October 2nd and will continue to occur this fall, including demolition of structures remaining on full fee take parcels, removal and limbing of trees within the construction footprint, and relocation of agricultural wells within the construction footprint. Unforeseen field conditions, including large amounts of partially buried trash and agricultural debris as well as fallen trees submerged beneath floodplain bramble (both poison oak and invasive Himalayan blackberry) have complicated the vegetation removal process. The contractor has adapted to these complications without schedule delay, but extra resources were required to remove this debris and to properly dispose of the trash, metals, and other agricultural debris.

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. 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 November 2024, 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. To date, under \$1.4 million out of \$10 million had been distributed to residents and businesses. The next formal update on the spending is scheduled for the January board of supervisors meeting. 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](http://readymontereycounty.org) and is offered in both English and Spanish.

#### 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.