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California Environmental Protection Agency

# NEWS RELEASE

**State Water Resources Control Board**

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## **WATER BOARD LOAN TO HELP NAPA RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT, EASE FLOOD THREAT**

SACRAMENTO -- The State Water Resources Control Board has approved a \$34 million, five-year loan from the State Revolving Fund to the Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The money will be used to help fund a unique, \$195 million dollar restoration project for the Napa River.

The four-phase project will involve seven miles of river and about 1,000 of acres of land which will be returned to a more natural state, enhancing the water quality (the Napa River is an impaired waterway due to sedimentation, nutrients and bacteria), improving wildlife habitat and improving flood protection. Additionally, some levees will be removed all the way to San Pablo Bay.

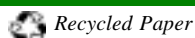
“This is an innovative approach to restoring this river’s health and improving flood control,” said James Stubchaer, chairman of the State Water Resources Control Board. “The Board is proud to be a part of the project by providing a low cost loan.”

The project is one of the first of its kind in the country and the first for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for flood control. Previous solutions offered by the Corps involved conventional flood control methods such as deepening the river channels, strengthening levees and banks, or regular dredging. The Corps will be a major player in allowing the river to reclaim its natural overflow areas. Project crews will remove channels, rip-rap and levees, raise and lengthen bridges that currently impeded high water flows, move or remove more than 60 structures, restore tidal marshes, reforest riverbanks, and create more and improved wildlife habitat.

By allowing the river to flood naturally onto its flood plain, the City of Napa should see a marked reduction in flood levels. When the project is completed, the city will have the benchmark 100-year flood protection offering safety and protection for the 10,000 residents, 2,700 residential units and 350 industrial, commercial and government structures. Previous flooding

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has caused more than \$500 million worth of damage in the last 40 years. The Napa River has flooded almost 30 times during the last century, most recently in 1995 and 1997. The restoration project is an innovative alternative to the traditional flood protection in place on the river, protection that has frequently proved inadequate during wet periods.

Actual construction on the restoration project is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2000. The project is expected to take five to seven years to complete.

In March of last year, voters in Napa County approved a sales tax increase to repay the state loan. The tax increase and proceeds from sales tax revenue bonds from the private market will provide the required \$85 million local share of the project.

The State Revolving Fund is a low-cost loan and grant fund administered by the State Water Resources Control Board. The project meets the criteria for a SRF loan for water quality and estuary enhancement in several ways. The project will create a more efficient system of nutrient removal. Runoff will be filtered through wetlands and marshes which will remove pollutants before the water reaches the river. The estuary will be enhanced and expanded when the levee system is removed, and no longer separates the river from its flood plain.

In addition to the agencies named above, the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Coastal Conservancy, CalFed, and the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board are participants in the project.

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