

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT (Leslie Ferguson)
MEETING DATE: March 9, 2011

ITEM: 9

SUBJECT: **Update on the Napa River/Napa Creek Flood Protection Project in Napa, Napa County – Information Item**

DISCUSSION: *Living River Design:* The City of Napa has experienced 27 major floods in the past 120 years, including 4 since 1990 alone. These have often resulted in extensive loss of property and occasional loss of life. To address the annual flood threat, the Napa River/Napa Creek Flood Protection Project (Project) was developed through a two-year community-wide coalition process, coordinated by the Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District). The Community Coalition was a cooperative process among a broad group of stakeholders consisting of residents, businesses, political and community leaders, and environmental agencies, which resulted in a “Living River” design that was approved by over two-thirds of voters in a county-wide 1998 sales tax election. The “Living River” design is a non-traditional flood management approach that seeks to combine flood protection with wetland restoration and reconnection of the Napa River to its historic floodplain.

Project Purpose: The Project’s primary purpose is to provide an economically-feasible and environmentally-sensitive means to protect the City of Napa from the 100-year flood event. The Project is being jointly implemented by the District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). It focuses on the 6.9 mile reach of the Napa River from the north side of the City south to the Highway 29 bridge, and on the 0.67 mile reach of Napa Creek that joins the Napa River in downtown Napa. The Project is designed to achieve flood protection and ecosystem restoration by using environmentally-beneficial methods, such as the creation of wetlands, marshplains and floodplain terraces, the use of setback levees, bypass channels, and biotechnical bank stabilization, the remediation of petroleum-contaminated riverbank sites along Oil Company Road, and the selective removal of existing levees and use of open space as the floodway. Total project costs are estimated to be \$430 million.

Project Implementation: Construction began in 2000, and to date the Project has created and enhanced 977 acres of wetlands and mudflats and almost four miles of tidal marshplains and floodplain terraces. Also, at the Project’s southern end, setback levees have been constructed and over two miles of recreational trails have been created. The Project has also demolished and re-constructed four major roadway bridges and two pedestrian bridges that previously constricted flood flows.

In 2008, the Project’s downtown area, which incorporates urban amenities into flood protection features such as a river front promenade and a summer outdoor amphitheater that is allowed to flood in high water, received the American Public Works Association Project of the Year Award. Currently, with two major construction efforts underway on Napa Creek and the Wine Train Bridge Relocation, the Project is approaching 75%

completion. The final phase of the Project, estimated to be complete in 2016, includes the construction of the Oxbow dry bypass and the completion of floodwalls and pump stations. However, Project completion will be delayed if sufficient federal funding is not allocated.

Board Involvement: The Board and its staff have been integrally involved in the Project since its inception. Board staff were invited by the Community Coalition in the mid-90s to co-chair the Geomorphic, Water Quality, and Habitat Committee that created the “Living River Guidelines”. These Guidelines have served as the environmental blueprint for the Project, both in initial and on-going design stages. The Board approved Waste Discharge Requirements in September 1999 for the general Project design and, in subsequent orders, approved cleanup of petroleum-contaminated sites within the Project’s footprint, which has resulted in removal of over a quarter-million cubic yards of petroleum-contaminated soil in the Oil Company Road area. In 2004, the District received a Proclamation of Appreciation from the Board for accelerated remediation of this contamination. In 2006, the Board adopted a resolution requesting that the Corps confer the designation of “Nationally Significant” to the Project in a nationwide competition for this designation and its associated funding. While the Project did not receive this designation, in 2009, the Project received an award of \$99.5 million, the largest sum of federal stimulus funds awarded nationally for the Corps Civil Works Program at that time.

Throughout the Project, Board staff in the Watershed, Planning and Toxics divisions have continued to work closely with the District and Corps providing Project design, implementation and maintenance oversight. Board staff have formed an ad-hoc work group with other agencies to jointly review and oversee the Project to efficiently insure that the planned environmental benefits are realized, without causing unnecessary delays due to overlapping jurisdictions. Recently, a two-year design process for the Napa Creek segment of the Project was completed, and the Oxbow dry bypass design and long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) plan are currently being revised in response to the work group’s comments. Additionally, Board staff in the Toxics Division provide continued oversight of groundwater monitoring in the Oil Company Road area and insure proper disposal of excavated soil.

Next Steps: While the majority of the Project’s environmental features have been successfully implemented, Board staff are working with the District, environmental agencies and the Corps to resolve a few outstanding concerns including: unexpected erosion of the River’s west bank and potential loss of future riparian habitat; development of grasslands in some locations intended to develop seasonal wetlands; implementation of vegetation requirements near floodwalls, levees and berms; and development of O&M procedures and policies that protect the Project’s environmental features.

RECOMMEN-
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No action is necessary at this time.