

SAN DIEGO FLOODSAFE WORKSHOP SUMMARY

JULY 10, 2008

OVERVIEW

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) FloodSAFE California Program sponsored a series of workshops to present information on the FloodSAFE Strategic Plan and related projects and regulations. Eight meetings were held throughout the State: four within the Central Valley and four outside the Central Valley. The San Diego workshop was held on July 10, 2008. The workshop agenda included:

- FloodSAFE Program Update
- Federal Flood Control Subventions Program Regulations Update
- Discussion

FloodSAFE PROGRAM UPDATE

Ken Kirby, Executive Advisor to DWR, presented highlights of the FloodSAFE Program and public review draft Strategic Plan. Key elements of the Strategic Plan include: a vision statement, goals, foundational and near-term objectives, guiding principles, implementing partners and stakeholders, and an implementation framework. These key elements support the four action areas for the FloodSAFE program:

- improve emergency response
- inform and assist the public
- improve flood management systems
- improve operation and maintenance

In seeking to provide the multiple benefits outlined in the FloodSAFE vision, policy decision-makers and flood management professionals must consider and balance the outcomes identified in the FloodSAFE program goals:

- reduce the chance of flooding
- reduce the consequences of flooding
- sustain economic growth
- protect and enhance ecosystems
- promote sustainability

Twelve foundational, longer-term objectives and ten near-term objectives create an action plan for achieving those goals. To maximize the effectiveness of flood management decisions and investments, proposals must be considered in the context of the guiding principles, which promote: system-wide approaches, multiple benefits, integration with land-use and regional planning, natural processes and functions, equitable access to decision-making, informed understanding of flood risks, and adaptation to climate change.

The FloodSAFE program overview included a discussion of flood risk, defined by both the likelihood (probability) of flooding and the consequences of flooding. Through FloodSAFE program components and local actions, flood risk can be significantly reduced; however, some residual risk will always exist (no matter how small it may be). Residual risk represents the possibility of flood events that exceed the capacity of flood management systems.

The presentation also included bond funding allocations. Much of the bond funding is dedicated to the Central Valley due to legislative emphasis on the State-federal flood control system in the Central Valley and the Delta. In addition to geographic boundaries, FloodSAFE priorities are also tied to land use categories, such as urban and urbanizing areas, non-urban areas, and broad, system-wide areas that include complex land-use and/or environmental considerations. The FloodSAFE team is continuing to develop additional guidelines on investment strategies and cost-sharing approaches.

Also discussed were recent accomplishments in the FloodSAFE program including improvements in DWR's emergency response capabilities, early implementation projects, and other programs to evaluate and improve flood management systems, channel maintenance, and workshops and public outreach materials. Lastly, near-term future activities were discussed, including completion of the Strategic Plan. Workshop participants were invited to submit comments on the Strategic Plan through July 25, 2008.

SAN DIEGO FLOODSAFE WORKSHOP SUMMARY
JULY 10, 2008

SUBVENTIONS

Terri Wegener, Statewide Grants Branch Chief, recapped the Federal Flood Control Subventions Program. This program reimburses local agencies for a portion of the non-federal costs associated with federally authorized flood control projects, including watershed protection flood prevention projects administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Traditionally, the program has reimbursed for a base 50% of the non-federal costs. As a result of Assembly Bill (AB) 1147, an additional 20% (for a total of 70% of non-federal costs) can be granted for projects that increase or enhance the level of protection for:

- habitat
- open space
- recreation
- impoverished areas
- state transportation and water supply facilities

Implementing regulations for AB 1147 are currently being developed, and workshop participants were invited to submit comments on the proposed regulations by July 28, 2008.

DISCUSSION

Scope of Strategic Plan

Q: Is mitigation banking a statewide effort that all agencies could tap into?

A: Currently, the emphasis is on the Central Valley. A pilot banking program was under development by Caltrans; this could perhaps expand into a statewide program.

A: This program is for environmental mitigation for areas disturbed by levee improvements, where an area of land, equal to the amount damaged, is improved or preserved. The focus is on Delta or riparian habitat and purchasing areas for restoration or preservation.

Q: Is it the Corps [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers] that designs, builds, and certifies the levees?

A: Levees can be designed and/or built by the Corps, the State, or private entities. Per the National Flood Insurance Program, a Registered Professional Engineer or a federal agency with responsibility for levee design (e.g., the Corps) can certify levees.

Q: Will you have to coordinate with the California Coastal Commission?

A: Where there are overlapping jurisdictions, which is especially true in the Delta, DWR will coordinate. The Coastal Commission is not a partner in terms of implementing projects, but will need to be consulted.

Q: What would flood fight training be? Would this include sandbagging?

A: Yes, certainly flood fight includes sandbagging, as well as levee patrols, control of levee overtopping, boil repairs, wave-wash protection, and other activities.

Q: Are warning systems a component of flood fight?

A: Warning systems are a component of the overall emergency response system, but are not directly related to flood fight, which generally relates to actions to prevent further physical damage due to floods in threatened areas (e.g., areas where erosion is occurring on levees). Some communities have more defined warning systems than others. Some areas have an automated system. Warnings are broadcast via television, radio, and sheriff departments.

Comment: FEMA has a pre-disaster mitigation program. An easy project is acquisition and demolition of at-risk structures. Relocation is also part of their mitigation program.

Response: Those types of actions are being considered, where appropriate.

Q: How is coastal floodplain management (e.g., Redondo Beach) being considered with FloodSAFE?

A: From a state perspective, we do not know of anyone who is actively working to address coastal flooding. For areas that are potentially vulnerable, local agencies would take the lead. The public, and even the

SAN DIEGO FLOODSAFE WORKSHOP SUMMARY
JULY 10, 2008

legislature, are often not fully aware of flooding risks and consequences until there is a disaster. Hurricane Katrina has focused public attention on levees; to date, there has not been a big emphasis on coastal flooding and flood protection. However, sea-level rise and climate change may bring needed attention to these flood management elements. In addition, a statewide flood management planning program to be led by DWR is expected to include identification and cost estimation of needed investments in flood management, including coastal flood protection.

Q: Does California have areas that are below sea level and protected by levees?

A: Most islands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta are at or below sea-level; a few are greater than 15 feet below sea level. Elsewhere in the Central Valley, some areas are above sea level, but could still see flood depths of 15-20 feet.

Mapping

Q: Are the DWR maps consistent with FEMA floodplains?

A: In some cases, they are exactly the same as FEMA floodplains. There are some variations, due to assumptions made and data available at the time the maps were produced. The DWR maps are for informational purposes; they are not regulatory maps.

Levee Evaluations

Q: Is the documentation database and library only for the State-federal flood protection system?

A: The levee database is a statewide database. Typically, the most comprehensive data has been for the State-federal flood protection system in the Central Valley, but DWR has been working with local levee maintaining agencies and others to obtain information on all levees in California.

Q: Isn't this one of the only comprehensive databases in the nation?

A: Yes, the database covers about 1,400 miles of levees. It builds on the framework created for the national and California levee databases and is augmented with additional information.

Subventions

Q: Federal authorization sometimes takes years. Does the State have a timeline for when the money must be spent?

A: It is a bit more complicated than that; State and federal processes are not directly linked. The State has its own authorization process for subvention projects. The local cost-share can include in-kind contributions or actual construction money. There is a certain level of cash that can be reimbursed, and perhaps some constraints on in-kind contributions. In general, Proposition 1E money must be used within 10 years of bond measure passage. Due to the reimbursement nature of the subventions program, Prop 1E funds are now being expended toward projects that have already been built.

Q: When will the subventions regulations be final? Do they need to be signed by the Governor?

A: After 45 days and assuming no significant public comment, regulations are codified by the Office of Administrative Law.