

SAN JOSE FLOODSAFE WORKSHOP SUMMARY

JUNE 27, 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 Jose workshop was held on June 27, 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 JOSE FLOODSAFE WORKSHOP SUMMARY
JUNE 27, 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

Comment: What is important to my district is protection of levee systems and flood channels. A more challenging issue is taking care of rodent burrows, which affect dam faces and levees. It would be helpful if the State (California Department of Fish and Game [DFG]) supported getting permits. We need to identify approved methods for dealing with those rodents, some of which are state listed, some federally listed.

Response: There will have to be discussions with the Environmental Protection Agency and DFG to find expeditious methods for dealing with rodents as a maintenance consideration.

Q: Are there any interim objectives, other than those for the Central Valley? Are there any for other areas of the State?

A: FloodSAFE is a statewide initiative, so many objectives and guiding principles in the Strategic Plan apply to the entire State. In addition, DWR has initiated a statewide flood management planning effort. As a part of this effort, multiple objectives will be identified and developed at the State and regional levels.

Q: How is flood protection being integrated with watershed protection? San Francisco Bay areas have no engineered levees for protecting Silicon Valley. Sea-level rise impacts could be extreme and would have devastating effects.

A: The current bond language directs the bulk of funding toward the State-federal flood protection system in the Central Valley. The statewide flood management needs assessment could help highlight other priorities. Efforts are underway to integrate flood protection with watershed protection and other water resources management areas. There are also grants available for certain projects, such as the Subventions Program, discussed earlier, the Integrated Regional Water Management Program, and the Flood Protection Corridor Program.

Comment: Additional outreach needs to reach local entities who are putting projects on the ground to address flood management.

Response: DWR will follow up with Ann Draper to expand the FloodSAFE list-serve to include local, Bay Area entities.

SAN JOSE FLOODSAFE WORKSHOP SUMMARY
JUNE 27, 2008

Cost Share

Comment: Consider limitations on localities to raise funds to meet public health and safety objectives. The Prop 218 process is a daunting one; however, flood control projects meet requirements for Prop 218 exclusions regarding public safety.

Q: Have you thought about leveraging and coordinating with federal appropriations? That used to be done through the Water Commission.

A: Coordinating is important for us. DWR and the FloodSAFE program are actively coordinating, matching State bond funding with federal appropriations and local funding wherever possible. As a matter of fact, DWR is launching its own governmental relations program to better support that type of coordination. We are encouraging increased federal authorizations for projects that already have some federal authorization but do not have sufficient federal funding, and we are working to establish cost-sharing, new federal authorizations, and feasibility studies for projects that may include a federal interest.

Mapping

Q: How will DWR maps affect the Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] flood insurance program?

A: The information that is gathered could be submitted to FEMA during their map revision process, thereby impacting flood insurance rate maps. DWR is working with FEMA to coordinate the mapping updates.

Subventions

Q: What can the statewide pot of funding be used for? What type of work products can be applied for?

A: The majority of funding needs to go to on-the-ground projects. The funding is not available for maintenance or studies.

Q: Will there be 2008-09 competitive grants for early implementation projects? Are there any changes in the requirements relative to the previous cycle?

A: The FloodSAFE program is working on that now, and we want to make funding available as soon as possible. The grants selection process will be looking at tiered approaches that are conducive to the 200-year level of flood protection for urban areas in the Central Valley.