

RUTHRAUFF BASIN MANAGEMENT PLAN

OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY: Prepared by Lori Lantz from Gordley Group with edits by Chuck Williams from Stantec and Evan Canfield from the Pima County Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) - finalized 12-22-14 allowing two weeks following the meeting for comment forms to be mailed.

LOCATION: Ellie Towne Flowing Wells Community Center Multipurpose Room

DATE: Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014

TIME: 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

PROJECT TEAM

Evan Canfield, Project Manager, RFCD
Mindy Cox, Pima County RFCD
Terry Hendricks, Pima County RFCD
Akitsu Kimoto, Pima County RFCD
Francisco Ramirez, Pima County RFCD
Julie Simon, Pima County Department of Transportation
Diane Luber, Pima County Communications
Jason Green, City of Tucson Planning & Development
Jim Vogelsberg, City of Tucson Planning & Development
John Wise, Project Manager, Stantec Consulting
Janice Mock, Stantec
Sandy Steichen, Stantec
Chuck Williams, Stantec
Jan Gordley, Gordley Group
Lori Lantz, Gordley Group
Ian Sharp, JE Fuller
John Wallace, JE Fuller

Overview

Pima County Regional Flood Control District held a public meeting on Thursday, Dec. 4 at Ellie Towne Flowing Wells Community Center, 1660 W. Ruthrauff Road, Tucson, Ariz. The purpose of the meeting was to inform stakeholders about the Ruthrauff Basin Management Plan project and receive input about areas of concern and suggestions. About 46 members of the public attended. 14 comment forms were received from the public between Dec. 4 and Dec. 18.

Meeting Format, Materials and Presentation

At the public meeting, participants were provided an agenda, project information sheet, comment form, frequently asked questions and news release. Participants were asked to:

- Sign in.
- Fill out and leave completed comment forms at the meeting or send them in by Dec. 18, 2014 to be included in the meeting summary.
- Proceed to the tables with displays of aerial maps of County or City project areas to indicate property location, areas of concern, and discuss with team members.

Staffed information stations with aerial plan-view maps were provided on tables, to allow participants to ask questions specific to the location of their concern. Participants were encouraged to view the displays, ask questions and provide feedback. Tables included Pima County, City of Tucson, and Floodplain Regulation.

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Handouts:

Each participant was provided the following handouts when they entered:

- December 2014 Ruthrauff Basin Management Plan Project Update
- Ruthrauff Basin Management Plan Frequently Asked Questions
- Ruthrauff Basin Management Plan Comments/Concerns Form

Presentation (start at 6:30):

1.) **Introductions and Opening Comments**

Evan Canfield

Evan Canfield opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. He introduced Jeannie Davis, representing Pima County Supervisor Ally Miller from District 1, who expressed support of the flood control program. Because Pima County Regional Flood Control District continues to exceed National Flood Insurance Program requirements, residents who live in a FEMA floodplain are eligible for up to a 25 percent discount on their insurance over other communities. Evan also thanked City Council Member Karin Uhlich and Aide Matt Kopec who was present, and who assisted with a resident's concern about debris in the wash by getting it cleaned up right away.

2.) **Agenda Review and Meeting Purpose**

Chuck Williams

- The project purpose is to develop a comprehensive flood control program, develop cost-effective drainage alternatives and provide a balanced multi-objective approach, as well as provide a basis for implementation cost estimates and phases. These efforts should produce a report that Pima County and City of Tucson can approve and adopt.
- The purpose of this meeting is to inform the public of the project objectives and overview, receive input and identify any other related issues.

3.) **PowerPoint Presentation: Project Overview**

John Wise, Evan Canfield

The project overview included the historical changes in land use leading to changes in water flow and flooding, current areas designated as floodplains, problem areas and drainage complaints. Existing conditions analysis, floodplain mapping and FEMA map review are in process, with public involvement outreach ongoing, and alternatives analysis and remediation forthcoming. The project began in April 2014 and is scheduled for completion in approximately 24 months. The public is being asked to provide input to help identify the problems and suggest solutions.

4.) **Public Involvement/Input (Discussion)**

Chuck Williams, Facilitating

- Comment: When the City and County have road improvements like Prince Road, can you tie in to existing drainage structures that are there now?
 - Response: We are working on this over time. Some roads already have storm drains or culverts. We are conducting existing conditions analysis, which includes generating maps with every known storm drain in this project area. We will use this existing conditions information to understand the system as it is today and how to best utilize any future additions to the system.

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- Comment: Who is a stakeholder?
 - Response: Stakeholders include members of the public, residents, business owners, property owners and agencies such as Arizona Department of Transportation and the railroad. If you own property in the project area, you are considered a stakeholder.

- Comment: If you complain too much, FEMA can put your property in a floodplain. This happened to my property, which made it worthless. I sued the City and eventually I was partially reimbursed when the City bought back the property. Be careful not to complain too much.

- Comment: Why is Tucson Mall not in the project study area?
 - Response: The Tucson Mall is not in the project study for technical reasons. The large areas of buildings create errors in the survey data, which makes it look like there is a 40-foot hole there, so the Mall was taken out of the study.

- Comment: Where does Flowing Wells Wash start and where does it empty out?
 - Response: Flowing Wells Wash begins at the confluence of Cemetery Wash and Navajo Wash near Fairview Avenue, drains under the interstate and into the Santa Cruz River.

- Comment: I have a floodplain on my property. Water flows around my property, which has been elevated, and the neighbors complain that they're going to sue me because water flows onto their property.
 - Response: Part of the study is to collect and evaluate information regarding drainage problems and complaints. Write the information on the comment form so that we can include it and follow up on it.

- Comment: Will this project interfere with the groundwater table for wells in the Flowing Wells Irrigation District and impact water level underground?
 - Response: Most of the recharge for groundwater in regional aquifers is from water infiltrated at the Santa Cruz or Rillito rivers. Evaporation is so great and occurs so fast, water can't get into the aquifers very well. We need to get water into the rivers and into the aquifer. The Flowing Wells Irrigation District has been at previous stakeholder meetings and we will continue to ask for their input in the future.

- Comment: If we are in a basin, where does the basin drain to?
 - Response: From around Campbell Avenue, water drains east to west. About half drains to the north and the Rillito River, while the rest drains westward to the railroad and I-10. Whatever can go under I-10 drains to the Santa Cruz River.

- Comment: What does the project do to prevent flooding on the Rillito and Santa Cruz rivers?
 - Response: We are not evaluating the Rillito and Santa Cruz as part of the study. This study is focused on the area inside these boundaries because there are so many drainage and flooding problems here. Big flooding on the Rillito or Santa Cruz is from lots of regional rainfall and previous improvements have been made on those systems over the years. It will have to rain for hours or days to get this type of flooding.

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- Comment: So in this area are you not concerned about flooding, but rather ‘puddling’?
 - Response: No, we are concerned about flooding within the basin. You don’t have to have 15 feet of water for flooding to cause damages and threats to life. Flooding can be three to four feet in some of these areas, but two feet of water is enough to cause damage and create a flood hazard.
 - Other Audience Member Response: My car was flooded with four feet of water. This is real flooding.

- Comment: There are berms by the railroad that can collect or pond water and cause flooding.
 - Response: We are working to get drainage under the railroad and I-10.

- Comment: Will a culvert be put in at Ruthrauff, like they did at Orange Grove, to help?
 - Response: Along the railroad embankment, ADOT is planning to upgrade the drainage near Ruthrauff Rd as part of the I-10 improvements. This upgrade is planned several years in the future. In other places along Ruthrauff we don’t know yet, since we have not completely identified problems and solutions.

- Comment: Any thought of cleaning the river bottom in the Rillito by dredging?
 - Response: No. We recognize it is a potential problem. We won’t evaluate that option as part of this project, but the Flood Control District is aware of these issues on the Rillito. It is on the radar and we have to look at cost and the amount of sediment that needs to be removed to pass the flow. We have removed sediment from the Rillito following the 2006 flood, and we are evaluating whether we need to do so again.

- Comment: Over 20 years ago I suggested that the County sell sediment in the Rillito to the sand and gravel company or lease the area to them and let them do the dredging and sell the materials.
 - Response: While there is clearly material in the Rillito it may not be profitable for a sand and gravel company to mine it, because it may not be suitable for use.

- Comment: My property is not in any floodplain. I live two blocks from Tucson Mall. Will you take my property out of the study like Tucson Mall?
 - Response: Write this on the comment form and we will answer your question.

- Comment: Does the study just apply to property owners and businesses or are school districts and irrigation districts subject to the same rules? In this area we have the Sun Tran bus yard and the Amphi School District bus yard, and a lot of our flooding seems to have increased.
 - Response: Yes, school districts and other agencies have the same requirements. We have had meetings with them and with political subdivisions. We want this to be a comprehensive study.

- Comment: How is this project coordinated since so much of the flooding is along the railroad and I-10?
 - Response: We have had meetings with Arizona Department of Transportation and will be meeting with the railroad. We will continue to coordinate with them. ADOT has already added culverts and we are looking at more future culverts in the northern area to get water quickly to the Santa Cruz River.

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5.) Summary/Next Steps

Evan Canfield

- Watch for updates on the website and project report document. Go to Pima.gov and search for Ruthrauff Basin.
- If you would like to provide more questions or input, fill out the comment form and mail, fax or email to Evan Canfield.
- Continued stakeholder coordination will include meeting individually and in small groups.
- Production of project maps and reports is ongoing. Good progress is being made on preliminary drafts.
- There will be a future public meeting, tentatively spring of 2016 where we will share information about recommended alternatives.

6.) Adjourn

Evan Canfield

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.