



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 27, 2018

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "CHH", is written over the printed name "C.H. Huckelberry".

Re: **April 19, 2018 Santa Cruz River Capacity Restoration Project Public Meeting**

Attached for your review is an April 26, 2018 memorandum from Suzanne Shields, Director for Regional Flood Control District regarding the comments from the Santa Cruz River Capacity Restoration Project Public Meeting that was held on April 19, 2018.

CHH/mp

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Suzanne Shields, Director for Regional Flood Control District

DATE: April 26, 2018

TO: C. H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

FROM: Suzanne Shields, P.E.
Director

SUBJECT: Comments from Santa Cruz River Capacity Restoration Project Public Meeting

Please find attached comments from the public meeting for Phase 1 of the Santa Cruz River Capacity Restoration Project. This document reflects both the written and verbal comment that were received and have been transcribed as written. Below each comment, in red, are the Regional Flood Control District's responses. Many of the comments were complimentary of the actions the District is taking, and are curious as to whether, and when, similar actions will be taken upstream of this project. There were a few comments requesting consideration of alternatives that avoid having to remove the sediment and the vegetation that is growing on top of it. While the District understands this perspective, in this case, maintenance is necessary.

Not reflected in the public meeting comments is a series of emails that arrived after the meeting. These comments suggested significant concern regarding the speed of the project and the mitigation actions taken. Yesterday, there was a meeting with these concerned stakeholders, Tucson Audubon Society and the Community Water Coalition, regarding both the substance of the mitigation actions, as well as the issues regarding communicating the project details in advance of the public meeting. The District acknowledged the communication problems and agreed to alternative strategies moving forward. It is the District's understanding that the stakeholders understood with the logic and need for the project and mitigation actions, and were satisfied with the thoughtfulness of the project with respect to the impacts during construction, the plan for preservation of quality vegetated areas in the river and the proposed mitigation.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Deputy County Administrator - Public Works
Eric Shepp, P.E., Deputy Director - Regional Flood Control District
Andy Dinauer, P.E., Deputy Director - Regional Flood Control District

Santa Cruz River Capacity Restoration Project
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Comments

(The following comments are transcribed as written)

From: Diana Hadley

This project should now to allow time for more research and refinement of flood control. Can the county consider retention basins and even infiltration possibilities upstream? South of 29th St. the channel is very wide with ample room for multiple basins and a protected bank.

Tucson should for once try to be creative. Follow the example of the Los Angeles River which has done a wonderful job of riparian restoration and improved neighborhoods along some 15 miles of river front.

Response: The Flood Control District is very supportive of alternative strategies that enhance water harvesting opportunities and use the retained runoff to enhance riparian corridors, increase urban canopy, and/or shade streets, parking lots, and buildings. Further, the Flood Control District remains very aware of the potentially competing priorities that our regional watercourses face. In fact, on the Santa Cruz River the District has begun the first phase of a River Management Plan that will address these very issues. The portion of the river that will be discussed and planned is the reach from Grant Road to Trico Road, and there is great opportunity to discuss maintaining and enhancing ecosystem services while ensuring reasonable flood control activities can occur. Even more to your point, the second phase, from the Santa Cruz County Line to the reservation boundary will provide opportunity discuss the value that overbank flows have on flood attenuation, recharge, and riparian habitat.

With respect to the LA River, my understanding is that while river restoration is the goal, it is needs to be compatible with the single most important purpose, flood protection.

From: JoAnne Campbell

In the past 10 years Melrose & Delaware have become a bus thoroughfare for Tucson Unified School District, Az School for Deaf & Blind buses & when gas line repairs occur Caterpillar trucks would go up & down the neighborhood streets. Concerned about project trucks doing this during this project would really hope the lot on Melrose/Speedway would not be for project trucks & Delaware traffic minimized.

Response: This haul route for this project will remain in the river until it reaches the disposal site north of Grant Rd. Project trucks will not use this location for staging.

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From: Patrick J Dooley

I live in Barrio Hollywood just ½ block from the SC River. I am very concerned that the project for sediment removal is not currently going to address our neighborhood. Additionally, I think it important for us to have up-to-date flood maps for our neighborhood & ways to find out if flood insurance would be an issue for us to consider based on the present state of affairs in the SC River as it travels past Barrio Hollywood. A response to this comment is respectfully requested.

Response: This project is the first phase of a larger project that extends from 29th Street to the south to Grant Road to the north. As such, it is anticipated that a grading plan will be prepared for your section of interest from Saint Mary's to Speedway. The timeframe for that phase to occur is likely over a year away. Public notification and public meetings will occur before any action is taken. In addition, because this area is owned by the City of Tucson, their concurrence will be required.

From: Anonymous

Seems ridiculous to show such a small piece of what needs to be looked at comprehensively. Very disappointed to hear that plans "upstream" are the venue of the COT and can't be seen. There should be substantial information, feel again these neighborhoods are collateral.

Response: Same as comment directly above

From: Jose A. Almeida

A lot of debris has accumulated on the southside of the bridge on St. Mary's it looks like a DUMP! On riverbed on southside of St. Mary's Rd. Kids like to play in the riverbed when the floods come it is very dangerous. The banks are very high, they will not have time to get out even if the trash was not there more will be coming. The kids don't believe on the time element. VERY DANGEROUS

Response: Regarding the maintenance of the section at St. Mary's, please see above. Regarding the kids playing in the river, the Flood Control District does outreach regarding the dangers of playing in the washes, especially during monsoon when flash floods can occur. You should be seeing this type of outreach soon as the summer rainy season will soon be here.

From: Anonymous

I'm glad to see plans for native plant restoration with an eye to habitat for native animals. But I'm dismayed at the extreme amount of litter and trash in the river. Maybe we need a new "Litterbug" campaign – in English, Spanish and Native Languages.

Response: Thank you for the acknowledgement. The District finds the amount of debris in the river very distressing as well. Tucson Clean and Beautiful will assist neighborhoods, businesses, churches, and

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other groups in “adopting” watercourses in order to organize single event clean-ups that reduce the amount of litter in the washes.

From: Peter Chesson, TMA President

More effort should be made to allow the river to flood naturally. How about working with the city to find places where wetlands could be constructed to take flood waters? I am strongly opposed to vegetation removal in the Santa Cruz except for invasive species. The proposed removals are environmentally damaging & are not policies that should be followed in the 21st century. Let’s see the Santa Cruz restored, not destroyed.

Response: The Flood Control District agrees with your suggestion that watercourses be allowed to flood naturally and has, over time modified its floodplain management strategy to emphasize non-structural flood control activities. These activities include regulations that require greater setbacks from watercourses, stricter definitions of “no adverse impact”, acquisition of floodprone lands, and updating the comprehensive plan to establish these sensitive areas as area that must be avoided. The infrastructure we are maintaining with this project was designed and built 30 years ago, and we have an obligation to protect the infrastructure as well as the development that relies on the constructed channels existence.

From: Christopher Takenaka

EXCELLENT! Please encourage us homeowners/community to keep trash from clogging the sewers and help keep this endeavor relatively maintenance free 😊

Response: Thank you for your comment. We will continue to discourage people from littering and dumping trash and debris in our region’s watercourses.

From: Anonymous

This should have been done in 1983 before the flood. It would be great if the homeowners could have some kind of suggestions, of how to keep there houses from flooding. (during monsoon rain) Will our taxes go up? Once improvements are made will the County try to move the residents that have lived for generations.

Response: This portion of the bank protection was built after 1983 and was designed to keep the floodwaters in the channel during a flood of that size. The deposition of sediment over time has reduced the capacity of the channel and now there are adjacent structures at risk of flooding. With respect to guidance on how to protect your home from the flooding, the Districts webpage contains these types of materials, please visit http://webcms.pima.gov/government/flood_control/ and click on the Outreach tab. Regarding taxes, this activity should have an impact on the assessed value of your property or the tax rate.

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From: Patrick McKenna – Vice President of Barrio Hollywood Neighborhood Assoc.

- 1) We need to make sure to do outreach to homeless individuals living in river. Coordinate with social service agencies a plan to help homeless living in river prior to project.
- 2) We must have a plan to deal with the wildlife that will be temporarily displaced during the project. (packrats, snakes and squirrels leave the riverbed everytime it floods. We need to ensure Barrio Hollywood is not overcome with rodents.

Response: In advance of flood control projects, the Flood Control District does investigate and inform homeless of the activity. The County has a protocol for engaging the homeless that does include social services. With respect to wildlife, the Flood Control District has hired herpetological experts to collect and relocates lizards and snakes, as well as to identify the location of nesting birds. This will hopefully reduce the number of animal encounters that the neighborhood experiences.

Matt Perri

Constituent expresses his primary concerns of the development, river channeling. Does not want to see soil sampling. I wanted containment. Since the expansion of the channel in 1980s it helped contain the flooding in 1983. It held from flooding here, and took it to Marana. The mitigation of the Santa Cruz River has is approval and the vegetation that will be removed like the Tamarisk trees he is in favor of. Because of different reason like people camping under them, that is not nice. Plus the river is not maintained there is a lot of vegetation there that when dried up is a fire hazard. Another thing of concerns is in the evening people/homeless are sleeping on the path that is for walking/biking/activities, these situations makes it unsafe. However, the removal of the trees and brush helps in preventing fires plus contain the water flow that is good.

Response: Thank you for the comment. While the primary purpose of the project is to restore flood capacity to the channel and reduce flooding, the additional benefits, as you note, are reduced fuel for fires and reduced tree coverage which may reduce the number of homeless that reside in this area.