MEMORANDUM

Date: July 16, 2021

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

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

Re: Trash and Debris Flow from Urban Storm Drains

The recent rains have highlighted an ongoing maintenance problem for the Regional Flood Control District (RFCD), which is the removal of manmade debris and trash from the river system. Often, as storm drains and tributary washes are used by homeless individuals for encampments, the debris left by these uses end up in the major river system, resulting in public complaints regarding trash and debris.

As you can see from the attached July 14, 2021 memorandum from RFCD Director, our resources are primarily concentrated on flood control storm damage related activities. At this time, our priority is cleaning debris on the Loop that is heavily used by the public. It is unlikely we will get to cleaning any of the debris at the bottom of the major river system in the near future.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c: Jan Lesher, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer, Health and Community Services
Suzanne Shields, Director, Regional Flood Control District
TO: C. H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator

FROM: Suzanne Shields, P.E.  
Director

DATE: July 14, 2021

SUBJECT: Debris from Recent Flow Events

With the summer monsoon rains returning after two years of minor rainfall, the amount of trash and debris flowing into our major watercourses from storm drains and culverts is unprecedented. The attached photographs of the Speedway storm drain outlet at the Santa Cruz River show large debris, a sofa, and damage to The Loop pavement and handrail. This area is in the process of being cleared and repaired.

The weekend storms resulted in deposition of trash and debris from the Congress storm drain at the Santa Cruz River, and from Alvernon Wash at the Rillito River. My staff was out evaluating the necessary scope of work to clear the Alvernon Wash debris on July 12, 2021 (see attachment).

Clean up of debris and damages on The Loop used by the public will be given a priority for public safety purposes. However, with continuing rain and flows in the major river channels, cleanup of debris within the channels may be difficult, if not unfeasible due to safety issues.

Because our staff and contractors will also be involved in flood damage repairs and maintenance of flood control and drainage infrastructure, there may not be sufficient resources to handle homeless camp clean up and the debris from storm drains and culverts. Therefore, to address potential resource shortages to deal with debris removal, I will be working with Chris Cawein at Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation and the Department of Corrections to employ prison crews. Mr. Cawein and I will also be working with Communications to issue advisories to the public on use of The Loop during monsoon season.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

SS/tj

Attachments

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator – Public Works  
Chris Cawein, Director – Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation  
Eric Shepp, P.E., Deputy Director – Regional Flood Control District  
Andy Dinauer, P.E., Deputy Director – Regional Flood Control District  
Colby Fryar, Engineer III – Regional Flood Control District  
Mark B. Evans, Director – Communications Office
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Bags and suitcases of clothes scattered in the wash.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito Mattresses and furniture debris under the Alvernon overpass.
Albernon Wash at the Rillito Scattered trash debris north of the Albernon pedestrian bridge.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Scattered trash debris north of the Alvernon pedestrian bridge.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Scattered trash debris north of the Alvernon pedestrian bridge.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Scattered trash debris south of the Alvernon pedestrian bridge.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Scattered trash debris north of Paradise Falls Dr.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Trash debris south of E. Kliendale Rd. culverts.

N 32° 16' 06.78"
W 110° 54' 33.72"
3:40:33 PM 7/12/2021
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Active encampments and debris under E. Farr Pl.

N 32° 15' 58.90"
W 110° 54' 34.32"
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Trash debris under E. Farr Pl.
Alvernon Wash at the Rillito
Active encampment with trash debris S of E. Fort Lowell Rd.
Speedway Storm Drain Outlet at the Santa Cruz River, July 14, 2021