

# Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project



## About PRFMA

The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) is a joint powers authority formed in July 2021 to plan, finance and manage projects and programs to reduce flood risk to the City of Watsonville, the Town of Pajaro, and surrounding agricultural areas. PRFMA's members include the Counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz, the City of Watsonville, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, and the Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Zone No. 7.

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**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

[prfma.org](http://prfma.org)

## About the Project

The Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project will provide 100-year flood protection to the City of Watsonville, the Town of Pajaro, and surrounding agricultural areas by constructing levees and improvements along the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries. The \$461 million project will be managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) and the CA Department of Water Resources. Federal and state agencies are expected to cover 100 percent of project costs.

## Project Need

The City of Watsonville, the town of Pajaro and surrounding agricultural areas face an unacceptably high probability and risk of flooding from the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries.

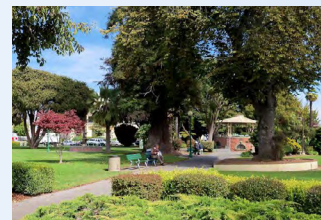
- The existing levees that protect these communities were built in 1949 and have not since been significantly improved.
- Today, these levees provide only an eight-year level of flood protection, among the lowest of any federal flood control system in California.
- A flood in 1995 caused nearly \$100 million in damages and life loss in the town of Pajaro. A nearly identical flood event occurred in March 23 following a levee breach on the Pajaro River. More than 1,700 people were evacuated, including more than 100 emergency rescues. Damages have not yet been quantified.
- The City of Watsonville and the Town of Pajaro – the areas with the highest flood risk – are economically disadvantaged. Per capita income in these communities is less than half the state and national averages.



Town of Pajaro, March 2023. Photo courtesy of CA DWR

## Project Objectives

- Reduce flood risk to human life, safety, homes, local economy and critical infrastructure in the City of Watsonville, Town of Pajaro and surrounding unincorporated lands
- Provide 100-year level of flood protection to the City of Watsonville and the Town of Pajaro
- Reduce local cost burden by maximizing cost-sharing from State, Federal and Non-governmental agencies
- Protect agricultural lands from flood damage
- Provide a vegetated corridor and low flow design to enhance habitat adjacent to the levee and fish passage
- Develop maintenance programs that best ensure the project provides high levels of protection against flooding





# Project Status

- A Project Design Agreement was executed in May 2021, and project pre-construction, engineering and design phase (PED) is underway. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.
- PED was fully funded by the federal government with \$4.6M in Work Plan appropriations. An additional \$149M in federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding has been awarded for project planning and construction.
- The CA Department of Water Resources is funding 100 percent of the non-federal cost share and will provide advanced funding to local agencies to expedite project planning and construction.



**Flood of 2023**



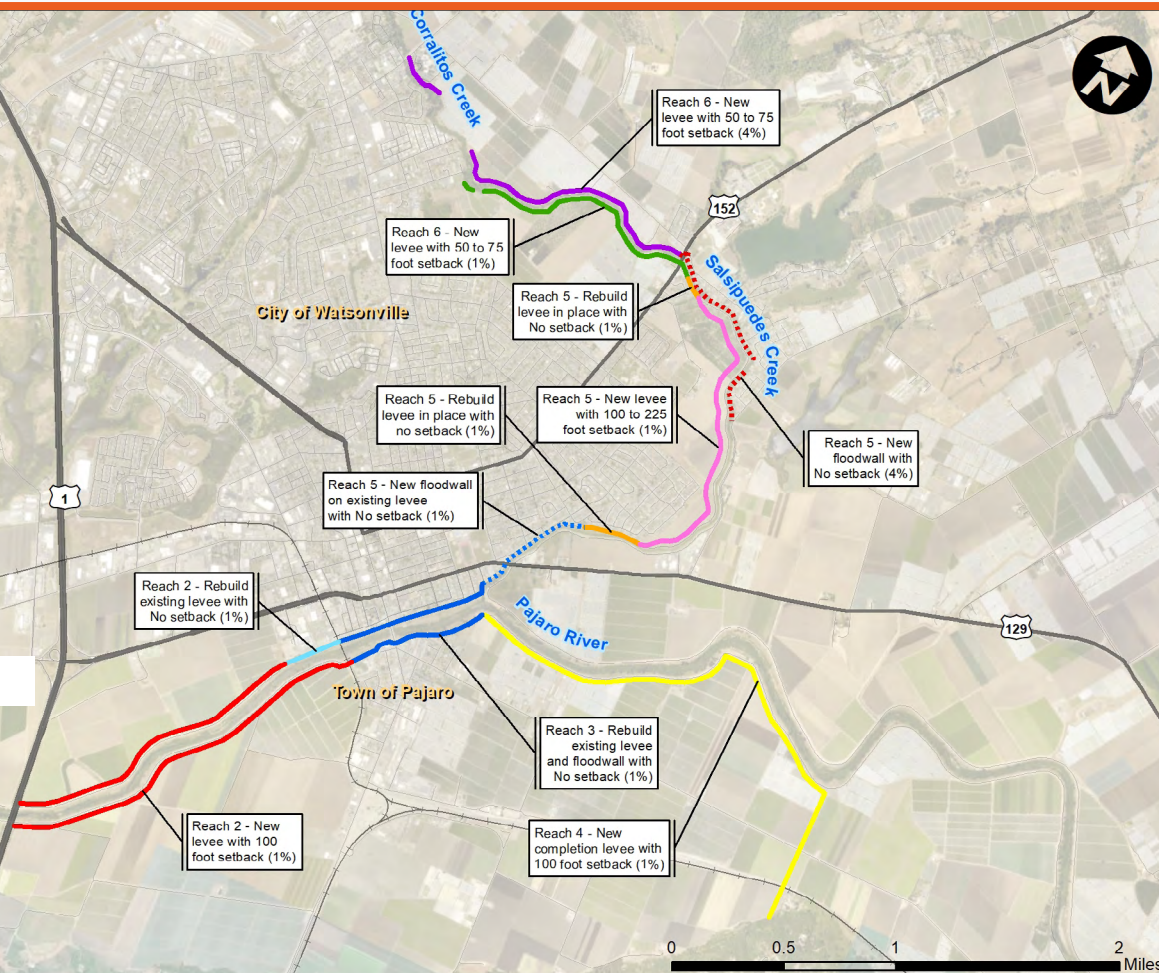
**Flood of 1995**



**Flood of 1997**



**Flood of 1955**



## Fast Facts

### EXISTING LEVEL OF PROTECTION

Approximately 8-year

### PLANNED LEVEL OF PROTECTION

Up to 100-year

### ESTIMATED PROJECT COST

\$599 million

Federal Cost Share: 65 percent

State Cost Share: 35 percent

No local cost share is required, but costs for levee operations and maintenance is a local responsibility.