



NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
PAJARO REGIONAL FLOOD
MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

BUILDING STRONG.

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USACE seeks public comment on Pajaro River environmental document

SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District (USACE) has achieved another key milestone in its efforts to advance construction on the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project. USACE conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). The Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) dated April 2024 for the Pajaro River at Watsonville, California, Reach 6 Flood Risk Management Project addresses design refinements for the authorized flood risk management project along Corralitos Creek in the City of Watsonville. Reach 6 remains on schedule to start construction later this year.

The Reach 6 project involves constructing new setback levees along Corralitos Creek from Green Valley Road to E. Lake Avenue/Highway 152. The Supplemental EA evaluated changes to the design which incorporated site-specific considerations and cost saving measures that were not identified during the original integrated Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project General Reevaluation Report and Environmental Assessment (GRR/EA), dated February 2019 and revised December 2019.

“We are excited that this effort gets us one step closer to construction of this much-needed project,” said Tuta Salaam, USACE San Francisco District Project Manager. “These design refinements include working within the setback levees to design floodplain features that enhance local environmental conditions, while also saving the project money.”

This Supplemental EA evaluates the anticipated environmental effects of the design refinements and identifies measures to avoid or reduce any adverse environmental effects to a less-than-significant level. For some resources, the design refinements did not alter the environmental effects from the evaluation in the GRR/EA and therefore were not evaluated in detail in this Supplemental EA. The design refinements evaluated in this Supplemental EA include:

- Incorporation of floodplain borrow features within the levee setbacks;
- Floodwalls at the upstream and downstream ends of Reach 6;
- Identification of staging areas and haul routes; and,
- Confirmation of vegetation impacts.

“One of the objectives from our perspective is to align traditional levee design and engineering with the natural environment,” said Mark Strudley, Executive Director of the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency, the project’s non-federal sponsor. “Some of the resulting benefits include improvements to salmonid habitat and water quality, and the potential to enhance groundwater recharge. The resulting project will be more resilient and sustainable over the long term.”

The EA will be available for public comments until Friday, May 17, 2024 and can be accessed at the following website: <https://www.spn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Projects-and-Programs/Current-Projects/Pajaro-River-Watsonville/>

A pre-construction community meeting will be held in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency in Watsonville in July 2024. Details will be available at the above link and on www.prfma.org or contact USACE to be added to the distribution list for this information.

Comments and questions about the Reach 6 EA may be sent to Pajaro-River@usace.army.mil.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project will provide 100-year flood protection to the City of Watsonville, Town of Pajaro, and surrounding agricultural areas by construction levees and improvements along the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries. The \$600 million project will be managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency and the CA Department of Water Resources. Federal and state agencies are covering 100 percent of the project costs, a first for California for a project of its kind. PRFMA is responsible for operating and maintaining the flood systems on behalf of its member agencies. Construction is expected to start summer of 2024.

