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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### PRFMA ASSESSMENT APPROVED WITH 79% OF WEIGHTED VOTE

WATSONVILLE, CA – Based on preliminary results of balloting, the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) announced that property owners in portions of Watsonville, Pajaro and surrounding agricultural areas have overwhelmingly approved a benefit assessment for levee operations and maintenance. Official results will be announced at the July 13 PRFMA Board meeting, at which time the Board will consider action to implement the assessment.

Ballot tabulation was completed immediately following Wednesday night’s public hearing on the proposed assessment, with results showing that 79 percent of the weighted ballots returned by property owners were in favor of the benefit assessment. In total, nearly 817 of the approximately 2,400 ballots were returned, or about 34 percent.

“For 70 years, generations of residents in the Pajaro Valley waited for the day when strong flood protection would be a reality,” said Zach Friend, PRFMA Board Chair and Santa Cruz County Supervisor. “With this vote and the monumental efforts to secure funding at the state and federal levels, we have reached that day.”

An affirmative vote from property owners also green lights PRFMA’s plans to take over responsibilities for levee maintenance on behalf of its member agencies. This is expected to improve compliance with federal regulations, create efficiencies and long-term cost savings, and improve emergency response. PRFMA proposed the assessment, which is designed to raise approximately \$1.2 million each year, to close a shortfall between existing and needed revenues for consolidated levee maintenance services.

Passage of the assessment also allows PRFMA to sign state and federal project agreements for the \$400 million Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project. The project – which will be fully funded by the state and federal governments – will improve levees along the Pajaro River and Salsapuedes and Corralito Creeks to provide up to 100-year flood protection for more than 3,000 properties. Once the project is completed, properties will be removed from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area, eliminating requirements for higher-cost flood insurance. Eligibility for state and federal project funding is contingent upon PRFMA’s ability to demonstrate its ability to maintain the levees to federal regulations.

If the benefit assessment is implemented by the PRFMA Board on July 13, assessments will first appear on property tax bills this fall. Property owners with questions can contact PRFMA’s Assessment District Hotline at 831-204-3769 (English), or (831) 204-3000 (Spanish), email [info@prfma.org](mailto:info@prfma.org), or visit [www.prfma.org](http://www.prfma.org).

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*PRFMA was created 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. It is a joint powers authority of 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.*