



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

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FLOOD PROTECTION PROJECT REACHES MAJOR MILESTONE

The County of Santa Cruz and Zone 7 Flood Control and Water Conservation District are pleased to announce a major milestone in efforts to protect the people of the Pajaro Valley from catastrophic flooding.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed an analysis of the project demonstrating a positive cost-benefit ratio, which is key to funding and eventually breaking ground on the project. The analysis included in a Director's Report on the Pajaro Valley Flood Risk Reduction Project frees up state funding for the project and pivots the \$394 million proposal from the planning to the design phase.

"This marks the most significant step in over 50 years toward the levee project becoming a reality. The most vulnerable populations in both counties rely on this levee and we won't stop fighting until this project is fully built," Supervisor Zach Friend said.

"After decades of engaging the Corps of Engineers and trying to meet their requirements, I want to congratulate the County for getting to this significant step in seeing the Pajaro River flood control project become reality," Assemblymember Mark Stone said. "The County has been persistent, flexible and dogged in their advocacy and now benefits from a real light at the end of the tunnel."

"This breakthrough came from collaboration. Collaboration between the counties and with our federal partners. We can see a light where there was none and will work to secure funding with our local, state and federal partners," Santa Cruz County Flood Control Manager Mark Strudley said.

The analysis was presented at a meeting of the regional Pajaro River Watershed Flood Prevention Authority held Friday, Dec. 13. U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta, who has been instrumental in moving the project forward, attended the meeting, as did representatives of jurisdictions impacted by flooding and flood protection along the



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Pajaro River, including those within Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Clara counties.

The goal of the Pajaro River Levee Project is to increase flood protection by rebuilding existing levees, or adding new setback levees or floodwalls in such a way that much larger flood flows can be contained within the Pajaro River channel. In addition to added flood protection, potential benefits include decreased maintenance requirements, improved habitat for endangered species, increased groundwater recharge to improve our local water supplies, and additional recreational opportunities. The project could also benefit homeowners who pay a premium for flood insurance based on the existing risk.