



National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies
2023 Excellence in Communications Award Application
For Projects Started after January 1, 2018, and completed by March 31, 2023
March 31, 2023, 11:59pm EST Deadline for Application Submission

Award Applications can only be submitted electronically at
nafsma2023awards@NAFSMA2022.onmicrosoft.com

If this is a partnered project, please list both entities and contact information for both.

Agency/Company Name _____

Project Name _____

Awards Category _____

Contact Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

For Public Agencies – Service Population: More Than 250,000 Less Than 250,000 (Check One)

For Private Firms – Number of Employees: More Than 30 Less Than 30 (Check One)

Submission Category (Please check below):

1. **Public Awareness of Flooding and/or Flood Prevention and/or Emergency Preparedness**
 - a. Communication Campaign _____ (Check here)
 - b. Individual Item (i.e., one brochure, one radio commercial, one billboard, etc.) _____ (Check here)
2. **Improving Water Quality**
 - a. Communication Campaign _____ (Check here)
 - b. Individual Item (i.e., one brochure, one radio commercial, one billboard, etc.) _____ (Check here)

Online application package should be submitted in one pdf file with agency or company name included in title of pdf file. The application package cannot exceed 5 MB.

Please note that applications for newsletter, brochure flyer or print publication, as well as outdoor category (picture or poster) need to be submitted in print-ready pdf format.

- 1) Completed Application Form
- 2) Project Description, Including Associated Costs of Production and Distribution
- 3) 500 word maximum written explanation of why the submission should be considered
- 4) Provide example of project (brochure (print ready pdf), posters (print ready pdf), radio commercial, video (please provide public available urls)
- 5) Describe the impact, effectiveness, and outcome of the campaign or item (for example, did the campaign result in greater emergency preparedness or improved water quality and how?)
- 6) Measurable metrics on the reach of the campaign or item ((# of participants, people reached, etc.)

I consent that my application submission can be used in Awards Video.

Please contact Dusty Williams: dustyw2015@gmail.com or 951-313-0257; Sunny Simpkins sunnys@nafsma.org or 503-705-4944 with questions.



701 Ocean Street, Rm. 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2807

National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies 2023 Excellence in Communications Award Submission

Project Name: Proposition 218 Election for Levee Operations & Maintenance Funding

Project

Summary: In early 2022, the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) conducted a Proposition 218 election to seek property owner approval for a \$1.2M annual investment to close the gap between existing and needed levee maintenance funding. The associated bilingual public outreach program included a Key Communicators group, mailers, community meetings (online and in person), a hotline, an online assessment calculator, media relations, and presentations to civic business groups. The property assessment was overwhelmingly approved by property owners in June 2022 with 79% of the weighted vote. The outreach increased awareness of and started community discussions about flood risk prior to January 2023 storm events and flooding of the Town of Pajaro (Pajaro) two months later. This awareness was important to the effectiveness of emergency communications during that period.

Project Cost: \$80,000 (consultant time and production/distribution of outreach materials)

The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) plans, finances and manages projects to reduce flood risk to the City of Watsonville, Pajaro, and surrounding agricultural areas. Built in 1949, the levees that protect the communities have not since been significantly improved. Today, they provide only an 8-year level of flood protection, among the lowest of any federal flood control system in California. Although a “fix” was authorized in 1966, the USACE did not identify federal interest in a project until 2019.

A series of Atmospheric Rivers pummeled California’s Central Coast in early 2023, resulting in widespread flood damage. Approximately 3,000 homes neighboring the Corralitos and Salsipuedes Creeks and the lower Pajaro River (Watsonville, Pajaro) were evacuated multiple times over a two-week period. Floodwater overwhelmed senior living communities in Watsonville when Corralitos Creek twice overtopped. The Pajaro River exceeded or neared flood stage three separate times, requiring a 7-day evacuation for Pajaro. Emergency mitigations prevented levee failure and catastrophic flooding. Unfortunately, the worst-case scenario occurred in March 2023 when the force from a nine-year flood event caused a 400-foot-wide breach in the Pajaro River levee upstream of Pajaro. More than 1,700 Pajaro residents were evacuated in the middle of the night, including more than 100 emergency rescues, as floodwaters descended on the community. The 2023 storm events add to the area’s long history of flooding. The first levee occurred in 1955. The flood was nearly identical to one in 1995 that caused approximately \$100 million in damages. Damage-inducing floods also occurred in 1997 and 1998.

In May 2021, a Project Design Agreement was secured for the USACE’s Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project (PRFRMP), a \$461M effort to improve levees along the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries. The project is to be fully funded by the USACE and the CA Department of Water Resources, a first for a project of this type.

Although no local funding match is required, PRFMA engaged its community in early 2022 to raise awareness for flood risk reduction actions. Most notably, PRFMA conducted a Proposition 218 election to seek property owner approval for a \$1.2M annual investment to close the gap between existing and needed levee maintenance funding. The associated bilingual public outreach program included a Key Communicators group, mailers, community meetings (online and in person), a hotline, an online assessment calculator, media relations, and presentations to civic business groups.

The property assessment was overwhelmingly approved by property owners in June 2022 with 79% of the weighted vote. More than half of all property owners returned ballots, which speaks to the impact and reach of the public outreach effort. More importantly, the public outreach program increased awareness of and started community discussions about the need for levee maintenance and the PRFRMP prior to the storm events of 2023. This awareness was important to the effectiveness of emergency communications during that period. Outreach will continue through the recovery process and into the future, as the PRFRMP progresses.



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.

Board of Directors

Luis Alejo
Monterey County Water Resources Agency

Ari Parker
City of Watsonville

Felipe Hernandez
Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation Zone No. 7

Zach Friend
County of Santa Cruz

Glenn Church
County of Monterey

Contact

Mark Strudley, Ph.D.

Executive Director

701 Ocean Street, Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 535-3788

mark.strudley@prfma.org



US Army Corps of Engineers

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 2025.
- 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



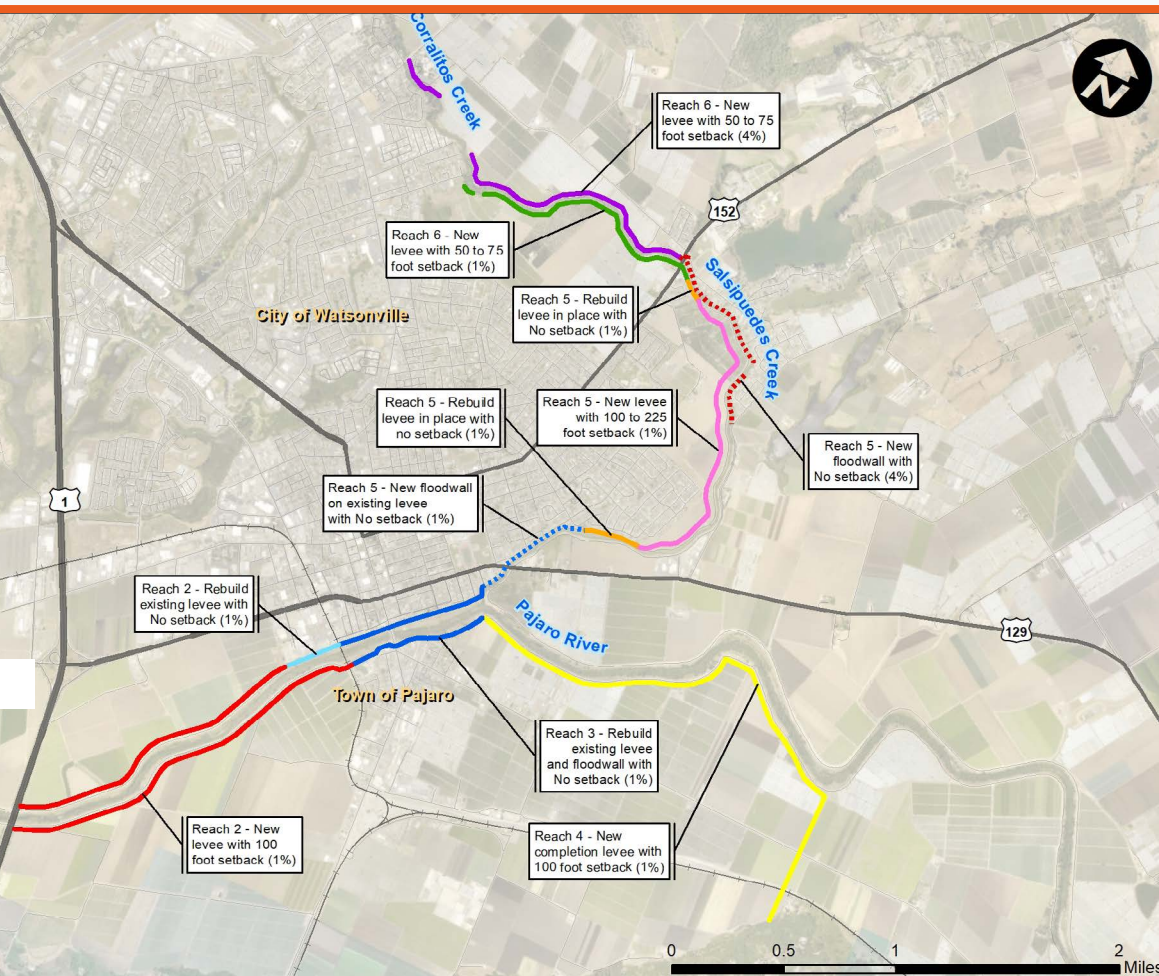
Flood of 1995



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

\$461 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.



**PAJARO REGIONAL
FLOOD MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

701 Ocean Street, Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**Please read to learn more
about proposed assessment
for levee maintenance**

Attend a Community Meeting!

6:30 p.m., Monday, April 18

Civic Plaza Community Room
257 Main St., 4th Floor, Watsonville

Online via ZOOM

6:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 19

Visit www.prfma.org to log in.



Introducing the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency

The Agency 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. The Board of Directors meets monthly and includes one representative from each member agency. Directors are appointed by their respective governing boards/council.

Board of Directors

Luis Alejo
Monterey County Water Resources Agency

Dr. Nancy Bilicich
City of Watsonville

Greg Caput
Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation Zone No. 7

Zach Friend
County of Santa Cruz

John Phillips
County of Monterey

The Agency's mission is to reduce flood risk through projects – such as levee improvements – and by managing levee operations and maintenance on behalf of the counties.

What's Inside

April 2022



Levees that protect Pajaro, Watsonville and surrounding agriculture lands are **old, leaky and could fail**, causing a major flood



Federal and state project **funding will only be granted if the local community agrees** to adequately fund ongoing levee maintenance



Federal and State **governments will pay 100%** of the \$400 million cost to improve the levees



The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency is proposing a **property assessment** to adequately fund levee maintenance



Improved levees will provide up to **100-year flood protection** and reduce risk of flood damages and loss of life



Average proposed assessment for a single-family home is **\$16 per month**



Once improved, properties will be removed from FEMA high-risk flood zones, **ending mandatory flood insurance and associated building restrictions**



**PAJARO REGIONAL
FLOOD MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

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Leaky Levees Need Fixing to Prevent Flooding

The City of Watsonville, the town of Pajaro and surrounding agricultural areas have extreme flood risk from the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks. In fact, portions of these communities are considered high-risk flood zones by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Properties in those zones are subject to mandatory flood insurance and restrictions on improvements.

Construction of the existing federal levee system for the Pajaro River was completed in 1949, but broke twice by 1958. Flooding occurred again in 1982, 1986, 1989, 1995, 1997 and 1998. The 1995 flood caused more than \$95 million in damages and two deaths. Levees nearly broke again in early 2017. **Today, these levees provide only an 8-year level of flood protection, among the lowest in the state.** Flooding is likely in the future if levees are not repaired. A fix is long overdue.



Flood of 1995

\$400 Million Levee Repair Project to be Funded by Feds/State

The USACE, in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency and the CA Department of Water Resources, is starting design for the \$400 million Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project, which will improve levees along the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks. The project will provide up to 100-year flood protection to Watsonville, Pajaro and surrounding agriculture lands. **Once completed, properties will be removed from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area, ending requirements for flood insurance and building restrictions.** The project also benefits properties that aren't covered by flood insurance, as it will significantly reduce the chances of flooding.

Levee Maintenance to be Consolidated Under Agency

The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency plans to take over responsibilities for levee maintenance on behalf of the counties. This will improve compliance with federal regulations, create efficiencies and long-term cost savings, and improve emergency response. The proposed annual budget for levee operations and maintenance is \$3.8 million per year. Existing assessment revenues from Zone 7 (Santa Cruz County) and Zones 1/1A (Monterey County) generate \$2.6 million per year. **The shortfall between existing and needed revenues is \$1.2 million per year.**

Proposed Property Assessment Would Adequately Fund Levee Maintenance

The Board of Directors for the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency will decide whether to ask property owners to vote on a proposed property assessment at its April 13, 2022, meeting. The proposed assessment would close the gap between existing and needed revenues for levee maintenance. **On average, the proposed Single-Family Residential assessment is approximately \$16 per month, or \$193 per year.**



Working Together

The USACE and state have agreed to pay 100 percent of the project's design and construction costs, a first in California. It equals an investment of about \$130,000 for every property that will be protected by the improved levees. **To receive funding, the local community must agree to maintain levees to strict federal regulations.** That means levee maintenance must be adequately funded.



How Proposed Assessments Are Calculated

Under CA Proposition 218 law, only properties that benefit from the Agency's levee maintenance activities can be assessed. The benefit to each property is the avoidance of flood damages to land and structures because of adequate levee maintenance. Each property's assessment is different based on the benefit received. Individual assessments are calculated based on the following factors:

Relative flood risk
(location of property/Benefit Zone)

Land-use type
(e.g. Single-family residential; Commercial; Industrial)

Parcel size
(acreage)

Size of structure
(square footage of building footprint)

Average depth of flooding

Percentage of parcel that is flooded

Calculate your property's assessment online at www.prfma.org/assessment and click on the Assessment Calculator button. Questions? Need help calculating your assessment? Contact us at (831) 204-3769, or info@prfma.org.



CALCULATE YOUR ASSESSMENT

Property Owners Will Vote

Under California law, only property owners within the proposed assessment district boundary are eligible to vote on the proposed assessment. If balloting is approved on April 13, each property owner will receive a ballot by mail. If the assessment is approved, the community remains eligible for \$400 million in state and federal funding for the levee repair project. **If it's not approved, the community will lose eligibility for state and federal funding and the levees will not be repaired.**

What's Next

If balloting is approved by the Board of Directors on April 13, property owners will be sent assessment ballots on April 22. The balloting period will last 45 days, ending with a public hearing and ballot tabulation on Wednesday, June 8. Public hearing details will be included in the ballot package and posted online at www.prfma.org.

Community Meetings

Proposed Assessment for Levee Maintenance

6:30 p.m., Monday, April 18

Civic Plaza Community Room
257 Main St., 4th Floor, Watsonville

Online via ZOOM

6:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 19

Visit www.prfma.org to log in.

Get More Information

Website: www.prfma.org

Email: info@prfma.org

Hotline: **831-204-3769** (English)

Hotline: **831-204-3000** (Spanish)



Frequently Asked Questions

Proposed Assessment for Levee Maintenance & Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project

The State and federal governments will invest \$400 million to improve the old, deficient levees on the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes Creek. To receive funding, however, the local community must promise to maintain levees to strict federal regulations. There is a \$1.2 million annual shortfall between existing and needed revenues to adequately maintain the levees, now and into the future. The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency is proposing an assessment to adequately fund levee operations and maintenance and secure \$400 million in funding for the levee improvements. To follow are frequently asked questions about the project and the proposed assessment.

Why do we need to reduce flood risk?

To protect life, property and the local economy. The City of Watsonville, the town of Pajaro and surrounding agricultural areas face extreme flood risk from the lower Pajaro River and Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks. The federal levees that protect the communities were poorly constructed in 1949 and have broken multiple times since. A flood in 1995 caused nearly \$100 million in damages and life loss. Levees nearly broke again in the storms of early 2017. Flooding in the future is likely unless levees are repaired.

How will we reduce flood risk?

By repairing and properly maintaining levees. The Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project will upgrade levees to provide up to 100-year flood protection to the City of Watsonville, the town of Pajaro and surrounding agricultural land. Ongoing maintenance is required so levees don't weaken and fail. PRFMA is taking over levee operations and maintenance on behalf of the city and counties to provide consistent levels of service and long-term cost savings.

Who is building the project?

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) and the CA Department of Water Resources. The project is in early stages of pre-construction, engineering and design.

What does the project cost?

Approximately \$400 million, but the USACE and state are covering 100 percent of the construction costs.

When will the project be finished?

The project is currently in the preliminary engineering and design phase. Construction is expected to begin in 2025 and will be completed within 8 years.

What's the local cost share for the project?

Nothing. Normally in projects like these, the local community is required to pay a local cost share. In this case, the local cost share would have been \$42 million, making it unaffordable. However, Senate Bill 496 (Laird) authorized the CA Department of Water Resources to cover the local cost share, saving the community tens of millions of dollars.

Why doesn't the USACE and State pay for the maintenance costs as well?

The USACE and State are paying \$400 million for the project. That's an investment of about \$130,000 for each property that will receive reduced flood risk. The costs for levee operations and maintenance always has been, and will continue to be, a local responsibility.

What is "levee operations and maintenance?"

PRFMA is responsible for maintaining the overall flood risk reduction system, which includes 24 miles of levees, 12 miles of channels, 15 pump stations, and 85 culverts. PRFMA will perform both channel maintenance and levee maintenance. Levee maintenance activities (separate from channel maintenance) include – among other things – erosion repairs (rock and rip rap), vegetation management, rodent control, soil compaction, environmental and federal permitting, reporting, and compliance, and patrolling the levees 24/7 when water levels are high.

Why is PRFMA taking over levee operations and maintenance for the counties and city?

To provide long-term cost savings by making services more efficient and consistent. The Agency will also develop a centralized plan to improve flood-related emergency response activities.

Why an assessment for levee operations & maintenance?

To provide adequate revenues for required operations and maintenance activities. The USACE and State will invest \$400 million to construct the project. However, as a condition of federal/state funding agreements, PRFMA must promise that levees will be maintained to strict federal standards and regulations. There is a \$1.2 million annual shortfall between existing and needed revenues to adequately maintain the levees, now and into the future. Proposed assessment revenues will be used to adequately fund levee operations and maintenance.

How much is the assessment?

The average single family residential assessment for levee operations and maintenance is about \$16 per month. Assessments will differ based on property characteristics, like land use type, and relative flood risk.

Who gets to vote on the proposed assessment?

Owners of property within the proposed assessment district boundary. Property owners receive ballots by mail and must return them by mail, or in person.

What happens if the assessment is not approved by property owners?

PRFMA will lose \$400 million in federal and state funding for the project. There is no other funding available for the project, so it could not be constructed. As part of the project funding agreements PRFMA will sign with the USACE and the State, PRFMA must provide assurances that the levees will be maintained to strict federal standards. In this way, the USACE and State can protect their \$400 million investment.

How are assessments calculated?

Under CA Proposition 218 law, only properties that benefit from PRFMA's operations and maintenance activities can be assessed. The benefit to each property is the avoidance of flood damages to land and structures as a result of these services. Individual assessments are calculated based on property characteristics (land use type, acreage, structure type and size) and relative flood risk (based on levee breach and overtopping analysis).

Is the proposed assessment a one-time cost, or is it annual?

The assessment is an annual cost and will be included on property tax bills, if approved by property owners. Properties that don't receive property tax bills will be directly billed by PRFMA.

Will the assessment amount stay the same or increase over time?

The proposed assessment can be increased by no more than 4 percent, or the Consumer Price Index if it is lower. The increase is not automatic and must be approved on an annual basis by the PRFMA Board of Directors.

What about channel maintenance?

Channel maintenance is part of the overall program for flood system maintenance, but it is paid for with revenues from existing Zone 7 and Zones 1/1A assessments. The proposed assessment is specifically to cover the \$1.2 million shortfall between existing and needed revenues for levee maintenance.

Will there be an oversight committee, if the assessment is approved by property owners?

Yes. At its March 9 meeting, the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency Board of Directors asked staff to bring forward a plan for a Citizens' Assessment Oversight Committee to represent the interests of property owners in the expenditure of assessment revenues. The Committee would review financial reports, annual audit documents, and annual budget proposals and report back to the community on its findings.

Continued on back >>>



Frequently Asked Questions Inside

PROPOSED ASSESSMENT FOR LEVEL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

An upcoming vote on a proposed assessment may affect the safety of you and your property. Please read this document for more information.

IMPORTANT!



PAJARO REGIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT AGENCY

701 Ocean Street, Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Do I have to pay flood insurance if the assessment is approved?

Properties that are within the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area will no longer be required to purchase flood insurance once the project is completed. If the assessment is not approved and the project can't be completed, then these properties will remain within the Special Flood Hazard Area indefinitely. And, additional properties may be added to the Special Flood Hazard Area in the future, without a project to reduce flood risk.

I'm not required to purchase flood insurance. How does this project and levee operations and maintenance help me?

The existing levees along the river and creeks provide among the lowest levels of flood protection in California. The project and ongoing maintenance of the levees will significantly reduce flood risk, which in turn protects your investment, your property value, and the local economy.

I already pay into Zone 7 and Zones 1/1A on my tax bill. Why do we need another flood control fee?

PRFMA is taking over levee operations and maintenance on behalf of the city and counties. This will save money due to cost efficiencies (e.g. consolidated administration; increased "buying" power for supplies) and also ensure consistent levels of service. The estimated annual budget to adequately fund levee operations and maintenance is \$3.8 million/year. Existing Zone 7 and Zones 1/1A provide \$2.6 million per year. The proposed assessment will provide the remaining \$1.2 million in revenues for required services.



Proposed Assessment for Levee Operations & Maintenance

What problem are we trying to solve?

Levees are the only defense against flooding from the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks. The levees were built in 1949 and **have broken eight times** since. **In 2017, a levee along the Pajaro River almost failed. Had it broken, the Bay and Pajaro Village neighborhoods would have been flooded.**



What's the risk?

Currently the levees that protect Watsonville and Pajaro from flooding **only provide an 8-year level of flood protection.**

The 1995 flood that caused \$100 million in damages and killed 2 people was a **20-year flood event.**

There is a **40% chance** that a flood of that size **can happen within the next 10 years.**

What's the solution?

There are two ways to reduce flood risk:

- 1** **Maintain existing levees** to ensure they don't further degrade
- 2** **Improve levees** to provide stronger flood protection

Both are needed to protect you and your property!

Bottom Line

Levee maintenance is currently underfunded. The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency is proposing a property assessment to adequately fund levee maintenance.

- **Adequate funding is critical** to maintain existing levels of flood protection and prevent levees from further deteriorating.
- If approved by property owners, **the community will also be eligible for \$400 million in state and federal funding** for a levee improvement project.
- **All project construction costs will be paid by the state and federal governments.**
- Once the project is completed, the levees will provide **up to 100-year flood protection.**

..... **More info on the back!**



APRIL 2022

Proposed Assessment for Levee Operations & Maintenance

Questions about your proposed assesment?

CONTACT US!



(831) 204-3769



info@prfma.org



www.prfma.org

Attend a Community Meeting!

Community Meeting (Virtual)

6:30 p.m., Thursday, May 5

Zoom (visit prfma.org for login information)

Community Meeting

6:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 10

Pajaro Middle School

250 Salinas Road, Pajaro

Community Meeting

6:30 p.m., Thursday, May 19

Watsonville Civic Plaza

Community Room, Top Floor

275 Main Street, Watsonville

Public Hearing & Close of Balloting

6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 8

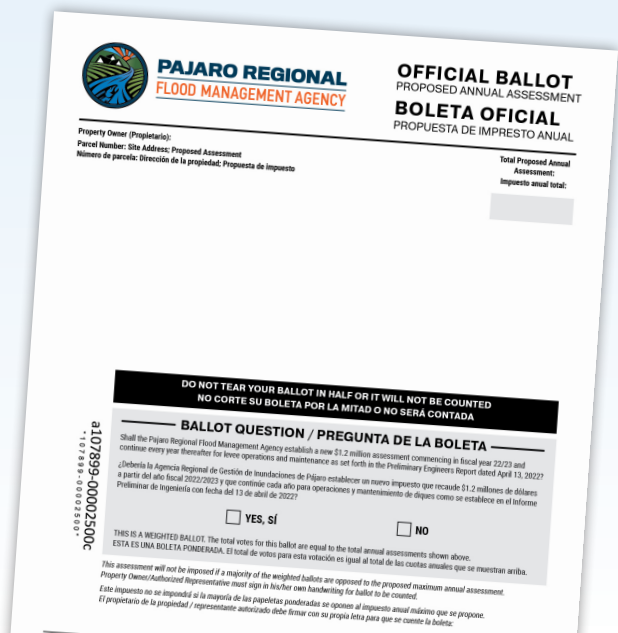
City of Watsonville City Council Chambers

275 Main Street, Watsonville

Need a replacement ballot?

If you misplace your ballot or wish to change your vote, you can get a replacement by contacting us at:

(831) 204-3769 or
info@prfma.org



prfma.org

How To Complete & Return Your Ballot

- 1 Cast your vote by marking an "X" in the box next to "Yes" or "No"
- 2 Print and sign your name
- 3 Date your ballot
- 4 Place your entire ballot in the postage-paid return envelope

IMPORTANT! Do not tear off any portion of the ballot or it will not be accepted.



- 5 Return all ballots:
 - a) By mail: Ballots must be in the postage-paid security envelope, mailed and received prior to the close of the June 8 Public Hearing. Postmarks cannot be accepted.
 - b) By hand: Place in the security envelope and deliver to Santa Cruz County Public Works, 701 Ocean Street, Room 410, Santa Cruz.
 - c) By hand: Place in the security envelope and bring to the Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 8, at the City of Watsonville City Hall City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Top Floor.
- All ballots must be received by the close of the Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 8, at the City of Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Top Floor, Watsonville.
 - Any ballots returned unmarked, unsigned or after the close of the Public Hearing cannot be accepted and will not be counted. Ballots must be original (no photocopies), and not damaged or torn.
 - If you lose your ballot, need a replacement ballot, or wish to change your vote, call the Agency's Assessment Hotline at (831) 204-3769.
 - Joint owners of property may split their ballot in proportion to their ownership percentage. If you would like to split your ballot, please request replacement ballots by calling the Assessment Hotline at (831) 204-3769. Written documentation of ownership shares will be required.

Assessment ballots will be counted after the close of the June 8 Public Hearing. Each property's assessment ballot is weighted by the amount of the proposed assessment (e.g. \$1 = 1 vote). The assessment will not be imposed if the weighted vote against the assessment is greater than the weighted vote in favor. The results will be announced by Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency Board of Directors following verification of the results.

Attend a Community Meeting & the Public Hearing

Community Meeting (Virtual)
6:30 p.m., Thursday, May 5
Zoom (visit prfma.org to log in)

Community Meeting
6:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 10
Pajaro Valley Middle School
Multipurpose Room
250 Salinas Road, Pajaro

Community Meeting
6:30 p.m., Thursday, May 19
Watsonville Civic Plaza Community
Room, Top Floor
275 Main Street, Watsonville

Public Hearing
6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 8
City of Watsonville
City Council Chambers, Top Floor
275 Main Street, Watsonville

"YES" or "No," What Happens?



If the proposed assessment is **approved** by property owners:

- The community will be eligible for \$400 million in state and federal funding for the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project. Construction is expected to start in 2025 and be completed within 8 years. Once completed, properties will be removed from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area.
- A Citizens' Assessment Oversight Committee will be created.
- The assessment will first appear on property tax bills in fall 2022.
- All assessment revenues will be used to maintain levees, existing and improved, in accordance with federal regulations.



If the proposed assessment is **not approved** by property owners:

- The community will lose \$400 million in state and federal funding for the Pajaro Regional Flood Risk Management Project. The levees will not be improved.
- There will be an increased risk of flood damages from year to year as levees continue to deteriorate. Climate change, to include sea level rise, will add to the growing risk.
- Properties will remain in the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area and be subject to associated mandatory flood insurance and building restrictions.

About the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA)

The Agency 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. The Board of Directors meets monthly and includes one representative from each member agency. Directors are appointed by their respective governing boards/council. The Agency's mission is to reduce flood risk through projects – such as levee improvements – and by performing levee operations and maintenance on behalf its member agencies.

Board of Directors

Luis Alejo
Monterey County Water
Resources Agency

Dr. Nancy Bilicich
City of Watsonville

Greg Caput
Santa Cruz County Flood Control and
Water Conservation Zone No. 7

Zach Friend
County of Santa Cruz

John Phillips
County of Monterey



PROPOSED ASSESSMENT FOR LEVEE OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

Official Notice & Ballot Information Guide

Questions?

Website: www.prfma.org

Email: info@prfma.org

Hotline: **831-204-3769**

Visit website for additional info:

- Assessment District Boundary Maps
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project information
- Community meeting dates and Zoom log in

Attend a Community Meeting!

Look inside for dates and locations

Why a Proposed Assessment?

The purpose of the proposed assessment is to provide adequate revenues to maintain levees that protect the City of Watsonville, the town of Pajaro and surrounding agriculture areas from flooding. The State and federal governments will invest \$400 million to improve the old, deficient levees on the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes Creek. To receive funding, however, the local community must promise to maintain levees to strict federal regulations. There is a \$1.2 million annual shortfall between existing and needed revenues to adequately maintain the levees, now and into the future. Proposed assessment revenues will be used to adequately fund levee operations and maintenance and secure \$400 million in funding for the levee improvements. Please read on to learn more.

High Flood Risk for Watsonville, Pajaro & Surrounding Areas

The City of Watsonville, town of Pajaro and surrounding agricultural areas have extreme flood risk from the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks.

Levees that protect the city, town and surrounding areas from flooding are in poor condition. They were built in 1949, but broke twice by 1958. Levees failed and caused floods again in 1982, 1986, 1989, 1995, 1997 and 1998. The 1995 flood caused more than \$95 million in damages and two deaths. Levees almost broke in early 2017. Today, these levees provide only an 8-year level of flood protection, among the lowest in the state. Flooding is likely in the future if levees are not repaired.

How Can We Reduce Flood Risk?

- Improve levees
- Properly maintain levees now and in the future

State/Feds to Pay for \$400 Million Levee Improvement Project

The US Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency and the CA Department of Water Resources, is starting design of the \$400 million Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project. The project will improve levees along the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks and provide up to 100-year flood protection to Watsonville, Pajaro and surrounding agriculture lands. Once completed, properties will be removed from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area, ending associated requirements for flood insurance and building restrictions. The project also benefits properties that aren't covered by flood insurance because it will significantly reduce the chances of flooding.

The USACE and state have agreed to pay 100 percent of the levee improvement project's design and construction costs, a first in California. This commitment equals an investment of about \$130,000 for every property that will be protected by the improved levees. However, to receive funding, the local community must agree to pay to maintain levees to strict federal regulations.

Levee Maintenance to be Consolidated Under Single Agency

The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency plans to take over responsibilities for levee maintenance on behalf of the counties. This will improve compliance with federal regulations, create efficiencies and long-term cost savings, and improve emergency response. The annual budget to adequately operate and maintain the flood protection system is \$3.8 million per year. Existing assessment revenues from Zone 7 (Santa Cruz County) and Zones 1/1A (Monterey County) generate \$2.6 million per year. The shortfall between existing and needed revenues for levee maintenance is \$1.2 million per year.

What is "Levee Operations and Maintenance?"

The Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency will be responsible for maintaining the overall flood risk reduction system, which includes 24 miles of levees, 12 miles of channels, 15 pump stations, and 85 culverts. PRFMA will perform both channel maintenance and levee maintenance. Levee maintenance activities (separate from channel maintenance) include – among other things – erosion repairs (rock and rip rap), rodent control, mowing, soil compaction, levee top and access road maintenance, environmental and federal permitting, reporting, and compliance, and patrolling the levees 24/7 when water levels are high.



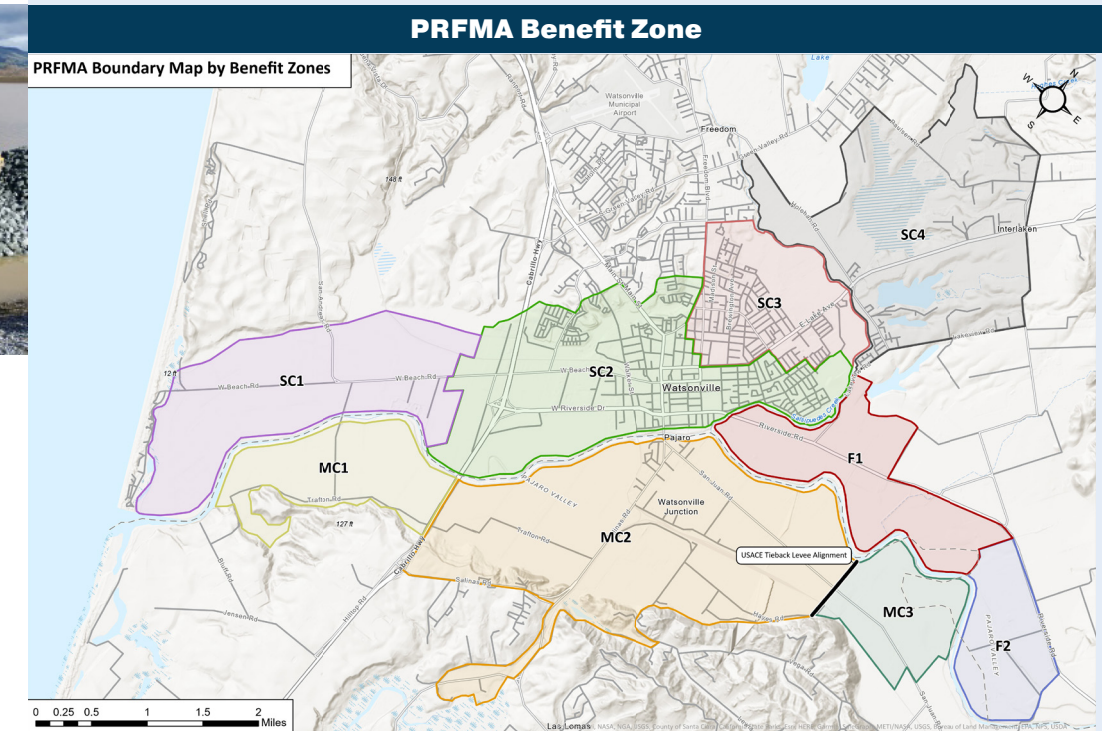
Proposed Property Assessment Would Adequately Fund Levee Maintenance

The proposed annual assessment would bridge the \$1.2 million shortfall between existing and needed revenues for levee maintenance. The assessment would continue as long as levee operations and maintenance services are provided. The proposed assessment can be increased by no more than 4 percent, or the Consumer Price Index if it is lower. The increase is not automatic and must be approved on an annual basis by the PRFMA Board of Directors. If the assessment is approved by property owners, the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency Board would create a Citizens' Assessment Oversight Committee.

How Proposed Assessments Are Calculated

Under CA Proposition 218 law, only properties that benefit from the Agency's levee maintenance activities can be assessed. The benefit to each property is the avoidance of flood damages to land and structures because of proper levee maintenance. Each property's assessment is different based on the benefit received. Individual parcel assessments are calculated based on the following factors:

Relative flood risk (location of property/Benefit Zone)	Land-use type (e.g. Single-family residential; Commercial; Industrial)
Parcel size (acreage)	Square footage of any structures
Average depth of flooding	Percentage of parcel that is flooded



A detailed description of the assessment methodology is included in the Preliminary Draft Engineer's Report, available online at www.prfma.org/assessment, or by calling the Assessment Hotline at (831) 204-3769.