

Lower Penitencia Creek Improvement Project

June 5 community meeting questions and answers

The water district's June 5, 2014 neighborhood meeting tackled a myriad of questions associated with the Lower Penitencia Creek Improvement Project. Concerned citizens who attended the meeting at the City of Milpitas' senior center listened to staff review the background, objectives and schedule of the project and outlined the three proposed project alternatives to improve the creek's capacity to handle future storm events. Residents in attendance agreed with the need for the work and the benefits it will provide when completed in 2018. The project team has compiled the following answers to questions posed at the meeting and will also post this information on the project's web site.



Will this work remove homes from the FEMA flood zone

Only a few parcels may be removed. This is because most of the flooding around Lower Penitencia Creek is actually due to flooding that results from Upper Penitencia Creek. This flooding will not be removed until Upper Penitencia Creek improvements are completed. One of the purposes of this project is to accommodate the increased flows due to upstream improvements along Berryessa Creek. The project's improvements will allow continued flood protection to the residential and business properties currently protected.

How tall are the floodwalls?

The floodwalls are estimated to be about 4 to 5 feet relative to the top of levee. From the channel bottom to the top of the floodwalls, the distance would be approximately 13 to 14 feet high. These are preliminary numbers and as the analysis is refined, the heights may change.

How will this project "minimize" maintenance needs?

The project will be designed to minimize future maintenance. The design will accommodate acceptable levels of sediment accumulation and vegetation growth before maintenance activities are necessary.

Will the trees be removed from inside the creek channel? Does the space that the trees take up affect the flow/capacity of the creek?

At this time, the analysis is not far enough along to determine which trees will be removed and which will be retained. The intent of the project is to minimize the tree removal, which is a requirement of federal and state regulations. During project design, the water district will carefully map existing trees and habitat and quantify the impacts of the various project alternatives. This information will be used to identify the least environmentally damaging alternative that achieves the project objectives. Federal and state regulations require that the District implement the least environmentally damaging alternative.

A storm drain merges at 90 degrees with the creek. Is the pump station sufficient?

The pump station is not a water district facility. It is owned and operated by the City of Milpitas. This project will not impact the capacity of the pump station.

There are walkways on both sides.

We do know that there is currently a formal city trail on the east levee. There is no formal trail on the west levee, although the levee is currently being used as a trail.

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Will maintenance be done? Cutting the grass? The current schedule appears to be once every 5 years.

Our maintenance planner inspects and documents the current condition of this facility every year, often multiple times per year. Water district Operations and Maintenance (O&M) staff perform a wide variety of annual maintenance at this location, including graffiti removal, trash and debris removal, maintenance road upkeep, and a number of vegetation management activities. When necessary, O&M staff also perform erosion repair and sediment removal. Similar to the other 300 miles of creek managed in the county, work is prioritized and scheduled according to staff availability and availability of State and Federal regulatory approvals.

Why is the island there?

The island was originally constructed to allow for maintenance access, where heavy equipment (excavators) could be used to reach out and remove sediment deposits without the need to drive down into the creek. Commonly available excavators have a limited reach length and the island allows for reaching sediment deposits on the western side of the creek. The island is currently vegetated with trees, brush, and grasses that provide habitat. These alternatives try to retain existing habitat as much as possible.

Will existing walls be raised? What is the purpose of the walls?

There are currently no floodwalls in the project limit. However, some of the alternatives include floodwalls. The purpose of the floodwalls is to keep the water contained in the channel.

Will sediment be removed at the Lower Penitencia Creek/Berryessa Creek confluence?

Sediment in the portion of Lower Penitencia Creek from just north of Milmont Drive Bridge to the Berryessa Creek confluence will be periodically removed in the future. Removal cycles will be defined during the study process.

Will the vegetation currently inside the creek be removed? Doesn't that impact the flow of water?

Alternative 1 does not require removal of the vegetation in most of Reach 3. Vegetation does impact the flow of water but also provides riparian and wetland habitat. This alternative looks at providing flood protection while minimizing the impact to existing habitats.

Are you going to take the roadways out where the creek parallels Abbott Avenue?

There are no plans to remove the maintenance roads in this area; the location is outside the limits of this project.

About the project

Lower Penitencia Creek receives flows from Berryessa Creek and flows into Coyote Creek. There are currently improvements planned, designed and soon to be constructed on Berryessa Creek that will bring more flows into Lower Penitencia Creek. The project extends approximately one mile from the confluence with Berryessa Creek to the confluence with Coyote Creek.

This project is funded by the water district's Watershed Stream Stewardship Fund. This project is necessary to provide continued flood protection for residents and businesses currently protected along the one mile study limit.



CONTACT US

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