

Funding for J Levee replacement may be granted

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Funding for the Hamilton City flood control project to replace the aging J Levee may finally be granted this year following last week's passage of the Bi-partisan Budget Act of 2013.

That is the hope of Reclamation District 2140 and Glenn County officials who issued a written statement Dec. 19 on the current state of the project.

Local officials said by passing the agreement, "Congress can forgo the use of the Continuing Resolution which has blocked our ability to get the flood control project funded for the last three years."

The project is already in President Barack Obama's 2014 budget proposal, so local officials are optimistic it may finally be able to start construction, in a statement issued by the reclamation district.

They added the U.S. Senate version of the spending bill authored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein includes \$15 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to start work on this project. However, the House version of the spending bill did not include funding for the project.

"We are very pleased that Congress has finally agreed to enact spending bills," said Lee Ann Grigsby-Puente, president of Reclamation District 2140's board of trustees. "Now we need the House to agree with the Senate that the Hamilton City flood control project must get funded. With the support of Sen. Feinstein, Congressman (Doug) LaMalfa and Congressman (John) Garamendi, we feel confident that this will be our year." Glenn County Supervisor Leigh McDaniel said LaMalfa and Garamendi "know the flood risks are frightening" and have been working together to convince their House colleagues on an appropriations committee of the need to get construction underway.

McDaniel added they will have to redouble their efforts to make sure the project gets funded, but locals are confident the Congressmen's support will pay dividends.

The Hamilton City project is a multi-purpose flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration project.

It calls for construction of 6.8 miles of setback levee to provide more reliable flood protection to the small community and surrounding agricultural properties. It also would tear down the existing J Levee and reconnect about 1,400 acres of native habitat to the Sacramento River flood plain.

Once built, the new levee will provide Hamilton City with protection against a 75-year flood event, officials said.

Despite repairs done by Glenn County during the last decade and emergency work conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California Department of Water Resources, the existing J Levee remains in critically bad condition, county officials say.

Complete construction of the project will take several years and require additional funding.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designed the project to be completed in phases.

It is estimated to cost \$52.4 million with the federal government paying \$34.1 million and the other \$18.3 million coming from other sources.