

## Ground should move this summer for Sacramento River flood project in Hamilton City

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Posted: May 5, 2015

Source: <http://www.chicoer.com/general-news/20150505/ground-should-move-this-summer-for-sacramento-river-flood-project-in-hamilton-city>

Hamilton City >> It seems like decades that residents of Hamilton City have been waiting to start construction on a new levee.

That's because it has been decades that the residents of Hamilton City have been waiting to start construction on a new levee.

Shovels should begin moving earth this fall at the south end of what will become 6.8 miles of setback levee along the Sacramento River. The construction crew will continue as long as the weather will allow.

The project includes 1,400 acres of habitat restoration. If everything moves along nicely, the project could be done by 2018.

The first phase is possible due to \$12 million in federal funding approved over the past two years.

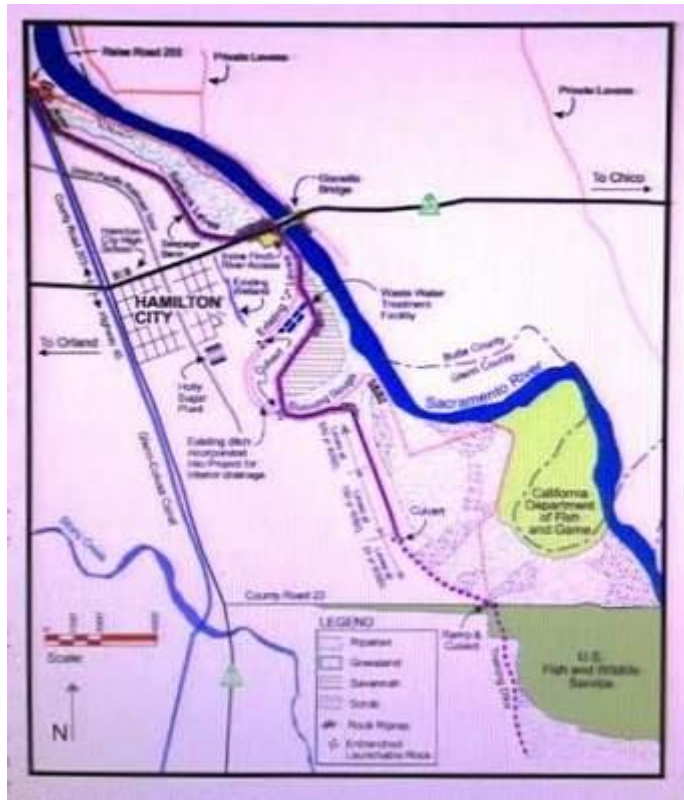
The full project is now estimated at \$72 million, with \$47.4 million from the federal government and \$25.5 million from state and local funding.

Friday, the federal House of Representatives approved another \$15 million toward the project, which would be awarded in 2016. The Senate still needs to vote to approve that level of funding, and is scheduled to decide in late summer.

If that funding goes through, another \$17 million to \$20 million will still be needed.

Despite the uncertainties, residents of Hamilton City are pleased that the money is starting to roll in.

Over the past several decades, residents of the small town of Hamilton City raised money through a levee festival, where thousands of tamales were sold. More recently, a tax assessment was approved, which brings in about \$60,000 a year.



The most recent plans for the J Levee call for 6.8 miles of set-back levee, shown in purple. The blue line is the Sacramento River. The area in between would be restored to habitat.

The Nature Conservancy has been key to the deal, arranging to purchase and donate 1,400 acres of land for the restoration part of the project. The value of the land counts towards the necessary local share of costs for the project. The state of California has also awarded funding for the levee repairs.

Lee Ann Grigsby-Puente is president of Reclamation District 2140, formed by citizens to push for the levee repairs. Piecing together the deal and the funding has been a major effort. There were years when the group believed their chances for federal funding were close, but then the votes went a different way.

The fact that money has been approved for two years in a row, and that more money is in the pipeline now, is a great success, Grigsby-Puente said.

She praised Congressmen John Garamendi and Doug LaMalfa as consistent supporters.

Garamendi said Tuesday evening that the citizens of Hamilton City have worked long and hard.

The "leadership in Hamilton City has made this project happen," he said. They kept up the effort and brought it to the attention of federal officials, he noted.

"Hamilton City is the most at-risk community in the Central Valley. They literally have no levee."

Hamilton City residents have been vulnerable to flooding each time the waters in the Sacramento River rise. The original J Levee was built around the early 1900s and is in serious disrepair.

At the same time the funding was approved for Hamilton City, a bill was passed to require the Secretary of Interior to complete feasibility studies for CalFed storage projects by November 30, 2016. This would include Sites Reservoir. The reservoir has been pushed by Northern California water leaders, including a special Joint Power Authority, <http://www.sitesjpa.net>, working to move the project ahead.

Garamendi said he believes the Bureau of Reclamation should be able to complete its part of the studies by the 2016 deadline. That deadline fits into the funding cycle for money from California's Proposition 1, the water bond.

Other funding on the recent list of approvals includes the Yuba River Basin ring levee, \$7.4 million; Sacramento bank protection, \$6 million; and shipping channel work along the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers and Suisun Bay.