

Hamilton City J levee documents available

Posted: January 19, 2016

By: Julie R. Johnson/Glenn County Transcript

Source: http://www.appeal-democrat.com/glenn_county_transcript/hamilton-city-j-levee-documents-available/article_ff835b84-bf1e-11e5-a277-f79da1c34b43.html

As work on the Hamilton City Flood Damage Reduction (J levee) and Ecosystem Restoration Project continues to move forward, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to issue a right of way easement to Reclamation District 2140 for the construction and maintenance of a portion of the Army Corps of Engineers levee and restoration project at the Capay Unit of the wildlife refuge.

A draft environmental assessment and compatibility determination for a right of way easement on the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge has been made available to the public.

The community of Hamilton City has long been at risk of flooding from the Sacramento River, relying on the existing J levee to contain flows in the river.

A study revealed the J levee does not meet government or any other levee construction standards and could fail at river levels well below the top of the levee.

Portions of Hamilton City and the surrounding area flooded in 1974. Extensive flood fighting has been necessary in 1983, 1986, 1995, 1997, and 1998 to avoid failure of the private J levee.

Residents of the town were evacuated six times in the past 20 years: 1983, 1986, twice in 1995, 1997, and 1998.

The original J levee was built in 1904 by the Holly Sugar Company to protect farmland against a 10-year flood.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and The Reclamation Board of the State of California completed a feasibility study in 2004 to develop plans to reduce flood damages and restore the ecosystem along the Sacramento River near Hamilton City.

The Hamilton City Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Project is set to enhance flood protection for Hamilton City through a multi-component plan: Construction of a setback levee to provide a more reliable form of flood protection to the community and agricultural areas; and degradation of the existing J levee to allow for reconnection of the river to the flood plain; and restoration of about 1,500 acres of native habitat between the new setback levee and the Sacramento River.

The construction and maintenance of a training dike at the Capay Unit is part of the plan as well.

According to the Army Corps' current plan, the southern half of the project will be constructed first, with the northern half to start this year. Construction in this fashion will minimize the risk to the town from any flooding event which may occur before construction is finished.

Assuming appropriate levels of future funding are made available, major construction should be finished by 2018.

Of the \$52.4 million estimated cost for the construction project, it is reported \$34.1 million would come from federal funding, and \$18.3 million from state and local funding.

To offset Hamilton City's share of the costs, a deal was developed through The Nature Conservancy to donate land along the river for habitat restoration.

In addition, Reclamation District 2140 was awarded a grant of up to \$5 million from the state, which in combination with other sources should be sufficient to cover the complete non-federal share of costs.

The draft environmental assessment and compatibility determination are available for public review and comment until Feb. 13. The draft documents are available online at www.fws.gov/refuge/Sacramento/news2.html. Copies of the draft documents are also available by contacting the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex at 934-2801.

Comments may be submitted by email to: sacramentovalleyrefuges@fws.gov with subject indication EA and CD for right of way easement on Capay Unit; faxed to 934-7814; or mailed to Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 752 County Road 99W, Willows, CA 95988.