

response to key questions raised at the march 2002 stakeholder meeting

How and when will project costs for the alternatives be presented?

The Army Corps is currently in the process of determining the costs for preliminary alternatives. This information will be presented at Stakeholder Meeting #7 on September 12, 2002. The costs will be presented in a way that allows community members to compare the design specifications and costs of each alternative (e.g., floodwall/levee construction, lands, bridge and road modifications, utility relocations, long term maintenance and other costs). The costs will also include relative local and federal cost sharing figures.

How should new ideas and alternatives be submitted for consideration?

The Army Corps of Engineers is analyzing a range of alternatives that address many of the community's key concerns. There will be several opportunities for additional public input as the analysis moves forward. Stakeholders and community members are invited to attend the September 12, 2002 Stakeholder Meeting #7. Should you have additional comments, please submit them in writing to:

David Patterson, Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
333 Market Street, 8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-2197

How will the type and amount of channel vegetation and maintenance for a new Pajaro River flood project be determined?

The amount and type of channel vegetation and maintenance in the Pajaro River and its tributaries directly affects the height and width of project levees, floodwalls and set-back distances necessary to achieve the design level of flood protection. This key design issue now moves to consultation among the Federal Agencies, as required by Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973. Under the Act, the Corps of Engineers consults with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) to investigate the existence of listed endangered or threatened species and critical habitat in the Pajaro River project area. Recent scientific studies have documented Central Coast Steelhead in the Pajaro River system and NMFS has designated the Pajaro River as critical habitat for this species. Also, the USFWS has raised concerns over the existence of the red-legged frog and its habitat within the project area.

The Corps will task the USFWS to create a Coordination Act Report (CAR) for the project. This report will incorporate habitat surveys that will evaluate impacts of the proposed project and make recommendations for avoiding or mitigating impacts or enhancing fish and wildlife resources.

Clarify the process for the concurrent environmental coordination with federal and state agencies?

An Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA). This joint document fulfills the requirements of NEPA and CEQA to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. During the preparation of the document, the COE will coordinate with other Federal, State and local agencies on the project. These agencies include: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG); California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB); State Coastal Conservancy (CC); California Coastal Commission (CCC); and Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties.

Public involvement will be a key component of the EIS/EIR process. The public will be invited to review and comment on this draft EIS/EIR when it is published. The COE will publish a notice of intent (NOI) in the Federal Register, as required under NEPA. The local sponsor will issue a notice of preparation (NOP) as required by CEQA. The NOI/NOP will be published in the local press and mailed to all stakeholders and community members on the project mailing list. The public review period for the draft EIS/EIR will be 45 days under both NEPA and CEQA; public comments will be addressed in the final EIS/EIR.