

December 5, 2006

Board of Supervisors
County of Marin
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: Watershed Management Program Update

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION: Approve transfer of \$100,000 to fund next phase of Ross Valley Integrated Watershed Management Program.

SUMMARY: On July 18, 2006, your Board approved the Watershed Management Program and associated staffing request. The purpose of the program is to evaluate Departmental and resource management needs utilizing a watershed approach for planning and implementation. A watershed consists of all the land that water flows over, or under, on its way to a creek, bay or the ocean. Watersheds are usually bordered by ridge lines and can serve as natural templates for managing pollution, flooding and riparian habitat as all land is naturally organized into watersheds. In Marin County at least 25 major creeks and their watersheds have been mapped (www.mcstoppp.org). Additional watersheds would be delineated as part of this initial planning effort. The largest watershed, Lagunitas Creek, drains 100 square miles of land to Tomales Bay.

After the floods of 2005/06, at the direction of your Board, Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) staff, in cooperation with the City Councils and staff from Larkspur, Fairfax, San Anselmo, Ross and members of the community, determined that planning at the watershed scale would be the most cost effective and efficient way to find long-term solutions to chronic flooding. This type of holistic approach not only improves flood protection, but also provides opportunities for restoring habitat and natural processes. Fully integrating flood management with environmental restoration elements is critical to acquiring community support and securing federal and state funding. The current Ross Valley Integrated Watershed Management Program (www.rossvalleywatershed.org) highlights the benefits of the watershed approach.

A number of Marin County watershed and stakeholder groups have completed plans or initiated a planning process. These include the Friends of Corte Madera Creek, the North Bay Watershed Association, Mill Valley Streamkeepers, Friends of Miller Creek, Friends of Novato Creek and the Tomales Bay Watershed Council.

This program would not duplicate efforts but rather work to integrate community and local watershed group work into plan development. We will utilize this information to guide restoration and enhancement activities within watersheds currently managed through the Marin County Flood Control District and the County. On July 18th your Board initiated the watershed program and allocated funds to Public Works for new staff to manage the program, specifically a Principal Planner and Senior Planner. Last month, we promoted Liz Lewis to manage the new watershed program. Ms. Lewis' appreciation and familiarity for Marin's watersheds is a product of her 11 years of service as the Flood Control District's Creek Naturalist and Stormwater Program Manager. The next vacancy to fill is that of the Senior Planner and it is anticipated this will occur in March 2007.

Your Board also determined that the planning process would begin within the following watersheds:

Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio (Mill Valley)
Corte Madera Creek (Ross Valley)
Easkoot Creek (Stinson Beach)
Miller Creek (Lucas Valley)
Novato Creek (Novato)
Woodacre Creek (Woodacre)

The program, in cooperation with the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP), would provide significant opportunities for stakeholder participation.

The watershed planning effort will produce a template for each watershed listed above utilizing existing plans if available and the latest technical information. The template will outline and describe major issues and needs within each watershed. The planning effort will culminate with a list of future informational needs and potential projects and include an iterative process for updating information. The County's existing GIS database will be utilized to facilitate this planning process. The program will seek to support and enhance efforts at the local, State and Federal levels. It is anticipated that the program will be fully staffed in five months.

The framework for most community watershed plans incorporates the following basic elements:

- 1) Executive Summary
- 2) Introduction
- 3) Community Priorities-ensure consistency with Marin County Watershed Guiding Principles.
- 4) Watershed Description
- 5) Watershed Assessments
- 6) Restoration and Management Objectives
- 7) Action Plan
- 8) Monitoring Plan
- 9) Implementation/Funding Strategies
- 10) Reference List

The first watershed planning effort authorized by your Board was the Ross Valley Integrated Watershed Program in April 2006. The Ross Valley program has developed short term, mid-term and long term recommendations. Some of the short term projects completed since its inception include the following:

- Creek maintenance work was implemented for Larkspur, Corte Madera, Ross, Sleepy Hollow, San Anselmo, Fairfax and Murphy creeks. The local municipalities and the County contributed \$60,000 to this effort.
- The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program application (HMGP) for elevating homes was mailed to 1,200 parcels. One full-time extra-hire employee and a part-time surveyor were hired to manage the program. The Flood Control District provided \$25,000 to implement the program and cover the mailing costs. Award notifications will be made around July 2007.
- We are working with the National Weather Service to refine our flood alert warnings and watches to improve coordination and the dissemination of reliable information to watershed residents.
- A consultant was hired to conduct hydrologic and hydraulic modeling. Modeling and surveying work is being funded by the State of California Coastal Conservancy. Preliminary work includes examining stormwater detention possibilities throughout the watershed.
- Multiple public meetings with stakeholders and numerous smaller meetings have been held with stakeholders. We are working collaboratively with Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed, Flood Mitigation League, Coalition for Corte Madera Creek, Homeowners Associations and Planning Advisory Boards to evaluate flood solutions and watershed restoration opportunities. The last public meeting was held on October 21 to present the hydraulic modeling results and review flood preparedness efforts.
- We have retained an assessment engineer to assist the County and the cities and towns with the development of a financing program to support long term planning and implementation
- Polling for a local revenue measure for the Ross Valley has been completed. Overall, the community was supportive of a parcel assessment to implement flood protection and watershed restoration measures. The goal is to bring a ballot measure to the voters in 2007 to support the financing of a long-term integrated watershed program. If this ballot measure is not approved, the Ross Valley Program will no longer be able to sustain the current level of work and product delivery.

As you can see from the projects completed to date, none of this work would have been feasible without significant matching funds from local and State agencies. Cost sharing is critical to securing additional funding to complete mid-term and long-term flood protection and restoration priorities.

The following table summarizes the level of financial commitment to date for the Ross Valley Program:

Watershed and financial planning consultant (MIG):	\$300,000
Hydraulic modeling and creek surveys:	\$130,000
Watershed wide creek maintenance program	\$60,000
Benefit assessment engineer	\$49,000
One full time Zone 9 engineer	\$120,000
Management of Hazard Mitigation Grant program	<u>\$25,000</u>
	\$684,000

The County of Marin contributed approximately \$200,000 to the projects listed above. Implementation of the mid- and long-term priority projects for the Ross Valley program is contingent upon the approval of a dedicated funding source. The Ross Valley Program illustrates the complexity of watershed planning and the importance of community outreach. Ultimately the goal of the Ross Valley Watershed Program is to integrate the mid-term and long-term project priorities into a comprehensive watershed management plan.

The County will initiate planning efforts similar to the Ross Valley approach within other Phase I watersheds such as the Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio watershed which also experienced significant structural damage from the 2005/06 floods. The watershed management program's start up period will be used by staff and the community to evaluate the lessons learned from the Ross Valley process. Each watershed presents unique challenges and opportunities so the funding requested will be used to make the most of lessons learned from the Ross Valley experience.

The success of this program will rely upon the financial participation of the cities and towns. County staff have initiated this dialogue with some municipal staff and received positive feedback and support for the County's approach to date. The County will not be able to successfully implement this watershed program without financial support from the cities and towns. This financial support is critical to securing grant funds from State and Federal sources. The goal of this program is to develop comprehensive watershed plans for above listed watersheds utilizing existing information and resources

One of the first things staff will do is to set up meetings with existing watershed groups, environmental organizations, Flood Zone advisory board members and local municipal staff to review the planning products they have produced to date and to gather their input on planning needs. Once this preliminary information is gathered, staff will work with watershed groups and local municipal staff to summarize what is available. The County will organize this information and most likely select a consultant through a competitive process to assist staff with the compilation of this information and to integrate it with the

County of Marin's Draft Watershed Management Plan, the North Bay Watershed Association's Integrated Watershed Management Plan, municipal watershed and creek restoration plans, District flood management plans and existing community watershed plans. It is anticipated the preliminary framework for these watersheds will be

available in June 2007. Our goal is to return to your Board with a schedule for watershed plan development including financing and project implementation next summer.

It is anticipated that the development of these comprehensive watershed plans could take two to five years to draft and adopt.

FISCAL IMPACT: Increase appropriations in Fund Center 4100993023 commitment item # 5210100 by \$100,000, offset by a transfer of appropriations from the CAO Fund Center 9000011000, and commitment item # 5210100, to fund the next phase of Ross Valley Watershed Program. Additional funds are available for the other watersheds once similar conditions that favor long term success have been established, for example, demonstrating shared funding of programs and projects by cities and towns.

REVIEWED BY:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Auditor Controller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Respectfully submitted,

Farhad Mansourian
Director