



SUTTER BUTTE FLOOD CONTROL AGENCY

A PARTNERSHIP FOR FLOOD SAFETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 8, 2009

CONTACT: Kim Floyd
(916) 409-0426

SBFCA TO UNVEIL PLAN FOR LEVEE ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

Board to get first look at proposed boundaries and methods for calculating assessment

YUBA CITY, CA – The Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency is moving forward with long-awaited plans to improve 24 miles of unstable levees along the Feather River, from Thermalito Afterbay to Yuba City. Adding urgency to the agency's efforts are ongoing FEMA and DWR floodplain mapping, a predicted rainy season that could trigger moderate to severe flooding, and the opportunity to secure at least \$120 million in state funding for the project.

The successful implementation of the agency's plan hinges on its ability to raise \$80 million – the estimated local cost share for the \$200 million levee improvement project.

“We'll fix 24 miles of levees, achieve 200-year flood protection, and remove the majority of our properties from floodplains for only 40 cents on the dollar,” said Bill Edgar, SBFCA's Interim Executive Director.

SBFCA is proposing to raise the local share for levee improvements through an annual benefit assessment on properties, following the lead of other Central Valley flood control agencies, including the Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority, the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, and the West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency. Per state law, assessments must be proportionate to the benefit properties receive from the levee improvements.

According to the National Flood Insurance Program, as little as five inches of flooding can result in more than \$11,000 in property damage. The 34,000 properties within SBFCA's boundaries are subject to flood depths up to 20 feet, according to recent engineering studies. Flood depths for the majority of properties range from 2-6 feet.

“Properties that benefit the most would pay a higher assessment than those with a lesser benefit – like those with flood depths of less than one foot,” said Bob Cermak, the agency's Assessment District Engineer. Land use, parcel size, and square footage of structures would also factor into individual assessment calculations.

The SBFCA Board and public will get its first opportunity to look at the proposed benefit assessment district boundary and method for calculating assessments at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 9, at the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation Office (1227 Bridge Street, Yuba City). Under the current timeline, the agency proposes to send assessment district ballots to property owners sometime in March, if approved by the Board of Directors.

Levees along the Feather River leak from underseepage and through-seepage, the same types of problems that caused levee failures in Yuba County. Levees do not meet minimum federal

guidelines requiring 100-year flood protection. In cases where this requirement is not met, communities behind the levee are “mapped” as Special Flood Hazard Areas. Such designations trigger mandatory, costly flood insurance for most property owners, along with restrictions on development. In addition, the state will soon require all urban communities to demonstrate compliance with 200-year flood protection, or be prohibited from entering into development agreements and implementing general plans.

Last month, FEMA released working flood hazard maps that showed the majority of Sutter County in the floodplain. “If those maps were to take effect today, we estimate that our property owners would pay in excess of \$22 million each year for mandatory flood insurance,” said Dan Peterson, Sutter County’s Water Resources Chief. According to Peterson, FEMA is expected to issue preliminary flood insurance rate maps in winter 2010, meaning mandatory flood insurance would take effect for many property owners the following year. “It is safer and more cost effective to fix levees than it is to pay for mandatory flood insurance,” he said.

Updated FEMA maps are proposed to go into effect for Butte County in mid-2010, requiring flood insurance for any property owner with a federally-backed mortgage and triggering restrictions on development. “Our first concern is always public safety,” said Stuart Edell, Butte County’s Manager of Land Development. “Our levees do not provide adequate flood protection and must be fixed. Once that happens, we can request that FEMA revise flood hazard maps and release our community from flood insurance mandates.”

The December 9 Board Meeting is open to the public; interested community members are encouraged to attend. For more information, please visit www.sutterbuttefloodcontrol.org, or contact Kim Floyd, SBFCA Public Outreach Coordinator, at (530) 701-7449.

###

The Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency is a joint powers authority of Sutter and Butte Counties, the cities of Biggs, Yuba City, Gridley, and Live Oak, and Levee Districts 1 and 9. The Agency is responsible for financing and constructing levee improvements in Sutter and Butte Counties.