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Mike Moran looks down at the 40-foot slide area. Left: the new drainage pipe sits behind newly planted trees along the creek bed.

Photo Andy Schreck

## Lafayette's proactive measures prevent road collapse

By Pippa Fisher

In a race to beat the winter rains, the recent major road stabilization project on St. Mary's Road in Lafayette was completed in the nick of time, just one day before the first significant rain of the season. Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and completed 11 days ahead of schedule, this comes as a relief to the

Lafayette Public Works Department. In early January amid all the heavy rain, the shoulder of the road slid about 40 feet down to the Las Trampas Creek, taking with it a tree and laying vulnerable a high pressure gas line. Public Works Director Mike Moran says the work was a permanent stabilization project and should

prevent a recurrence. "If it were left undone St. Mary's Road at that location would have collapsed. Maybe within this winter but certainly sometime in the near future." Moran added that if the road had collapsed it would have impacted not only the gas main but also a sewer main and a water main. ...continued on page A12

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## Local firefighters reflect on recent major disasters

By Nick Marnell



A rescued dog gets decontaminated in Texas. Photo courtesy MOPFA and California Task Force 4

Lamorinda fire personnel spent weeks outside their jurisdictions during a busy fall that included disaster responses in Texas and Florida and strike team deployments to the North Bay wildfires. But what impacted the responders most was the appreciation and gratitude of the local residents whom they came to help, many of those

locals having lost everything. Both the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District are participating agencies in the Urban Search and Rescue response system of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The two local agencies are assigned to California Task Force 4, sponsored by the Oakland Fire Department. Task forces step in when states seek federal assistance, as did Texas following Hurricane Harvey and Florida for the onslaught of Hurricane Irma. MOFD responded with two personnel to Texas and three to Florida; ConFire sent five to Texas and six to Florida. **On to Texas** The Hurricane Harvey convoy left Oakland Aug. 26 and drove 44 hours to Texas. "We become FEMA employees upon deployment. Our local titles no longer matter," said MOFD firefighter Steve Rogness, a task force rescue specialist. ... continued on page A8

## Town takes next steps toward storm drain fee; timing still uncertain

By Sophie Braccini

Many questions were left unanswered after the Moraga Town Council agreed Nov. 8 to move forward with a rate study to tax residents for storm drain maintenance and repair. When will this mail-in ballot be sent to property owners? In March? Later? How much will single-family residents be taxed? What is the impact for commercial owners and the school district? How will outreach to residents be done? Beyond the technicality of the measure itself, a few residents questioned the wisdom of asking for the new fee. The method chosen by the town council and staff to tackle the town's high priority storm drain repair project backlog has been to first survey the residents to gauge what type of measure and level of funding would be acceptable. The

survey results, according to consultant Godbe Research, indicate that a storm drain fee would be acceptable to a majority of property owners and the recommended level is not to exceed an average of \$144 per parcel. A storm drain fee taxes properties depending on their specific impact on the storm drain system. For example, a home on a small parcel would impact the drainage system more than a large open space parcel: the first has a lot of impermeable surfaces such as roof and concrete slabs that create runoff, while the second contains mostly vegetation and dirt that absorbs water. On the other hand, that same small parcel impacts the systems much less than a commercial property, which is mostly roofs and parking lots. ... continued on page A4

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