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## Town council gets update on Laguna Creek Restoration Project

By Vera Kochan



Hacienda Pavilion flooding during 2005-06 winter storms Photo provided

The Hacienda de las Flores, located at 2100 Donald Dr., is owned by the town of Moraga and is the subject of the proposed Laguna Creek Restoration Project. Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp gave an informative update during the town council's July 8 meeting as to future steps in the continuing project.

Heavy winter storms during 2005-06 triggered the Laguna Creek's rise and eventual flow over its banks in the western vicinity of the Hacienda Pavilion. Damages were incurred to the wooden footbridge and wrought-iron gate. Additionally, more than 200 feet of chain-link fence, walkways, retaining walls, head walls, wing walls and banks of the creek bend were either damaged or washed away. The creek slope failed causing the Pavilion to flood.

The Project entails the removal of an underground culvert near the Pavilion and replacing it with a natural channel to improve flood protection for the various Hacienda facilities. The upstream end of the culvert is located approximately 400 feet south of Donald Drive.

Watersheds from the neighborhoods of Campolindo, Carol Ranch, Rheem Valley and others contribute to the southward flow of Laguna Creek via underground storm drains or open channel creeks, all of which eventually deposit into the Upper San Leandro Reservoir.

The restoration project will reduce the flood risk by daylighting the creek and retrofitting or replacing the existing 8-foot diameter culvert. During 2007, repairs to the damaged pavilion were completed at a cost of \$37,000. Additional repairs to the creek wall and bank stabilization were completed in 2013, costing \$1.04 million. In 2014, the town council directed staff to proceed with the daylighting and restoration of the Laguna Creek channel after a Hydraulic Study and an Alternatives Study revealed this to be the best-case scenario.

Besides removal of the existing culvert, the project will involve the construction of a natural channel to provide habitat for endangered species; the relocation of a Central Contra Costa Sanitary District sewer line; the construction of a vehicular bridge over the creek; and the improvement of public accessibility and protections.

The public works department has secured funding from the California Natural Resources Agency (\$399,980) not capable with the Federal Emergency Management Agency grant; East Bay Regional Parks District (\$599,743) the maximum possible award; and the FEMA (\$803,331) 66% allowable costs for up to \$970,000.

FEMA has approved Phase 1 of the project which entails field and geotechnical investigations and surveys; a hydraulic study and FEMA coordination; a biological resources study; California Environmental Quality Act studies; and design (up to 65%). With the 65% design, FEMA will complete the National Environmental Policy Act evaluation prior to authorizing Phase 2.

The town will incur up to \$28,066 in project costs for Phase 1. However, \$15,000 may be reimbursable and the remaining \$13,066 would be reimbursed by the EBRPD grant if the project was completed. There is also adequate funding available in Department 730 - Storm Drain Maintenance. Staff will return to council in the fall to consider the awarding of a design contract.

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