

47. Authorize County staff participation in the Technical Advisory Group which will identify, prepare, and submit for the Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study ()



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Board of Supervisors - Fourth District

Subject: Technical Advisory Committee for the Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study

Meeting Date: June 10, 2025

Formal Title: Authorize County staff participation in the Technical Advisory Group which will identify, prepare, and submit for the Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study

Recommended Actions

Authorize County staff from the Community Development and Infrastructure Department, the Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience, and other departments, as needed, in coordination with partner agencies and community stakeholders to work to actively identify, prepare, and submit funding applications at the local, state, and federal levels for financial support of the Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study ("Study").

Executive Summary

The Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study will assess and design improvements that advance environmental sustainability, emergency access, and regional mobility in this economically and environmentally critical corridor of Santa Cruz County.

Given the collaborative and multidisciplinary nature of the Study, staff participation is essential to identify and pursue funding sources, prepare grant applications, and coordinate with partnering organizations.

Discussion

In order to prepare to access funding opportunities for the Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study ("Study") it is critical for a collaborative group of local and regional stakeholders to identify potential funding opportunities and prepare a workplan of shared goals and community priorities prior to commencing with the study. To that end a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) composed of collaborating agencies and stakeholders will guide the process to pursue funding opportunities. The following is a list of potential community partners:

- Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency
- Santa Cruz County Community Development & Infrastructure Department
- Santa Cruz County Parks
- Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience
- Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency
- Watsonville Wetlands Watch
- Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District
- Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
- Residents and farmers

- District 4 Staff

The purpose of this group is to identify potential opportunities to eventually fund a study that will evaluate infrastructure design options across the Paulsen Road, College Lake, and Pinto Ditch corridors. Authorizing County staff to collaborate to pursue funding opportunities will enhance the competitiveness of applications for funding a study to examine and evaluate specific elements needed prior to any construction of specific project components.

The Paulsen Road Multi-Benefit Flood Resilience and Connectivity Project Study would explore and determine the priority of specific aspects of project needs such as:

- **Elevation of Paulsen Road** to ensure all-weather emergency, school and County Park access
- **Pedestrian and bicycle path construction** to improve non-motorized mobility
- **Drainage and stormwater upgrades** to protect farmland and improve water quality
- **Riparian habitat restoration** to enhance biodiversity and ecological health
- **Farmland acquisition** opportunities by local land conservation organizations
- **Pinto Ditch improvements** to mitigate flood risks in the Orchard Park neighborhood

And would consider multiple community objectives, including:

- **Climate adaptation and flood resilience**, especially for disadvantaged and farmworker communities
- **Protection of productive agricultural lands** and support for long-term farm viability
- **Equitable access** to schools, parks, and emergency routes
- **Ecological restoration** to strengthen natural flood buffers and ecosystem services

In order to insure that funding for the study can be obtained and considers broader regional goals for flood resilience, climate adaptation, and sustainable infrastructure, it is necessary to compel participation in the Technical Advisory group by appropriate County staff and to create a workplan that identifies potential funding opportunities for the Study as well as those for actual project construction.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of the recommended actions is unknown but will likely involve redirecting staff time away from other priorities.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Sustainable Environment

Submitted By:

Felipe Hernandez, Fourth District Supervisor

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.