

# Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program Advances

by Sandy Guldman  
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In a unanimous vote published June 7, the California Supreme Court affirmed the flood fee election that was narrowly passed by property owners in the Ross Valley in 2007. The decision clears the way to using fee funds to move ahead more aggressively on the Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program, a watershed-wide, integrated approach to flood control that would provide protection from flooding that has a one percent chance of occurring in any year (commonly called the 100-year flood). The Corte Madera Creek system, as it is now, can only handle up to about a 38-year flood event in the downstream channelized section, and as little as the five-to-ten year event in upstream sections.

On a hitherto very restricted budget, county staff has been working with a team of local engineering consultants to create a plan with proposals to store runoff in detention basins during large storms, improve creek capacity in critical locations, and manage stream sediment that settles out and reduces flow capacity in the lower reaches of Corte Madera Creek. The full report will be ready in October 2010, but there will be interim reports in July (Detention Basins) and September (Creek Capacity and Geomorphology). The Sediment Management plan and a cost/benefit analysis will be submitted along with the full report in October. Each of these will be presented at public meetings of the Flood Zone 9 Advisory Board.

Friends has representatives on the Technical Advisory Committee that will review the interim and final reports. We support effective flood management, not only because we want to avoid the damage suffered by residents and business owners in the Ross Valley, but because of the serious environmental damage done by floods in urban and suburban neighborhoods: degradation of the vestigial riparian corridor, scouring of redds and loss of young fish, water pollution from raw sewage overflows and household and gardening chemicals washing into the creeks and wetlands, excessive sediment deposition in the tidal areas, and debris that buries marsh vegetation after a storm.

We look forward to working with the County and incorporated communities to write proposals for funding for specific projects identified in the reports, now that matching funds will be available.



*Neither high or dry enough: Nokomis Avenue bridge in San Anselmo was overtopped by the December 2005 flood, but with legal obstructions cleared, work will be able to proceed with watershed improvements to reduce flooding. Photo by Charles Kennard*