

Flooding: the Current Situation

by Sandy Goldman

2006

The December 31, 2005 flood was a wake-up call for all of us who live and work in the Ross Valley. Supervisor Hal Brown responded to the public outcry and in January 2006 initiated the Ross Valley Watershed Flood Protection and Watershed Program to create a comprehensive strategy for dealing with the causes and consequences of flooding. It is recognized that historic disregard for natural drainage and creek flow patterns is responsible for many of the problems. Led by the County of Marin Department of Public Works, the Program is a collaborative effort that includes the City of Larkspur and towns of Fairfax, Ross and San Anselmo. A wide range of partners, technical and financial working groups, and community members are participating. Technical and financial working groups will add expert analysis to the project, and will present their findings to Ross Valley residents at a series of community meetings. Friends have two representatives on the Technical Working Group.

Through 2006 and early 2007, the County will host a series of working group and community meetings to develop potential flood management solutions, propose creek restoration strategies, and identify funding sources for their implementation. The first community meeting was held May 20, 2006. During this meeting, the County engineer, Jack Curley, together with technical experts, presented an analysis of the flooding and described the solutions framework and planning process. A second community meeting is planned for October 2006, at which the County will present preliminary solutions and a financial plan. The third community meeting will be held in December 2006, when the County will present agreed on solutions and an integrated finance plan.

One challenge for the planning process is lack of information about the watershed, and various groups are working to address that problem. The Town of San Anselmo Flood Advisory Committee is, among many other tasks, identifying problem areas, obtaining anecdotal information, and documenting high water marks. Friends' volunteers documented high water marks during the first two weeks after the flood and also revisited some of the high water marks from the 1982 flood to compare 1982 and 2005 water levels. Volunteers from the Ross Valley Flood Mitigation League also plan over the course of the summer to place tags at high water marks.

Please visit the website at www.rossvalleywatershed.org/ for more information and updates. We need your involvement to develop a project that will include improvements in flood management, aquatic and riparian habitat, and fish passage.

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