



Staff Report

Date: July 9, 2020

To: Mayor McMillan and Council Members

From: Richard Simonitch, Public Works Director

Subject: Presentation and discussion of the Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project, Phase 1 by the Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District staff and environmental consultants

Recommendation

Town Council consider and discuss the locally managed Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project, Phase 1 (the Project), to provide guidance to the Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (MCFCD) staff and environmental consultants for the preparation of a new Draft Environmental Impact Report.

Background and Discussion

The primary goal of the Project is to reduce the frequency and severity of flooding and to protect human life and property in the communities of Ross and Kentfield by enhancing and improving Corte Madera Creek. Under local leadership and management, the District plans to use public input, additional evaluation of the "Phase 1" components, and the completed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 2018 Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) to develop a redefined project concept that is reflective of local community priorities. The USACE published the Draft EIS/EIR for the Project in 2018. As of December 31, 2019, the MCFCD and the USACE have mutually agreed to terminate their agreement and the Project has now transitioned to a locally managed project. As a result, the USACE Draft EIS/EIR has been shelved and a new draft EIR is to be prepared and circulated.

The MCFCD staff and environmental consultants held public workshops on June 25 and June 30, 2020. These initial workshops were designed to assist MCFCD with developing a project description for the Environmental Review process and provide attendees with the opportunity to view and comment on the Draft Project design and concepts. The Project design will integrate multiple benefits including flood risk mitigation, ecosystem restoration, improved fish passage, and recreational enhancements.

To procure congressional approval for funding, the USACE project required a 100-year level of flood protection throughout the entire reach of Corte Madera Creek between Lagunitas Road

bridge and the end of the concrete channel at the College of Marin. To achieve this level of protection, the project would have required either the construction of extensive flood walls across properties along Sylvan Lane, or the installation of a large underground twin-bypass culvert within Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Ross. Based on the comments received throughout the USACE public outreach efforts beginning in 2016, these project elements were not well received and are not included in the current project.

With the removal of the USACE funding constraints, the MCFCD has returned to a concept that would be designed to provide significant flood risk reduction based on a 25-year flood event. The Project elements include removal of a USACE wooden fish ladder, modifications to Frederick Allen Park including removal of portions of the existing concrete channel and natural channel restoration and redesign of the park features and landscaping, construction of new floodwalls, installation of a storm drain pump station, and construction of improved fish pools.

The Town of Ross has a key role in the Project which includes participating in the development of the project description for the Draft EIR of the proposed modifications to Frederick Allen Park, Advisory Design Review of Frederick Allen Park final concept designs, and the review, approval, and issuance of grading and building permits for all construction within Town Property.

Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts

The estimated cost of the Project is currently being assessed by MCFCD and will be refined through the environmental review phase. The preliminary cost estimate for the Project is currently \$14 million. Funding sources include the Ross Valley Flood Control Zone 9 Storm Drainage Fee, and the \$7 million California Department of Water Resources and other future grant funding sources.

The current timeline for the Project is:

1. Conduct community meetings on draft Project concepts: June 2020
2. Define proposed project for EIR: July 2020
3. Issue Notice of Preparation and conduct scoping: August—September 2020
4. Publish Draft EIR for public comment and review: 1st Quarter 2021
5. Publish Final EIR Summer: 2021
6. Decision on Project: Fall 2021
7. Permits Issued by state and federal agencies: Fall 2021
8. Construction: Spring 2022—Fall 2022

Alternative actions

None

Attachments

Project Information Sheet

Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project

Project Information Sheet



OVERVIEW

The Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) proposes the Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project, Phase 1 (Project). Corte Madera Creek has flooded numerous times in the past 70 years resulting in loss of human life and significant property and infrastructure damage. Goals of the Project include protection of life and property from flooding and improved fish passage within Corte Madera Creek within Kentfield and the Town of Ross. The Project is funded through a combination of local funding and a grant from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). The Project will be locally managed by the District, in partnership with the Town of Ross, Friends of Corte Madera Creek and other local stakeholders.

Project History

- 1960s–70s: USACE and the District began work on the Corte Madera Creek Flood Control Project; however, the project was not implemented due to litigation.
- 2015: USACE reinitiated study and design of the flood management project.
- 2018: USACE released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project.
- 2019: District and USACE worked together to terminate the joint effort in support of a locally-managed project

Previous Environmental Review

The USACE published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Project in 2018. Upon careful review of the public comments on the Draft EIS/EIR, the District recognized that additional analysis of the project alternatives would be necessary to ensure that public and agency comments were adequately addressed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The District Board of Supervisor decided to terminate the agreement with the USACE as of December 31, 2019, and transition the Project to a locally-managed project.

Current District-Led Project

Under local leadership and management, the District plans to use public input, additional evaluation of the “Phase 1” components, and the completed 2018 Draft EIS/EIR to develop a redefined project concept that is reflective of local community priorities. The Project design will integrate multiple benefits including flood risk mitigation, ecosystem restoration, improved fish passage, and recreational enhancements.

The Project will reduce the risk of flood damage in the Town of Ross and unincorporated Kentfield through Corte Madera Creek channel improvements and widening; removal of a USACE wooden fish ladder; removal of portions of the existing concrete channel; construction of new floodwalls; installation of a storm drain pump station; construction of improved fish pools; and natural channel restoration.

The current Project design does not include a bypass pipeline or closure of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, which was previously a major area of public concern due to traffic impacts.

Project Location

The Project is located in the Corte Madera Creek watershed, within the Town of Ross and unincorporated Kentfield in Marin County. The Project is divided into units which reflect units of Corte Madera Creek that were defined by USACE in the 1960s. The Project involves activities in Units 4 and 3 and the concrete-lined portion of Unit 2, along approximately 1.4 miles of Corte Madera Creek. No work is proposed in Unit 1.

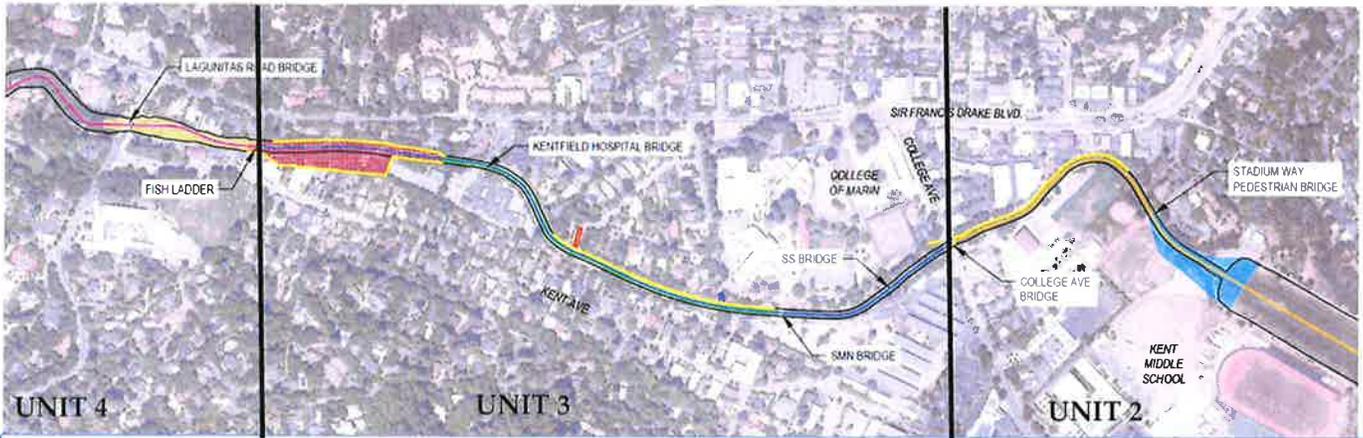
Project Objectives

The purpose of the Project is to reduce the risk of flooding to provide further protection for life and property along Corte Madera Creek. The Town of Ross and unincorporated Kentfield have experienced flooding along Corte Madera Creek and are at further risk of flood damage under the 25-year flood if the Project is not constructed. The Project objectives include:

1. Reduce the likelihood and consequences of flooding on human life and critical infrastructure in the Town of Ross and Kentfield
2. Develop and implement environmentally sustainable flood risk management features consistent with natural geomorphic processes and ecological functions of the study area
3. Improve fish habitat and fish passage conditions for salmonids in Corte Madera Creek
4. Minimize environmental impacts from future operation and maintenance actions in the Project area
5. Provide recreation and trail access benefits at Frederick Allen Park

Project Timeline

Project Next Steps	Timeline
Conduct community meetings on draft Project concepts	June 2020
Define proposed project for EIR	July 2020
Issue Notice of Preparation and conduct scoping	August—September 2020
Publish Draft EIR for public comment and review	1st Quarter 2021
Publish Final EIR	Summer 2021
Decision on Project	Fall 2021
Permits Issued by state and federal agencies	Fall 2021
Construction	Spring 2022—Fall 2022

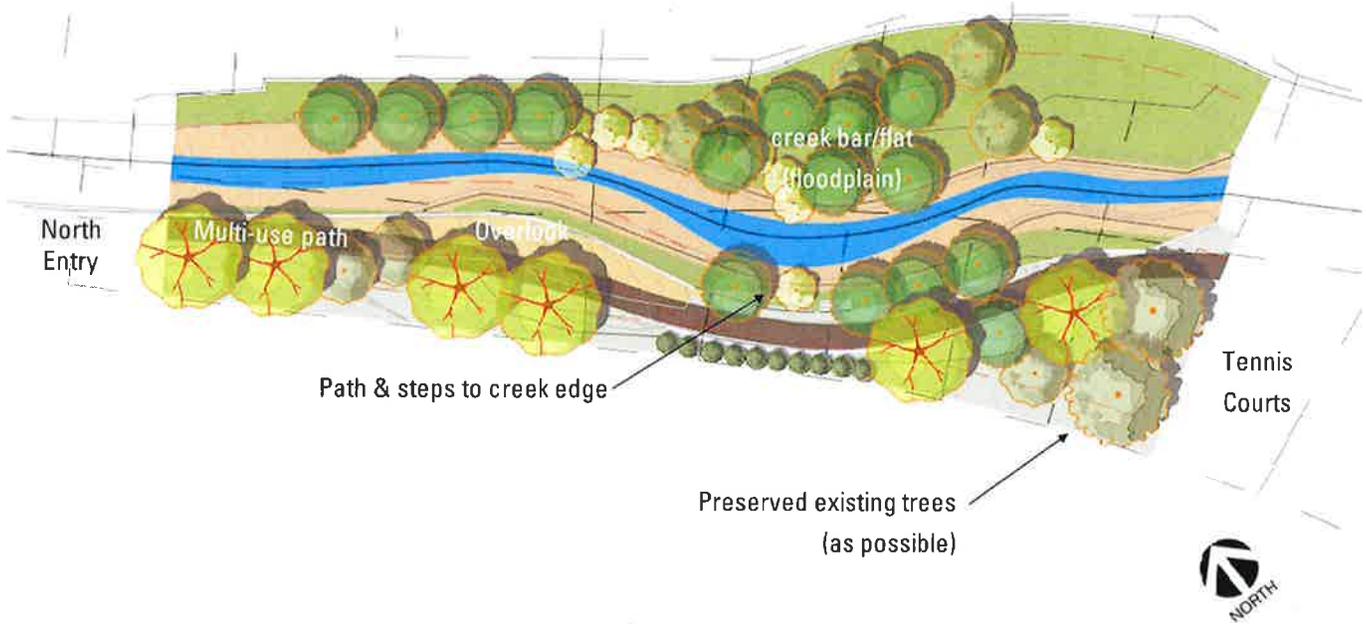


Project Elements by Unit

Unit	Project Elements
Unit 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish Ladder Removal. The existing fish ladder located at the upstream limit of the concrete channel would be removed. • Channel Improvements. The existing bed and banks of the channel would be graded to provide a hydraulically gradual and smooth transition from the upstream natural channel to the downstream concrete channel. • Grade Control and Slope Protection. Large rock would be strategically placed to line the bed and banks to meet the finished grades and protect an existing Ross Valley Sanitation District sanitary sewer pipeline from erosion and scouring.
Unit 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Channel Concrete Removal. The existing concrete channel and walls in Frederick Allen Park would be removed and replaced with natural substrate. • Channel Improvements. The channel corridor within Frederick Allen Park would be widened along the left bank after the existing concrete is removed. A portion of the existing park would be lowered to yield a new floodplain bench. • New and Modified Flood Wall. A new floodwall would be constructed along the western edge of the Frederick Allen Park with heights up to 3 feet above grade. Increased floodwall height along the left bank in Granton Park neighborhood. • New and Enhanced Fish Pools.² New fish pool structures would be installed to improve fish passage in the concrete channel. • New Permanent Maintenance Access. A new access ramp would be constructed in the intersection of Locust Avenue and Cedar Avenue to provide channel maintenance access. • Stormwater Pump Station and Backup Power. A new stormwater pump station would be constructed at Laurel Avenue to convey runoff from the Granton Park neighborhood and tributary area to east of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.
Unit 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Channel Concrete Removal.³ The existing concrete channel from the Stadium Way pedestrian bridge downstream to the confluence at the earthen channel would be removed. • New and Modified Floodwall. The left bank would remain either an existing concrete wall, a new shorter wall, or a rock embankment to protect the existing Ross Valley Sanitation District sanitary sewer pipeline. Another floodwall (up to 4 feet height) would be constructed on top of the existing concrete wall downstream of College Avenue.

Frederick Allen Park

The District is coordinating with the Town of Ross to identify potential channel improvements that may be completed within Frederick Allen Park. Potential improvements include removal of the existing fish ladder and floodplain restoration within the park. The design approach at Frederick Allen Park will be refined after public outreach on the draft Project concepts. A draft concept for Corte Madera Creek and Frederick Allen Park is shown below.



Contact Information

If you have any comments or questions about the Project, you may contact the Project Manager for the District, Joanna Dixon, P.E., Associate Civil Engineer (jdixon@marincounty.org).

Additional Resources

Project Website:

<https://www.marinwatersheds.org/resources/projects/corte-madera-creek-flood-risk-management-project>

Ross Valley Flood Protection & Watershed Program:

<https://www.marinwatersheds.org/creeks-watersheds/ross-valley-flood-protection-watershed-program>

Notes

- ¹ The left and right banks are based on the orientation facing downstream.
- ² This is the Corte Madera Creek Fish Passage Project proposed by Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed.
- ³ This is the Lower College of Marin Reach Concrete Channel Removal Project proposed by Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed. This project is funded by California State Coastal conservancy, CDWR and College of Marin.