



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Zone 7 Awards Grant to Facilitate Stream Improvements *Win-Win for Flood Protection Agency and Private Landowners*

The Livermore-Amador Valley's Zone 7 Water Agency is launching a pilot grant program to determine whether public/private partnerships could help in implementing Stream Management Master Plan projects on privately owned stream reaches within Zone 7's jurisdiction.

The Zone 7 Board of Directors on Wednesday night agreed to requests from a group of private landowners along a stretch of Arroyo de la Laguna between Pleasanton and Sunol, which suffers from significant streambank erosion and loss of backyard property, for a \$100,000 grant to facilitate stream improvements consistent with Zone 7's SMMP goals.

The Urban Creeks Council, a non-profit organization, will administer the grant along with \$50,000 in matching funds it has received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grant funding will be used to develop preliminary designs for bank stabilization, erosion protection, habitat and other improvements on a mile-long stretch of arroyo from Castlewood Drive downstream to the Verona Bridge. The design work could then be used to seek future joint funding for constructing those improvements, and could make the project more competitive for future state and federal grant funding.

“This action demonstrates Zone 7’s willingness to work collaboratively on watershed issues, and provides one avenue for seeking joint funding on stream management issues like slope stabilization and restoration,” said Zone 7 Board President Dick Quigley. “To finally see SMMP projects where the rubber is meeting the road – and with community involvement – is really special.”

Zone 7’s SMMP, adopted in 2006, identifies the lower reach of Arroyo de la Laguna – which carries much of the Livermore-Amador Valley’s stormwater to Alameda Creek and on to San Francisco Bay -- as regionally important to the flood protection goals of the entire Valley. The SMMP identified a project for this stretch of arroyo that includes bed/bank stabilization, restoration/rehabilitation through bio-engineering methods, and other habitat enhancements within the reach.

Private landowners along the stretch near Verona Bridge formed a neighborhood coalition called Friends of Verona Reach to address concerns of significant bank erosion and loss of property, along with overall stream health. The bank erosion is a major source of sediment buildup in the downstream area of the arroyo, which reduces its stormwater-carrying capacity. In addition, the erosion is so great that large amounts of tree debris can become lodged downstream, causing out-of-bank flooding.

Although many of the Valley’s streams and channels are under public ownership, the Verona Reach of Arroyo de la Laguna is one of many privately owned areas identified in the SMMP as important to the overall health of the Upper Alameda Creek Watershed. Achieving flood protection in the Valley is therefore difficult for Zone 7 to accomplish without costly or unpopular land acquisition. Zone 7 is hopeful that public/private partnerships in implementing some SMMP projects could be a win-win for everyone involved.

The grant program will require minimum criteria to be further refined through the pilot program:

- Grantee must provide a 25 percent match for requested grant funds.
- Grant funds may be provided only to non-governmental organizations, non-profits, homeowners associations or other groups assisting private landowners.
- Grantee must own land within Zone 7's jurisdiction and be located on a stream identified in the SMMP or subsequent flood protection improvement plans as needing improvement or enhancement.

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Zone 7 Water Agency is one of the 10 active zones of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The District was established by the State Legislature in October 1949 to solve problems of flooding, drainage, channel erosion and water supply and conservation in Alameda County. In 1957, by popular vote, Zone 7 became a special district governed by a seven-member board of directors. Along with flood protection, Zone 7 supplies water for nearly 200,000 residents. Treated water is sold wholesale to local retailers, including the cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, the Dublin San Ramon Services District, and the California Water Service Company. Zone 7 also distributes untreated water to local agriculture operations and golf courses.