

Solano County Flood Control (Sweeney Creek) 2003-2004 Grand Jury Report

I. Reason for investigation

The Grand Jury elected to continue the investigation into Solano County Flood Control policies and procedures initiated by the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 Grand Jury in relation to Sweeney Creek, as some of the unresolved issues were in the working stages of being resolved.

II. Procedures

The Grand Jury:

- Reviewed 2001-2002 Grand Jury Report and Responses
- Reviewed 2002-2003 Grand Jury Report and Responses
- Attended Solano County Water Agency Board of Directors' meetings
- Attended flood control advisory committee meetings
- Attended Sweeney Creek Watershed presentation
- Toured Sweeney Creek areas subject to flooding
- Toured Sweeney Creek when crews were cleaning/clearing channel

Interviewed staff members of:

- Solano County Water Agency (SCWA)
- Solano County Department of Transportation work areas

III. Background

1. Flooding within the County is a recurring problem. This issue should be of continuing concern to the County Board of Supervisors, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and various Solano County department heads including SWCA, Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Management and Office of Emergency Services.

2. During 2003, SCWA successfully obtained easements from land owners along Sweeney Creek and the following items were accomplished:

- The creek was cleared of dead trees, vegetation and four debris dams between Putah South Canal and Interstate 505 (I-505)
- A culvert was installed approximately 400 yards south of Putah Canal not without the planned flap gate
- Sediment and dirt was removed between Hartley bridge and I505.

3. The items accomplished on this section of Sweeney Creek greatly reduced flooding. However SCWA was not able to completely clean the creek between I-505 and the weir that takes water to the Kilkenney canal due to time constraints (May 15 – October 15). This portion is scheduled to be completed this year (2004) and will greatly reduce flooding. There is one minor problem, one Elderberry bush in the creek on Caltrans easement of the creek must be mitigated. Also one area of concern is "Arundo" a false bamboo weed that is extremely invasive and can create natural dams which cause flooding, this weed must be contained. Additionally, flooding in the Heather Lane area is caused by the drainage ditch along the side of Putah South Canal, this issue is being evaluated for correction. SWCA is currently accomplishing a watershed study of

this area. If this study is implemented, flooding would be greatly reduced in the north area of Solano County.

IV. Findings and Recommendations

Each finding is referenced to the background paragraph number

Finding #1: Flooding continues to be a problem in Solano County.

Recommendation #1: Solano County board of Supervisors, SCWA Board of Directors, and other effected agencies must continue to work to relieve the problem of flooding throughout the county for the health, safety and welfare of county residents.

Finding #2: Work accomplished on this portion of Sweeney Creek greatly reduced flooding in the area of Allendale and I-505.

Recommendation #2: Work that was not accomplished between Sweeney Creek from I505 to the Weir must be completed. SCWA should meet with local land owners to discuss problem areas and re-evaluate this area yearly to ensure the creek is maintained, and flooding is reduced to the minimum.

Finding #3: Elderberry bush in the creek may support an endangered insect species. This plant should be removed in accordance with environmental rules as it impedes the flow of water in the creek.

Recommendation #3: Caltrans and SCWA partner with the resource conservation district to develop a plan to grow endangered plant species for mitigation of removed plants.

Finding #4: Arundo” a false bamboo weed that is extremely evasive and can create a natural dam causing flooding,

Recommendation #4: Caltrans and SCWA partner with the resource conservation district to develop an eradication plan.

Finding #5: The culvert installed south of Putah Canal has a “backwash” when Sweeney creek is full causing slight flooding. A flap gate was not placed on culvert when installed.

Recommendation #5: Install a flap gate.

V. Comments

SCWA and county transportation crews should be commended for the work that was accomplished. Flooding in this portion of the creek has been reduced. The dialogue between local land owners and SCWA has greatly improved, and the results of their efforts should be an example for the entire county to follow.

VI. Affected Agencies

- Solano County Water Agency
- California Department of Transportation
- Department of Environmental Management
- Solano Resource Conservation District