FLOOD INSURANCE TO BE REQUIRED IN NATOMAS

Purchasing policy early can reduce the cost

This coming December, a new Federal flood insurance requirement will go into effect for property owners in Natomas. If your home or building is located in this basin and you carry a loan that is federally guaranteed, you will be required to buy flood insurance then or have your mortgage lender buy it for you at a higher premium cost to you.

In 1998, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) certified the Natomas levees as meeting minimum Federal flood safety standards. After Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, however, the Corps adopted tougher Federal safety standards for certifying levees. The Corps recently announced that the levees protecting Natomas from flooding do not meet these standards.

SAFCA urges everyone in Natomas to purchase flood insurance provided by the Federal government’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). If you own property in Natomas and don’t have flood insurance, you can save money by taking advantage of the lower preferred risk policy (PRP) rates before Natomas and don’t have flood insurance, you the federal flood insurance requirement takes effect in December. The amount of the savings, however, will depend on when the property owner purchases the NFIP insurance.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Stakes are Higher This Year

This past year has been exciting, positive and sometimes confusing. Our first major step forward occurred in April, when property owners voted overwhelmingly to support the formation of SAFCA’s new Consolidated Capital Assessment District (CCAD). Reaching this milestone will allow SAFCA to generate $326 million in assessment fees that will enable SAFCA to secure $2.4 billion in matching State and Federal funds.

Perhaps the most tangible marker of progress, however, was the start of construction on Folsom Dam improvements late last year.

I am also pleased to report that we saw the first phase of construction begin on Natomas levees as well as flood walls and channel improvements along 8,250 feet of Morrison Creek in south Sacramento.

Progress was also made in the State Legislature and Congress. State legislation was passed to provide an improved regional framework for flood project planning and authorizing most of the elements of SAFCA’s 200-year flood protection plan. Congress authorized the new Folsom Dam Spillway and appropriated $62.5 million for SAFCA-related projects.

Now, we must turn again to the State of California and the Federal government in order to secure approvals for environmental impact studies, permits for moving earth, and annual appropriations to fund the State and Federal portions of our project costs.

We also propose that a “development impact fee” be imposed on new floodplain development to finance continuing efforts to strengthen the Sacramento region’s flood control infrastructure and to improve control over American and Sacramento river flows.

New Federal standards on levee certification and vegetation have created a challenging planning environment. Moreover, a group of Garden Highway residents who will be impacted by Natomas levee construction

Balancing Growth and Flood Protection

TAKING SACRAMENTO BEYOND 200-YEAR PROTECTION

Sacramento’s founders probably did not imagine the flood threat they were facing when they began building on the banks of the Sacramento River, just downstream of its junction with the American River. It wasn’t long before Sacramentans began a long and occasionally humbling battle with the floodwaters of the Sacramento and American rivers.

We are still at it over 150 years later. Our levees are better, we have a flood bypass system with “relief weirs” stretching from Chico to the Delta and most of the tributaries of the Sacramento River are substantially tamed by dams.

If there is any lesson to be learned from our history, it is that while Sacramento will always face the threat of floods, the area will continue to grow. Thus, the Sacramento area faces a dilemma: How do we maintain prosperity and accommodate growth while at the same time reducing the community’s flood risk?

To answer this important question, SAFCA proposes to collect a Development Impact Fee from all new development within the Sacramento area 200-year floodplain. This fee will be invested in further improvements to our levees, developing forecast-based operations for Folsom Dam and regional flood system improvements.
Last April, property owners overwhelmingly approved the establishment of the Consolidated Capital Assessment District (CCAD) to generate $326 million to fund the local share of projects needed to achieve 200-year flood protection for the Sacramento area. With this assured revenue source in place, SAFCA sold $93 million in revenue bonds to help pay for planning, design and construction in 2007 and 2008.

SAFCA and its partners - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and State of California (State) - with continued strong support from elected officials at every level, have made swift progress on securing Federal and State authorizations and funding, as well as making strides on planning, design and construction over the past year.

**Folsom Dam Joint Federal Project (JFP) and Folsom Dam Bridge:**
Last year saw significant progress on this project, which will construct a new auxiliary spillway on the south side of the dam and fix dam safety concerns so it can safely pass the 200-year flood, withstand earthquakes and survive the probable maximum flood.

In May, the Corps and Reclamation completed the environmental documentation process and a contract was awarded for the first phase of construction, which began in January 2008. Work has begun on excavating part of the channel for the auxiliary spillway and strengthening some of the dikes and the Mormon Island Auxiliary Dam, which together help contain the lake.

Construction of the Folsom Dam Bridge is proceeding smoothly. The two bridge piers have been constructed to nearly the level of the bridge deck, while the approach alignments on both ends are being excavated. The Corps will continue construction on the bridge, which is expected to open to traffic by mid-2009.

**Natomas Levee Improvement Program:**
Last year, SAFCA began a five-year program to restore 100-year flood protection to the Natomas Basin by 2010 and achieve 200-year flood protection by 2012. SAFCA is constructing the first phase with State financial assistance authorized by SB 276.

SAFCA constructed the first two elements of this program in 2007. They included installation of a sheet pile wall to secure the foundation at the Pritchard Lake Pump Station in north Natomas, and construction of a bentonite clay cement seepage cutoff wall along 5,400 feet of the Natomas Cross Canal.

**Last Year Brought Many Legislative Accomplishments**
After seven years of unsuccessful tries, Congress finally passed the Water Resources Development Act. This act, vetoed by President Bush, became law in December when his veto was overruled by both houses of Congress. The successful override set in motion extensive flood control work in Sacramento by authorizing the Folsom Joint Federal Project, which includes a new auxiliary spillway for Folsom Dam. It also authorized SAFCA to count $20.5 million in accumulated credits from previous construction in Natomas as part of SAFCA’s cost share in ongoing Federal projects.

In December, Congress passed the Omnibus Appropriations Act, which appropriated $62.5 million for SAFCA-related projects for 2008 and provided SAFCA assurance that its proposed levee improvements in Natomas would be eligible for Federal reimbursement or credit in the future.

Last year was equally productive for flood control in the California State Legislature. After two years of working on forging a flood control policy framework, the Schwarzenegger administration and Legislature came to agreement, which will expedite flood control project planning, funding, and construction, as well as provide strong incentives for local agencies to implement wise floodplain management.

Eight flood control bills were passed as part of this framework, two of which have an important impact locally:

**SB 276 (Steinberg and Cox)** brings SAFCA’s plan one step closer to achieving 200-year flood protection for the Sacramento area. It authorizes construction of the Folsom Joint Federal Project, and 200-year levee improvements along the Lower American River, around the Natomas Basin, and the Sacramento River south of the American River. It also authorizes completion of 100-year flood protection for the South Sacramento Streams Group. For all these projects, the State will contribute 70 percent of costs not covered by the Federal government, while SAFCA contributes remaining 30 percent of the non-Federal share.

**AB 930 (Jones)** authorizes SAFCA to acquire, from willing sellers, easements outside of its jurisdiction for the purpose of preserving agricultural land and open space. Any such acquisitions must be consistent with local plans, including county general plans and be consistent with the State Plan of Flood Control. SAFCA is currently cooperating with Yolo County to protect open space in the Elkhorn Basin, just across the Sacramento River from the Natomas Basin.

We salute the leadership and dedication of our elected officials in Washington and here in California for making these accomplishments possible.
These repairs secured the two locations that experienced excessive seepage during the January 2006 high water event.

This year, SAFCA is working with the Central Valley Flood Protection Board (formerly the State Reclamation Board) to secure a funding agreement to cost share in construction of the project, to obtain encroachment permits, and to obtain Federal permissions and credit for the project. SAFCA is also working with the Corps to expedite the federal permissions process, which is difficult and time-consuming. We will complete plans and specifications and initiate construction as soon as all permits are granted in 2008.

SAFCA is confident we will be successful in addressing the legal challenge being mounted by a group of Garden Highway residents concerned about construction project impacts. Construction scheduled for 2008 includes completion of the Natomas Cross Canal levee improvements, construction of approximately four miles of levee improvements southward from the Natomas Cross Canal along the Sacramento River and completion of repairs at the Pritchard Lake Pump Station.

South Sacramento County Streams Project:

Last year, the Corps constructed floodwalls along both sides of Morrison Creek, for a distance of 8,250 feet, which will lead to remapping a portion of the Meadowview area out of the 100-year floodplain. This will make properties in the area eligible for Preferred Risk Flood Insurance later this year.

This year, channel and levee improvements along Florin Creek, Elder Creek and Unionhouse Creek will advance upstream from Morrison Creek toward Franklin Boulevard.

Mayhew Levee Project:

This project includes raising and strengthening about 4,300 feet of levee along the south bank of the American River and building a closure structure for the Mayhew Drain. The design and contracting process were completed in 2007. Construction is scheduled to start this year on this project, which has been in the planning and design stage since 1999.

A mitigation plan for burrowing owls affected by the project will get underway through rights obtained for 50 acres for construction of artificial owl burrows on Sacramento County Parks land within the Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge.

Projects To Be Funded By Development Fee

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Figures rounded to nearest million

For more information on this proposed program, please visit www.safca.org.
Keeping Up with Changing Levee Standards

Under the National Flood Insurance Program, flood-prone areas protected by levees are mapped in accordance with their level of flood protection. Thus, an area can only be mapped with 100-year level flood protection if the levees are certified to withstand a 100-year flood. In the past, SAFCA has sought such certification from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) because Sacramento’s levees are part of the Federal-State Sacramento River Flood Control Project and the Corps has generally been the lead agency for design and construction of improvements to those levees.

In the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the Corps tightened its levee certification criteria and methods. For the Sacramento area, with its very unique flood control system, this means certification by the Corps will be very difficult and time-consuming to achieve.

Under the new rules:

- The Corps will certify levees for complete basins, not for levee segments as they are completed. Under the old rules, levees could be certified as they were completed.
- Levee certifications must be renewed every 10 years. Under the old rules, levee certifications did not have a fixed life, but could be reviewed whenever warranted.
- Levees must have sufficient “freeboard” (space on the levee above the water line) to pass a 100-year flood with 90 percent assurance and have at least two feet of freeboard. Under the old rule, the Corps could certify a levee with three feet of freeboard over the 100-year flood.
- Levees must be able to withstand a 500-year earthquake, if in a seismic risk zone. Under the old rules, seismic risk was not considered in the design.

The certification criteria set forth by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) remain unchanged for the time being. Where appropriate for completing certifications in a reasonable and timely manner, SAFCA will certify levee improvements as they are completed, consistent with FEMA regulations.

ANCIPATED LEVEE CERTIFICATION MILESTONES

- South Sacramento Streams Project: Certified incrementally from 2008 through 2012, as improvements are completed
- Mayhew Levee Project: Certified by early 2009
- Natomas Levee Improvement Program: Certified by early 2011

For more information on the flood threat faced by the Sacramento area and the work to minimize the potential for flooding, please contact SAFCA at (916) 874-7606 or visit www.safca.org.

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"DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

have filed an environmental lawsuit to stop SAFCA from proceeding with its plans to raise and strengthen the levees.

In light of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ recent declaration that the Natomas Basin has less than 33-year level flood protection, new Flood Insurance Rate Maps will be issued at the end of the year and will stay in place until SAFCA brings the Natomas levees to a 100-year level of protection.

Working with our Federal and State partners and community leaders, we have a history of rapid and creative adaptation to changing conditions, successful project execution and a keen sensitivity toward the impacts of many construction-related projects that must be undertaken.

With your support and input, we can continue the pattern of completing these projects as expeditiously as possible in order to increase Sacramento’s level of flood protection.