



THREE RIVERS LEVEE IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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TRLIA CERTIFIES RECLAMATION DISTRICT 784 LEVEES, SEEKS FEMA APPROVAL

MARYSVILLE, CA – The Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority (TRLIA) announced today that it is seeking FEMA accreditation for 33 miles of Reclamation District 784 levees for a 15-year period. If approved by FEMA, the majority of properties in Linda, Olivehurst, Arboga and Plumas Lake will remain in a FEMA low-to-moderate risk flood zone through 2034. During that period, property owners will maintain eligibility for lowest-cost flood insurance and be free of any building restrictions. The system's existing FEMA accreditation, which took effect in 2010, is set to expire in 2020.

“The certification represents to the residents of Yuba County the highest level of flood protection promoted through the most current levee engineering standards and construction,” stated TRLIA Board President Sarbdeep Atwal. “We have worked extremely hard to achieve this through regulatory and environmental hurdles, and this sets a positive precedent for other surrounding counties.”

TRLIA, a joint powers authority of Yuba County and Reclamation District 784, was formed in 2004 to finance and construct levee improvements to meaningfully reduce flood risk and ward off FEMA-imposed regulations for properties in high-risk flood zones. These include mandatory, higher-cost flood insurance and building restrictions that can result in complete moratoriums on new and replacement construction. TRLIA embarked on a four-phase program resulting in approximately \$500 million in levee improvements, the bulk of which are being paid for by the state. The local share is largely being covered through a prior bond sale by Yuba County and Yuba Water Agency, for which Yuba Water Agency continues to pay approximately \$5.5 million per year in bond debt.

TRLIA's improved, and in some cases new, levees along the Upper Yuba, Feather and Bear rivers and the Western Interceptor Canal are designed to meet federal and state regulatory requirements to provide 100-year and 200-year flood protection, respectively. The majority of TRLIA's levee improvements were completed in 2010, providing the basis for FEMA's accreditation of those levees through 2020. By 2016, TRLIA had completed additional improvements to extend the Upper Yuba River levee from Simpson Lane to the Yuba Goldfields, the final requirement for 100-year flood protection. In 2020, TRLIA will break ground on a new levee that will tie into the existing

Upper Yuba River levee at the Goldfields and stretch 2.5 miles to the east, the final project necessary to meet state requirements for 200-year flood protection.

“The certification of the levee system is a historic accomplishment, one that marks the completion of a vision to protect the community from devastating floods like those in 1986 and 1997,” said Paul Brunner, TRLIA’s longtime executive director. “It represents a great deal of effort and dogged determination, both of which were necessary to deal with the ever-changing regulatory environment and funding challenges as we moved forward with project design and construction.”

Earlier this month, property owners within RD 784 boundaries approved a property assessment to provide adequate funding for the operations and maintenance of the levees and the district’s internal drainage system. Ongoing compliance with state and federal regulations for the operations and maintenance is a condition of certification, and ultimately FEMA accreditation.

TRLIA has, and continues to partner closely with Yuba County, Reclamation District 784, the Yuba Water Agency, the California Department of Water Resources, the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, FEMA and the US Army Corps of Engineers on its levee improvement program. For more information, please contact TRLIA Executive Director Paul Brunner at (530) 749-5679.

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Additional Background:

Levees are designed to reduce the risks associated with flood events. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that levees meet design, construction and operation and maintenance standards to protect against a 100-year flood event, or a storm that has a one percent chance of happening in any given year. In California, the state goes one step further in requiring that levees in urban areas protect against a 200-year flood event, or a storm that has a one-half percent chance of happening in any given year.

Local levee construction and maintaining agencies must certify – with technical documents prepared by licensed, professional engineers – that their levees meet FEMA and state standards. If FEMA standards are not met, the areas protected by the levees will be mapped into a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area, otherwise known as a high-risk flood zone. This triggers building restrictions and a requirement that properties with federally-backed loans purchase flood insurance at higher-risk rates. In addition, these agencies must demonstrate compliance with the state’s requirement for 200-year flood protection by 2025. If not, the land use agencies in the protected areas will not be allowed to issue building permits.