



December News 2012

Winter Storm Update

As we enter the winter storm season, my attention is focused on the Ross Valley's vulnerability to flooding. Especially vulnerable are our downtowns - Fairfax, San Anselmo, Ross - areas of Kentfield and Larkspur along the lower reaches of Corte Madera Creek, as well as neighborhoods in low lying areas throughout the Ross Valley. I've included in this edition of D2 E-news an editorial I recently drafted regarding our propensity for flooding and the program developed following the 2005 New Years Eve flood, aimed at reducing our collective flood risk. This program, The Ross Valley Watershed Program, is a region-wide, collaborative effort launched by our former County Supervisor, Hal Brown, in concert with electeds, civic and environmental organizations from throughout the Ross Valley. Whether you live in a flood prone area or not, I hope that you will take the time to educate yourself about this important public safety program and support efforts to implement it.

In addition, I'm giving you a brief update/background on the flood warning systems currently used for flood advisory. Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions that you would like me to address in the future. You can call my office at 415-473-7331 or email me at krice@marincounty.org.

Wishing you all a Happy Holiday and New Year!

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Ross Valley Watershed Program – Critical for our Community

There is a photograph of downtown San Anselmo taken the morning of December 31st, 2005, looking up the town's main street. There are no people or cars visible. Judging from where the water is banking off the walls of the U.S. Bank building, I'd guess the flood waters are about three or four feet deep, and coming down the road with some

force as the camera has caught a commercial size debris box, tipped on its side, floating down the middle of the road. I have a copy of this photo hung in my office at the civic center. It reminds me of what happened in 2005 and many times before.

That 2005 New Year's Eve storm was considered a "100 year" event. What that means is that a storm of similar proportion and resulting flooding has a 1% chance of happening every year. Historically, we've had "100 year" storms once every 10-20 years. The last one caused nearly \$100 million in damages to public and private property. But we were lucky. No one was hurt. No lives were lost.

We came very, very close to a repeat of the 2005 flood on December 2nd of this year. There was localized flooding in Sleepy Hollow and the Morningside area of San Anselmo and isolated events caused by blocked culverts and overwhelmed storm drains, but the main creek channels were not breached. And we were spared another community-wide disaster.

That recent "near miss" presents an opportunity to remind the entire Ross Valley community that any given year, our downtowns, many of our neighborhoods, schools and public buildings are at risk for flooding. It is why we as a community need to stay resolute in our effort to fully implement the Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program.

The Program's primary objective is to provide comprehensive flood mitigation and damage reduction integrating environmental restoration and watershed stewardship. The three primary flood protection elements are: Detention Basins, Creek Capacity Improvements, and Sediment Management. The total cost of the program is estimated at \$130 million. Of that, approximately \$40 million is being raised through the Ross Valley Storm Drainage Fee paid by property owners. The local funding source makes possible the leveraging of outside grant funding needed to fully fund projects and programs.

Earlier this year, the Ross Valley's Flood Zone 9 Advisory Board adopted a ten-year work plan that includes the first major, physical elements of the flood protection program including dry land detention basins, or dual use facilities. The detention basins are critical to achieving flood protection as they will function to hold back storm run-off during major storms and prevent flooding.

As planning for these projects commences, the County, and the Ross Valley city or town in whose jurisdiction the project is planned, will be reaching out to their respective communities to gather input on design, answer questions, address concerns, assure and ensure that a project meets community needs as well as flood mitigation function. Every project will be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and rigorous regulatory review, in addition to community vetting.

I encourage Ross Valley residents to keep informed about this program. Ask questions, express your concerns, and provide comment. Go to www.rossvalleywatershed.org for

technical data, for information about the Corte Madera Creek/Ross Valley watershed, and for flood protection and creek stewardship advice for private property owners.

Flood Warnings and Advisories - No system is perfect

The December 2nd storm was a highly unusual event. It behaved differently than forecast, rained more intensely and over a shorter period of time than predicted. Local officials and emergency responders familiar with our watershed and creeks have never seen our creek system rise as quickly as it did during that storm. As a result, there was no telephone emergency notification warning (TENS) issued.

To give you a bit of background on the regional flood warning, following the 2005 New Year's Eve flood, the County Office of Emergency Services (OES), in concert with Ross Valley local jurisdictions and emergency response agencies, established a regional flood warning protocol. That system utilizes the TENS to generate automatic calls to residences within the identified flood plain if and when conditions warrant.

The Ross Valley regional flood notification system was developed specifically to provide one more tool for advising property owners of possible flooding. It is a lower-level warning than the siren or horn warning triggered by local agencies to signal creeks are near flood level and flooding may be imminent. The TENS phone advisories are intended to provide warning of possible flooding well in advance of an event.

Each town has its own local storm and flood warning protocol in addition to working together with the OES, to provide regional warnings through the TENS system. But no warning system is perfect, and predicting storm and creek behavior is not an exact science. I want residents to know that local and county officials are reviewing their current policies and protocol around various warning tools and trigger criteria, and incorporating lessons learned from the most recent event. I will keep you updated on any progress.

Marin Catholic Stadium Improvements Update

Several months ago Marin Catholic submitted an application to the County to upgrade its athletic facilities. The proposal included replacing stadium bleachers system/grandstand, a new field house and concession stand, restrooms, weight room, locker and training rooms, Americans with Disabilities act (ADA) improvements, new field and stadium lights and speaker system, and landscaping and bioretention improvements.

Through the normal review process, two elements of the project have generated the most community interest and concern – lighting, to allow for night use, and a new sound system. My office, planning staff, the school, the Greenbrae Property Owners Association, and Kentfield Planning and Advisory Board have received many, many comments on the project—some in support of the project, and many concerned or objecting to the project.

In response to community concerns expressed, Marin Catholic has amended its proposal—eliminating night lighting, and has committed to working with community to ensure a new sound system will be an improvement over the current system. The revised project must now go through the formal review, design review and approval process at the County. Individuals interested in commenting on the project can send me or planner Neil Osborn comments at nosborn@marincounty.org.

Marin County's New Fire Chief

Jason Weber was sworn in as Marin County's ninth fire chief on December 11th after a nationwide search that produced 49 applicants and seven finalists. Jason received a standing ovation from a crowd that packed the Board of Supervisor's chambers, including firefighters from every city and town in the County and beyond, as well as family and friends from throughout northern California.

Chief Weber is a well known and much respected member of Marin's Fire Fighting community, having come up through the ranks of the Marin County fire department after joining in 1995 as a seasonal firefighter. He has served as a Battalion Chief and Training Officer, and more recently as Deputy Chief under Chief Ken Massucco for two years, and as Interim Chief for the past nine months. Jason grew up near Schellville in Sonoma County, has a degree in fire science, earned a bachelor's degree from California State University at Long Beach and is trained as a paramedic. Jason currently lives in Novato with his wife Brianna and their two young daughters.

I look forward to working with Chief Weber on the many issues surrounding fire prevention, protection, and community preparedness and invite all District 2 residents to shout out a "welcome" to Jason as well. I have no doubt that he will play an important role in keeping our communities safe and prepared for many years to come.

Social Action Project for Kent Middle School: Students Make a Difference through Dance

Kudos to Kent Middle School eighth graders Lauren Fish, Hanna Sweet, Emily Cerf, and Lily Gaudin who partnered with Performing Stars of Marin and Stapleton School for the Performing Arts to provide ballet classes for a group of children from Marin City and the Canal Area of San Rafael. The program was developed by the middle school students as their "Social Action" project.

The project originated with the students love for dance and the idea of teaching dance to children who otherwise wouldn't have the chance. They identified Performing Stars of Marin, and met with the founder and executive director Felecia Gaston who organized a group of eight energetic and excited kindergarteners to attend. "These children would not have this opportunity without programs like what the students and their partner Stapleton provide. It is their way of giving back."

The middle school students worked with Virginia Stapleton, artistic director and founder of Stapleton School for the Performing Arts in San Anselmo, to secure studio space and develop lesson plans for the classes. In addition, the girls recruited two high school

dancers, Emma Burgis from Redwood and Amanda Nordstrom from Drake who agreed to help the Kent students with the classes. Virginia says of their effort, “I really applaud my students for wanting to do something special. This project truly fits in with Stapleton’s commitment and outreach to make dance available to all children.”

In addition to planning and implementing the class, the students have held numerous bake sales to raise the funds needed for the young dancer’s chaperones and transportation from Marin City. They also held a leotard drive to gather appropriate dancing attire for the enthusiastic participants.

Through their efforts, the middle schoolers have managed to bring together youth of all ages and from across the county for a unique and memorable experience. When asked what they like most about this project, the four students said, practically in unison “being able to teach the girls ballet and watching them have fun!”



County of Marin Civic Center Volunteer Recognition

At their December 4th meeting, the Board of Supervisors recognized 158 Marin County Civic Center Volunteer program honorees for 2012, outstanding volunteers and student interns who have completed their contracts and were recommended for commendation by their immediate supervisors. These Marin County residents gave their time, energy and considerable talents free of charge to County government. A specific call out to District 2 resident, Taylor Lee of Greenbrae, who worked as an intern for six weeks this past summer in the office of the District Attorney. Currently a junior at Redwood High School, Taylor found her volunteer intern opportunity through the Marin County School to Career Partnership program, designed to provide educational opportunities for students.

These honorees are just part of a much bigger volunteer picture. In 2011, the Marin County Civic Center Volunteer Program (CCV) had 8,694 participants donating 240,676 hours and equaling 123.4 full-time employees. And for the first six months of 2012, 4,577 volunteers donating 112,551 hours equaling 115.4 full-time employees. Volunteer

assignments range from clerical assistance in the assessor's office to fire department support and supplement employees in virtually all aspects of county government.

The CCV was launched by the Board of Supervisors 33 year ago in 1979 after the passage of California's Proposition 13 and was created to supplement an already overburdened paid staff at every level, in order to help maintain Marin's excellent county services. To find out more about the County's volunteer program, visit <http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/hr/ccvol/index.cfm>

Upcoming Local Events

Junior Rangers: Cascade Canyon - Focus on Creeks and Fish

Sunday, December 23, 2012, 10am – 12pm

Meet at the gate at the end of Cascade Drive in Fairfax.

Join us for the new Junior Ranger program, created to teach youth about outdoor skills, natural history and environmental stewardship. The program is intended for 7-12 year olds, though explorers of all ages are welcome to attend. We will cover some basic pre-hike preparation and outdoor safety, then walk along San Anselmo Creek and learn why protecting stream headwaters is important to our wildlife and communities. This will be a moderate 2 mile hike. Dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes (it could be muddy or slippery), and bring water and snacks. Friendly dogs are welcome, but must be leashed. Rain will cancel the event. Questions: Call (415) 473-2816.

Salmon of San Geronimo Valley

Sunday, December 30, 2012, 9am – 12pm

Meet at the gate on Redwood Canyon Dr in San Geronimo.

Join rangers and learn about the amazing story of our local salmon. Born in Marin's streams, these fish venture out into the vast Pacific Ocean to feed and grow. When they are ready to spawn, they reverse the journey and return home to begin the next generation. We will carpool to Shafter Bridge to view waterfalls and a salmon spawning area. We will also discuss watersheds and the impacts we have on them. Dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes (it could be muddy or slippery), and bring water and snacks. Bring polarized glasses if you have them to reduce glare on the water. Heavy rain will cancel the event. Questions: Contact Ranger Gabe Ngarangad at (415) 473-2816 or GNgarangad @marincounty.org.

Save The Bay at Hal Brown Park

Saturday, January 12, 2013, 9am – 12pm

Hal Brown Park Creekside, Bon Air Rd, Greenbrae, CA

We will work to plant native shrubs and transform the transition zone between Hal Brown Park and Creekside Marsh from a monoculture of non-native Harding grass to a rich, native ecosystem. Volunteers of all ages and abilities are encouraged to attend. Pre-registration is required. To register, or for more information, visit www.savesfbay.org.

Waterfall Walks: Cascade Canyon

Saturday, January 12, 2013, 10am – 12pm

Meet at Doc Edgar Park on Cascade Dr in Fairfax for a car shuttle (parking is extremely limited at the end of Cascade Drive).

Meet a ranger for a tour in this lush canyon to view a cascade nestled amidst the trees. A discussion of creek ecology, watersheds, and water conservation will be included on the way. This will be a moderate, level walk with one steep section, approximately 2 miles round-trip. Dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes (it could be muddy or slippery), and bring water and snacks. Friendly dogs are welcome, but must be leashed. Rain does not cancel the event. Questions: Call (415) 473-2816.

For a complete listing of County events and meetings, visit <http://www.marincounty.org/main/calendar>.

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