

Dear CSA 6 Board Members

This email serves as a long overdue update to the CSA 6 board on the status of the proposed Gallinas Creek dredging project. The project has been in a period of slow movement as we work with potential disposal sites for placement of the dredged sediments.

Since our last meeting almost two years ago where the project budget and dredge design were approved by the CSA 6 board, the focus of staff since that meeting was on finalizing design and permitting for a dredge sediment disposal location. The two nearby disposal locations were (1) the fields north of the wastewater owned by Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District (LGVSD) and (2) the McInnis Marsh Restoration Project being overseen by Marin County Parks. CSA staff continued to work on both disposal sites in parallel.

The LGVSD field site was the most problematic. The location provided to County CSA 6 staff changed three times over the course of the roughly 12-month period requiring three different sediment placement cell redesign efforts. The final location offered to CSA 6 was too narrow for dredge disposal placement and had insufficient sediment disposal capacity along with significant additional cost for levees due to the large cell perimeter. In Fall 2020, CSA 6 staff notified the LGVSD that their final sediment location was not cost-effective.

For the proposed McInnis Marsh Restoration project, DPW staff continued to work closely with Parks staff to design the placement of 100,000 cubic yards of dredge sediment including approximately 9,000 cubic yards of sediment classified by the Regional Water Quality Control Board as "foundation" and thus requiring burying under three feet of clean cover sediments. This placement design requirement is being designed into the McInnis project. In 2020, the McInnis Marsh Restoration project ran into design slowdowns due to a number of issues including additional hydraulic flood modeling and the need to address the existing LGVSD force main pipe. Parks staff is continuing to work with LGVSD regarding the force main issue, which may result in redesign. To obtain the necessary funding to continue final design, CEQA and permitting activities, County and Parks staff submitted a grant application in December 2020 to the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (SFBRA) Measure AA bay region wetlands grant program. In March 2021, staff were informed that the grant was recommended for approval at an upcoming SFBRA board meeting. This grant funding will allow the McInnis Marsh Restoration project to continue work on final design, compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and permitting including the proposed CSA 6 Gallinas Creek geomorphic dredge project.

Note that the proposed McInnis Marsh Restoration project is not currently funded for implementation. However, a project that has its CEQA and permits completed is much more likely to find funding for implementation. Therefore, we have no definite date for dredging, transporting sediments into McInnis for use in the marsh restoration project but the earliest date for dredging the creek would be 2024 or more likely 2025. County staff will continue to work on the final design, CEQA and permitting for placement of South Fork Gallinas Creek sediments as our primary focus of staff time.

We anticipate having further updates or scheduling a meeting after Board of Supervisors acceptance of the AA grant and beginning of environmental review and CEQA is initiated. During this process, there will be opportunities for public participation.

Proposed 2021-22 CSA 6 Baseline Budget

The County Administrator's Office requested that the dredging CSAs recommend a baseline operations budget for the beginning of each fiscal year that does not include major project expenses. Baseline budgets are intended to be relatively consistent year to year. Major project expenditures will require separate actions from the Advisory Board (AB) and BOS to adjust the budget as needed. The approved budget may always be adjusted as necessary as priorities and cost estimates for projects and studies planned for this coming fiscal year are more clearly identified. Staff will review the proposed CSA 6 Baseline Budget for FY 2021-2022 at the meeting. It can be viewed here:

<https://www.marinwatersheds.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Proposed%20FY%202021-22%20Baseline%20Budget%20CSA%206.pdf>

Dredging and Relationship to the Santa Venetia Levee Project

It has been brought to our attention that a lot of misinformation has been circulating around Santa Venetia about the Gallinas Dredging project and we want to take this opportunity to clarify the relationship between the two projects. The Water Resources team of Public Works manages both the Flood Zone 7 levee and the CSA 6 dredging project which facilitates close and continual coordination between these two adjacent projects. There shouldn't be a reason why these two projects couldn't happen at the same time, however tying their schedules together would seem to unnecessarily complicate them without any apparent benefit.

The Santa Venetia levee is not being built or rebuilt – only the timber-reinforced berm is being added or replaced on the top of the levee. Reconstructing the timber-reinforced berm (TRB) will not have any impact on future dredge operations. The existing levee will remain in place. A TRB will be added to or reconstructed on certain sections of the levee that need a higher flood barrier in order to meet project goals. In some cases, there may be buttressing fill on the landside of the levee or a small amount of fill on the waterside face for access by species using the marsh, but the dredged sediments would not be a good material for this.

The proposed dredging of Gallinas Creek would not affect the stability of the levees. The geomorphic dredging footprint being proposed is smaller than the historic dredge footprint, and the footprint of the levees is generally not going to be altered, and any minor alterations would be of a nature that would not be impacted by activities or conditions in the creek.

The Santa Venetia levee project would not prevent dredging around Santa Margarita Island. Letting that section of creek return to tidal marsh is not part of the levee project, the proposed Gallinas Creek dredging project, nor any other project. The CSA 6 Advisory Board and Board of Supervisors will need to recommend and approve the final Gallinas Creek dredging project design before it can move on to construction. Updates on the Santa Venetia levee project will come from Flood Zone 7.

Note that CSA 6 is responsible solely for the navigational dredge of the creek (not for flood control) and although some of the residents are the same as Flood Zone 7, many other CSA 6 paying residents are not in Flood Zone 7 and the two entities have different revenue streams and project objectives. **Dredging does not protect Santa Venetians from tidal flooding.** Dredging does not alter the flooding water surface elevation in this reach of Gallinas Creek where the tide height and storm surge is what leads to the risk of levee overtopping. The purpose of the Gallinas dredge is small boat navigation.

Those that have attended CSA 6 meetings over the past several years know that the cost to dredge has far surpassed the available funding in CSA 6 accrued over the last 20 years using the traditional dredge footprint. This is primarily due to rising costs of permitting and construction for dredging that have greatly exceeded the rate of inflation, and thus the available CSA 6 funds, and are beyond the control of the County. Regulatory permit and mitigation fees alone would have taken a large percentage of available funds for the traditional style dredge. This is a problem all over SF Bay. Several smaller marinas in the Bay have gone out of business due to a lack of funding for dredging as well as the well-known issues with creek siltation, such as in San Rafael Creek and Petaluma River (which recently received nearly \$10 million in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding to dredge, for which Gallinas Creek is not eligible).

In response, and as presented over the past several years at several CSA 6 meetings, County engineers developed a scaled-down dredge approach (the “geomorphic dredge”) which greatly reduced the size and permitting costs for the dredging. The construction plans for the proposed Gallinas Creek dredge have been basically completed, however, the primary remaining issue is the need for a local disposal site for the dredged sediments. The geomorphic dredge concept was described in this technical memorandum and is more likely to achieve and sustain its shape (i.e. width and depth) with available funding than the traditional style dredge: <https://www.marinwatersheds.org/resources/publications-reports/gallinas-creek-final-geomorphic-dredge-technical-memo>. The memo includes an evaluation of eliminating the split flow condition around Santa Margarita Island in order to improve sediment transport, however, this concept was not supported by the advisory board and therefore dredging of the inner side of the island next to the homes is part of the final dredge design plans. The inner side of the island is geomorphically much more likely to silt in quickly so unless the split flow is blocked, the inner bend will start to silt in immediately following dredging regardless.

The CSA 6 staff have also been working very closely with Marin Parks staff on design of a combined project to place dredge sediments as part of the proposed McInnis Marsh restoration project which would likely be the most cost-effective option. However, it does open the possibility of grants to cover some of the dredging costs. While we understand the frustration over lack of progress, this is a big, complex and expensive project and staff have worked diligently to move the disposal site selection as fast as possible to finalize the design, proceed with the CEQA and permitting processes, and get the work out to bid. Next steps include final design that integrate the dredge sediment into the McInnis Marsh project, CEQA, permits and bid documents. Periodic updates will be provided.