



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Olivia Uribe-Mutal,
Emergency Services Program Manager
City of Carpinteria
805-755-4401
oliviau@carpinteriaca.gov

Lael Wageneck
County of Santa Barbara
Public Information Officer
805-568-3425
lwageneck@countyofsb.org

Clearing of the Carpinteria Valley Watershed Debris Basins

Carpinteria, CA -- Santa Barbara County Flood Control (SBCFC) will be conducting critical clearing of the Carpinteria Valley Watershed Debris Basins. This includes the Santa Monica, Gobernador and Arroyo Paredon debris basins; all of which collect debris from the Carpinteria Valley watersheds. In coordination with the City of Carpinteria, SBCFC will restore capacity and functionality to the debris basins by transporting deposited rocks, gravel and sand to the Carpinteria City Beach at Ash Avenue in the City of Carpinteria, where debris from the watershed would naturally flow without the benefit of the basin. A second location along the City Beach will be approved in the coming days to provide the benefits of beach sediment at multiple locations.

“Maintaining the capacity of the debris basins is crucial for its main function of protecting Carpinteria from destructive debris flows from our foothills,” said Dave Durflinger, Carpinteria City Manager. “On the coastal side of Carpinteria Valley, it is also important that collected sediments are transported to the shoreline, where the natural material buttresses our beaches from erosion and vulnerability to winter storm surges, swells and tidal events.”

In the deadly debris flows of 2018 and recent heavy storms, the debris basins have played a critical role in protecting Carpinteria from being inundated by thousands of tons of sediment. By minimizing debris flows, basins reduce the likelihood of erosion and/or blockage in local water channels. Flooding would spread without these important water channels, likely leading to an increased number of evacuations, damage to streets, homes and local infrastructure, and heightened risk to individual health and safety. The material that would have naturally flowed through the watershed, and potentially caused extensive damage and injury on its way to the beach, must be removed for the basins’ important capacity and function to be restored.

In the natural process, creek flow would deposit sediment on the shoreline, and that cobble, gravel and sand would help to replenish the beaches. Since the debris basins were constructed in the early 1970s, they have prevented floods, but have also intercepted sediment important to maintaining the beach and protecting properties near the it. When the beach is

deprived of these sediments, the beach narrows, the shoreline erodes, and public and private improvements are threatened by ocean wave flooding.

“The City believes that the most beneficial long-term debris basin sediment management program includes routine deposition of qualified mineral sediments on the shoreline that optimizes long-term cost-effectiveness, environmental benefits and public safety,” said Matt Roberts, City of Carpinteria’s Director of Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities.

The City is working collaboratively with the County of Santa Barbara to maintain our local basins utilizing best practices to balance the logistical needs of emergency workers (local, State, and Federal), community impact, and public health and safety. Mineral sediments and cobble are prioritized to be placed on the shoreline. To ensure public safety, the sediments are tested for contaminants such as bacteria and chemical constituents before being placed on the shoreline.

Over the following days and weeks, under authority granted by the issuance of Emergency Permits, sediment will be hauled in truckloads that may have noise and traffic impacts. The City will work with the County of Santa Barbara to mitigate project impacts, including air quality and truck queuing on City streets. Street sweepers will work throughout the operation to keep roadways as clean as possible. Trucks transporting sediment will utilize best practices to deposit material on the beach, thereby reducing the sediment tracked along roadways. The Flood Control District is also working to secure trucks with sealed tailgates to reduce material leaks along the hauling routes. While the process inconveniences Carpinterians in the short term, long-term impacts to the ecology, environment, and safety of the community will be positive as a result of this operation.

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