



City of Richmond to Receive \$1.6M Grant to Reduce Flood Risk in Rheem Creek Watershed

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City of Richmond, CA – After years of suffering from flooding, the Rollingwood neighborhood is one step closer to getting some relief. The City of Richmond was selected to receive \$1,598,844 in funding from California’s Natural Resources Agency Urban Flood Protection Grant Program to reduce the risk of flooding in the Rollingwood neighborhood in the Rheem Creek Watershed.

In 2018, California voters passed the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), which directed the Natural Resources Agency to administer a competitive grant program for projects that address flooding in urbanized areas and provide multiple benefits.

For over 20 years, the Rollingwood neighborhood in unincorporated western Contra Costa County has suffered from flooding related to overflows from a stretch of Rheem Creek in the City of Richmond. Due to its location at the boundary of multiple jurisdictions, the Rollingwood reach of Rheem Creek has long been neglected and is choked with invasive vegetation, leading to sediment build up, obstructed channels, and worsening flood conditions.

In 2019, the City of Richmond collaborated with American Rivers, The Watershed Project, Restoration Design Group, and other local partners to address flooding along Rheem Creek. American Rivers received a planning grant from the California State Coastal Conservancy Climate Ready Program to figure out how to solve the problem by working with project partners to complete technical studies, conduct community outreach, and prepare community-supported action plans.

Now these plans can become reality. The Natural Resources Agency Urban Flood Protection Grant will provide the City of Richmond funding to implement the project and reduce flooding in Rheem Creek. This requires several steps: preparing construction plans, obtaining agency permits, continuing community outreach and engagement, performing the on-the-ground work, and monitoring. In approximately one year, the City of Richmond will issue a public bid for construction to remove invasive vegetation and excessive sediment, grade a more stable creek channel, repair storm drains, plant native riparian vegetation, and install new fencing and educational signage. The project team will conduct monitoring activities and post-project evaluation. Opportunities for local employment and workforce development will be included in all project activities. Construction is planned for summer 2023.

"Growing up beside Rheem Creek was an opportunity to experience its beauty and wildlife, but also a challenge with yearly flooding. I am grateful that this project will alleviate the floods while healing an important natural space in San Pablo," said Britney Zapparolli, Rollingwood resident.

"This project would not have been possible without the leadership of the City of Richmond's Patrick Phelan, a champion for the project from the very beginning. These types of projects aren't in City job descriptions. They require thinking outside the box, working with local partners, taking risks, and a commitment to improving local creeks and waterways," said Sarah Puckett with American Rivers. "This project is the kind of solution with multiple benefits for people and nature that we'd like to see more in California and across the nation."

"The team we have assembled for this project is the direct result of relationships built at the Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council. I am grateful for the expertise of the project partners, and for this funding which will allow us to bring much-needed improvements to the community and the environment," said Patrick Phelan with the City of Richmond

"The Watershed Project staff, and myself in particular, are excited to see this project advance. We have been aware of the flooding of the Rollingwood neighborhood for over 10 years. I have toured Rheem Creek in the neighborhood with many stakeholders over the years and I am so grateful for the leadership that the City of Richmond has taken to ensure that the creek capacity is finally restored and all jurisdictions are aware of the great benefit this project will bring to the neighborhood," said Juliana Gonzalez, Executive Director of The Watershed Project.

Rheem Creek flows through a highly urbanized watershed including the City of Richmond, City of San Pablo, and the unincorporated community of Rollingwood, before entering San Pablo Bay. This multi-benefit project will help protect this urban community from flooding as well as increase California's resilience to intensifying floods due to climate change.

The Rheem Creek project partners acknowledge that all restoration work in the Rheem Creek watershed takes place on occupied Indigenous territory of Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, who have continuously lived upon this land since time immemorial.