

June 9, 2006

Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury  
Attention: Foreman  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**RE: Public Works' Response to the 2005-2006 Grand Jury Report on 'FLOOD CONTROL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT – Prepared for Winter Storms?'**

The 2005-06 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury recently released its report entitled 'FLOOD CONTROL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT – Prepared for Winter Storms?' The report names the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department as an affected agency and requires that Public Works provide responses to the relevant findings and recommendations.

*Grand Jury Finding 1: The channel maintenance and capital improvement program of the District is proactive, comprehensive, and well planned and documented.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department agrees with this finding.

*Grand Jury Finding 2: The District has a well-planned, tested emergency response capability for occasions when heavy flows do occur.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department agrees with this finding.

*Grand Jury Finding 3: Dam safety is carefully managed in the County, based on the existing construction of the dams, the ongoing program of physical inspections by highly qualified representatives of the County, State and Bureau of Reclamation; and the professional way the dams are operated.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department agrees with this finding.

*Grand Jury Finding 4: Silt accumulation in Twitchell Reservoir and the downstream channel is an ongoing problem.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department agrees with this finding.

*Grand Jury Finding 5: The deterioration of the rock facing on the Santa Maria Levee exposes the City of Santa Maria to the risk of widespread flooding.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department agrees with this finding.

*Recommendation 1: Now that a comprehensive engineering study of the Santa Maria Levee is available, the funding to reinforce the levee should be secured and applied to the solutions in the study report.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department is already implementing this recommendation. In early April, a consortium of officials from the County and the Cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe went to Washington, D.C., to meet with our Federal Legislators and the Corps of Engineers. Currently, we are seeking funding in the Federal Budget for the Corps of Engineers to prepare a feasibility report on the Levee (estimated cost \$1.5 Million) which is required to secure Federal construction money of a much larger amount.

Concurrently, staff has engaged the State of California for funding as well. The State is actively investigating its ability to fund levee improvements. Although the State's interest is clearly in the Sacramento area, staff continues to push for funding for Santa Maria as well.

*Recommendation 2: The Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District should continue to address the silting issue at Twitchell Dam.*

**Public Works Response:** The Public Works Department has no current direct responsibility for this recommendation, but the Department fully supports the recommendation and will continue to support its implementation. As noted, Twitchell Dam is operated by the Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District.

Recent events surrounding the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin litigation has resulted in the establishment of the Twitchell Management Authority (TMA). One of the key issues for the TMA is to address the continued silt issue in the reservoir. The TMA will bring staffing and funding to begin a concerted effort to this problem. It is expected that the County Public Works Department will play a role in the TMA as well as the Water Agency is the Contracting entity with the Federal Government.

The Public Works Department would like to thank the Grand Jury for its efforts in preparing this report. The Grand Jury's report will be helpful in pursuit of this project and strengthening the Levee to protect the City of Santa Maria and the Agricultural areas in the Santa Maria Valley.

Sincerely,

Phillip M. Demery  
Director of Public Works

Cc: Ron Cortez, Deputy County Executive Officer