



# Santa Clara Valley Water District

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**File No.:** 21-1211

**Agenda Date:** 11/23/2021

**Item No.:** 4.1.

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## BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### SUBJECT:

Consider the October 21, 2021 Board Policy and Planning Committee Recommendation to Adopt the Proposed Modifications to Board Governance Ends Policy E-3: Natural Flood Protection.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Consider the October 21, 2021 Board Policy and Planning Committee recommendation to adopt the proposed modifications to Board Governance Ends Policy E-3: Natural Flood Protection; and
- B. Adopt the proposed modifications to Board Governance Ends Policy E-3: Natural Flood Protection.

### SUMMARY:

On October 21, 2021, the Board Policy and Planning Committee (BPPC) recommended that the Board consider adoption of revised Board Governance Ends Policy E-3, Natural Flood Protection, (Attachment 1). The revised policy reflects all aspects of flood protection at Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water), including maintenance of existing facilities, public information and outreach, and reduced flood risk; confirms Valley Water's approach to providing flood protection for health and safety of all communities in Santa Clara County; and promotes the integration of environmental stewardship in flood protection activities. The BPPC provided input on draft policy revisions at their June 7, August 2, and September 7, 2021 meetings.

To clarify Valley Water's flood protection mission, Ends Policy E-3 was broadened to include three goals to achieve the following End: *Natural Flood Protection is provided to reduce risk and improve health and safety for residents, businesses, and visitors, now and into the future.* Each goal is aligned with a key aspect of flood risk reduction, to emphasize the critical functions of operations/maintenance and public engagement, in addition to providing new capital projects, in protecting Santa Clara County from flooding. Significantly, the proposed revision places a strong priority on maintaining the operational capacity of existing flood protection assets. This policy objective shifts the focus of Valley Water's flood protection program from capital improvement to operations, as the program matures into the future.

For new flood risk reduction capital projects, the revised policy will help ensure an overall level of protection is provided in all communities countywide. Since 1984, flood protection projects have been prioritized based on Valley Water's Waterways Management Model. This system primarily

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emphasized the economic benefits of reduced flood damages. The proposed, updated policy defines a flood risk approach that continues to include the economic benefit of a reduced flood damages factor, but it also brings in new factors, including:

- Environmental justice and social vulnerability (including disadvantaged community designation) of the community at elevated flood risk
- Community health and safety based on risk factors like depth and velocity of flooding,
- Actual flood frequency (areas of repeated flooding or “hot spots”) over the period of record
- Number of buildings and critical infrastructure subject to flooding (rather than solely the number of parcels)

Considering a broader array of factors will support a better prioritization of flood management activities that provide services to our communities. Applying this approach, is likely to prioritize areas in need based on frequency and severity of flood risk and not solely on a federally managed flood data layer, and result in projects that provide a minimum level of protection for community health and safety.

Finally, the revised policy retains objectives to integrate environmental stewardship into flood protection planning using a watershed approach, and the role of Valley Water in preparing the community for flood emergencies through outreach and sharing expertise.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact associated with this item.

**CEQA:**

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA because it does not have a potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Revised Ends Policy E-3

Attachment 2: PowerPoint

**UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:**

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