

Questions and Answers about the Proposed Flood Control Zone No. 1 - Parcel Tax

What is Flood Control Zone No. 1 - Novato?

Flood Control Zone No. 1 is a subarea of the Marin County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, which covers the entire county. Flood Control Zones were created in areas of the county that experienced frequent flooding prior to the formation of the zone. Zone No. 1 was the first zone to be created and it was established to construct and maintain the infrastructure that reduces flood risk and flood-related property damage to the Novato area, including levees, pump stations, channels, and stormwater basins. Zone 1 covers the City of Novato as well as unincorporated areas in western Novato, Bel Marin Keys, Bahia, Black Point, Green Point, Ignacio, Pacheco Valle and Indian Valley. The Board of Supervisors appoints a 5-member Advisory Board comprised of Novato area residents to review Zone 1 projects and recommend the annual budget.

How is the Zone funded?

As a special district, Zone 1 receives a small portion of the total property tax generated within its boundaries each year. In 1984, voters passed a benefit assessment which provided capital construction funds for four years and an ongoing maintenance assessment that averages \$9/parcel for a single-family home. In total, these revenue sources generate \$2 million annually. The last capital project on Novato Creek was completed in 2006.

What are the existing funds used for?

The Zone 1 work program includes regular servicing of 8 pumps at 4 pump stations, 5 miles of flood protection levees, maintenance of tide gates and trash racks, and an annual vegetation maintenance and debris removal program along 15 miles of creeks. In addition, Zone 1 removes accumulated sediment from Novato Creek, Warner Creek and Arroyo Avichi every four years to reduce flooding. The sediment removal occurs over 1.5 miles of creek from the Novato Fair bridge at the Safeway to the SMART railroad bridge.

Why is the Zone's revenue limited?

The Zone 1 tax rate was frozen at the levels set when Proposition 13 passed in 1978, and any increases need to be approved by voters in the form of special (parcel) taxes. Any election for a special tax requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast to approve a new tax.

How was the proposed tax amount set?

The proposed tax amount was vetted through meetings with stakeholders and the Flood Control Zone 1 Advisory Board. Proposed project costs were developed through the Novato Watershed Program. A computer based hydraulic model and engineering study was developed to quantify the flood benefits of multiple project options. These studies were vetted through stakeholder groups, community meetings and at Zone 1 Advisory Board meetings. Preliminary costs were generated for short and long term alternatives. The studies, modeling results and meeting information are available at:
http://www.marinwatersheds.org/pubs_reports_novato.html.

A package of priority projects has an estimated cost of \$16-40 million. A parcel tax of \$47 would result in revenues of about \$20 million over 18 years. In September 2016, 585 residents and property owners in the Novato area were polled about the recommended alternatives, and the survey showed support from 63% of the community for a \$47 per parcel tax to improve flood protection. For the full survey results, please visit our website:
<http://www.marinwatersheds.org/documents/NWPZone1RevenueMeasureSurveyPresentation09-27-16.pdf>

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What is the Novato Flood Protection and Watershed Program?

The Novato Watershed Program is one of several initiated by the Marin County Board of Supervisors to provide a framework to integrate flood protection and environmental restoration with public and private partners. The Program represents a partnership with the County of Marin, City of Novato, Novato Sanitary District, North Marin Water District, and the Flood Control Zone 1 Advisory Board. The Program established stakeholder committees comprised of residents, regulatory agency staff, and local agency partners to provide input on the development of flood protection project alternatives.

How will the tax revenues be spent?

Funding would be spent on these three categories of projects, outlined in the fact sheet “Proposed Flood Control Parcel Tax”, which was accepted by the Board of Supervisors on August 1, 2017 and summarized below. The annual work plan, projects and budgets would be recommended at the Flood Control Zone 1 Advisory Board meetings and the budget is approved by the Marin County District Board of Supervisors:

Reduce community and local flooding in the City of Novato [20%]

- Reduce roadway flooding by fixing pipes and drains identified in the City of Novato’s Stormwater Master Plan
- Funds can only be spent on priority city drainage projects

Reducing flooding and restore habitat [50%]

- Widen lower Novato Creek to reduce flooding
- Restore tidal marsh habitat for fish, wildlife and birds
- Restore tidal action to promote natural movement of sediment
- Provide local funding match to help leverage state and federal restoration grant funds

Repair storm damaged flood protection facilities [30%]

- Repair storm-damaged levees east of Highway 101
- Begin adapting levees to sea level rise
- Repair and replace aging stormwater pumps

Why should I pay if I don’t experience flooding?

The impacts of flooding affect residents, businesses, property values, emergency response, transportation networks, and the overall economic vitality of the community. Repeated flood events are disruptive and negatively impact property values and the local economy.

How will sea level rise be considered?

Climate change is likely to increase the magnitude and frequency of winter storms, further worsening flooding problems. Several sea level rise scenarios were considered and any projects constructed would include consideration of sea level rise in the design.

How has the Watershed Program engaged the community?

Since 2011, the Program has held 14 Flood Control Zone 1 Advisory Board meetings, two community meetings, and over 20 stakeholder group meetings. These meetings were used to draft and finalize the Hydraulic Study, evaluate revenue options, and develop a list of funding needs. Novato Watershed

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Program has presented to several community groups including the Novato Rotary Club, Rotary Club of Novato Sunrise, Novato Forward, Marin Conservation League (North Unit and Land Use Committee), Bel Marin Keys Community Service District board, Novato Chamber of Commerce (Government Affairs Committee), and Black Point Improvement Club, and has extended invitations to speak to other local organizations.

Will there be any exemptions to the tax?

An exemption will be available for **low-income seniors**, who would need to apply for the exemption every year. Applicants would need to satisfy both age and income requirements. The household would need to have at least one resident over the age of 65. The income limits are set by HUD (U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development) and could change every year. The maximum qualifying household income for 2017 is \$73,750.

Doesn't Measure AA, passed last year, already provide funding for flood control in Marin County?

Measure AA raises funds from the entire 9-county Bay Area for the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, which manages a competitive grant program focused on restoration projects along the San Francisco Bay shoreline. While the Authority guarantees that at least 9% of grants funds will go to projects in the North Bay region (Marin, Sonoma, Napa and Solano counties), it does not guarantee funds specifically to projects in Marin County. Measure AA does not fund flood control projects without a restoration component. To view the Authority's grant guidelines:

http://sfbayrestore.org/docs/Grant_Program_Guidelines_062717_final.pdf

Projects to repair and upgrade pumps and pump stations or improve city drainage systems wouldn't qualify for Measure AA funding.

Measure E would raise funds within Flood Control Zone No. 1 for flood control and restoration projects within Zone 1.