



Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program

PROJECT: LEFTY GOMEZ FIELD DUAL-USE FACILITY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) FEBRUARY 2, 2016

What is the Ross Valley Flood Protection & Watershed Program?

After the devastating flood of 2005, the Ross Valley communities came together and agreed that something had to be done to prevent flooding. Elected leaders from throughout the Valley asked the County to study the problem and propose solutions. Experts in hydrology, water resources, and flood protection created a computer model simulating how the watershed works, used the model to test various possible combinations of solutions, and ultimately recommended a regional, watershed-based approach comprised of many projects – removing constriction points, maximizing capacity in the creek channel, and holding back waters in detention basins. Together, these measures would contain a flood like that experienced in 2005.

Why is detention being considered?

Improvements within the creek (such as removing constrictions at key bridges, clearing debris, and constructing modest flood walls) are not enough to prevent the creek from flooding during severe storms like those experienced in 2005 and 1982. The excess storm water that would otherwise damage our community's homes and businesses during these types of severe storms needs to be held back in a more controlled and safe manner if our community is to be protected.

How does detention work?

Detention works by temporarily storing creek flow in a basin adjacent to the creek upstream of where flooding would otherwise occur. The basin is kept empty at all times except when it is needed during a rare, severe storm event. The detention basins would be used only when flooding in the community is imminent. As creek water recedes, floodwater from the detention basin is slowly drained into the creek.

Aren't there other ways of reducing the community's flood risk?

There are many tools for reducing flood risk. The goal of the Ross Valley Flood Protection Program is to work with the community to carefully consider how each can play a part in lowering the likelihood and/or consequences of flooding; however, the digital model created as part of a watershed-wide evaluation demonstrated the need for detaining floodwaters if a severe flooding event like the one experienced in 2005 is to be prevented. Other tools include removing constriction points (e.g. bridge replacements) and maximizing capacity in the creek channel (e.g., floodwalls, berms, creek maintenance); but models demonstrate that these solutions together do not eliminate the need for detaining floodwaters.

There are other ways of reducing the community's flood risk, but none that are as effective, practical, implementable, or sustainable as those outlined in the Program. Some suggest removing creek vegetation, gravel bars, and lowering the creek bed by bulldozer. Current laws largely prohibit these types of activities, as they can be environmentally damaging and may also increase erosion, property loss, and sedimentation in lower creek reaches. Some also suggest collecting rainwater via a network of rain barrels or cisterns placed throughout the community; however, they would fill during the early stages of the storm and be ineffective by the time the intense part of the storm arrives and when creeks begin to flood. Furthermore, coordinating an extensive network of thousands of rain barrels to collect enough rain volume to prevent flooding is impractical and infeasible.

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Why not utilize Low Impact Development (LID) or green solutions to solve our flooding issues?

Low impact development (LID) strategies offer a "green solution" to help reduce storm water runoff by replacing hardscapes with more permeable surfaces to reduce runoff into creeks. While LID may help reduce the amount of storm water from reaching the creek during smaller storms, its effectiveness is greatly reduced as soils in the watershed become saturated and there is nowhere else for water to go but the creek. During flood events such as the one in 2005, soils were so saturated that LID wouldn't have been able to reduce the runoff necessary to prevent flooding.

Why not hold the water somewhere other than Lefty Gomez Field?

Only by working together could the five detention basin sites identified in the 2015 Flow Reduction Study be able to temporarily store the volume of water needed to prevent the type of flooding experienced in December 2005. Each site alone would not hold enough water to prevent flooding. The use of fewer than these sites would require that other, less ideal, sites be identified and/or other flood risk reduction projects be significantly modified (e.g., higher floodwalls downstream) in order to reach the current flood protection goal. A list of the sites is available at www.RossValleyWatershed.org.

Why should detention be considered at Lefty Gomez field?

Each site was chosen as the best location for detaining floodwaters and it is essential for all the flood protection measures to work together. With Memorial Park no longer an option for use as floodwater detention in Ross Valley, Lefty Gomez Field is critically important to help reach our community's flood protection goals. Lefty Gomez Field was identified as a site that meets the ideal criteria for a detention basin site and it is anticipated that, with the community's input, the field can be improved and enhanced for the community's use while also providing essential flood protection during severe storms. Possible improvement ideas include new concessions, restrooms and changing rooms, improved field drainage, scoreboards, and safe routes to school.

How would detention at Lefty Gomez Field work?

Lefty Gomez field would normally not be used for detention and would continue to provide an important athletic facility for White Hill Middle School and a recreational venue for local youth sporting leagues and the general public. On the rare occasion that it is needed during a severe storm, the basin would be used for floodwater detention. Water would be diverted from the creek and stored on the field. This would occur during the later stages of a severe storm when monitoring indicates that flooding is imminent. As water in the creeks recedes, the water stored on the field would be slowly drained back into the creek. The fields would be cleaned, restored & made ready for recreational use.

What are some health and safety concerns with detention sites and how can they be addressed?

Any design for detaining water at a considered site, including Lefty Gomez field, would carefully address health and safety concerns and other risks identified by the community as a potential concern. A detention site could include use of small dams, spillways, berms, as well as flood and retaining walls, as it works to detain and manage floodwaters. These features are not unique to detention sites and are common across Marin County. Examples include existing dams and spillways at Phoenix Lake, and Stafford Lake, and berms at the Civic Center's lagoons.

How long would the field be closed after a flood & who would be responsible for cleaning the field?

The field could be closed approximately 1 to 3 weeks depending on the extent of flood damage. The Marin County Flood Control & Water Conservation District would restore the fields according to a specific maintenance plan that is developed and approved as part of the project.

Where would games be held while the existing fields are under construction?

Working with the community and the Ross Valley School District, a transition plan during construction would be developed to ensure there are places for games and practices to be held. There are also opportunities for exploring the use of a new site for a



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temporary play field nearby. These are the types of details which would be worked out as the project takes shape and only following an input and vetting process with the community.

What's happening now and what are the next steps?

Over the past few years, a lot of work has already been completed to identify the flooding issues experienced in the Ross Valley and to begin considering which types of solutions might work to help prevent a repeat of the type of flooding experienced in December 2005. The point has now come for these ideas to be presented to the community and for discussions to take place that will help shape how these possible solutions might be designed into actual projects which align with the community's unique needs and values. This phase is part of the initial feasibility assessment, which will be occurring over the next 6 – 9 months, and before the commencement of more detailed designs and environmental review.

Following these steps, more work will need to be done to work with the community on the selection of a preferred alternative (1 – 3 months), development of a final design (18 – 24 months), and, finally, construction.

Who will make the decisions on what the new field & detention site will look like & how it will function?

Public input and partner participation is integral to every step of the process and ample opportunities will exist over the coming months and years to deliver a project that is the right fit for the community. At the current initial feasibility assessment phase, several community meetings will be held to present current ideas and obtain feedback on what is important to the community when considering detention at Lefty Gomez field. Once these series of meetings are held, designs will be developed and presented which aim to incorporate feedback received. This iterative process will conclude with the selection of a preferred alternative and the finalization of designs for the preferred alternative.

The community will be engaged to define what aspects of field aesthetics and use, as well as patron

health and safety, are important to them. Design and engineering experts will be consulted to take community input and develop preliminary designs for further community review and consideration. A preferred alternative will then be developed that incorporates input and provides a design that preserves or improves on current uses and amenities, while also adding the benefit of a functioning floodwater detention facility.

When will detention basin designs be ready for public review?

While drawings have been drafted to assess the concept of whether or not detention at Lefty Gomez field might be technically feasible, drawings do not currently reflect public input that will be sought and later incorporated into more refined drawings. Opportunities to review and discuss these more refined drawings will be announced in advance of future community meetings. Stay in touch and be notified of future progress and meetings by selecting "Subscribe for Updates" at RossValleyWatershed.org.

How much would the project cost and how would it be funded?

The preliminary cost estimate is \$6.4 million, paid for with Ross Valley Flood Control Zone 9 Storm Drainage Fee and potential grant funding sources. Further development of the project may result in changes to these cost estimates.

How long will construction take and what would the impacts be?

Construction is estimated to take 1 to 2 years. As with any construction project, there would be impacts to neighbors but they would be mitigated as much as possible and a construction manager would be assigned to ensure that all approved conditions for construction are being followed. The field would be closed for that period, but a transition plan for utilizing other playing fields for games would be developed with the community and the Ross Valley School District, and implemented prior to the start of construction.