



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Temporary Delay on Emergency Green Valley Road Project** *Road will remain closed due to dangerous road conditions*

**Sebastopol, CA** – An emergency repair project to divert Green Valley Creek from flowing over Green Valley Road has been temporarily delayed. The project, which was slated to begin today, will begin as soon as the Sonoma County Water Agency obtains an Incidental Take Permit from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“The staff at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and State Senator Mike McGuire and Assemblymember Marc Levine have been incredibly responsive. Normally, it takes a couple of months to issue these permits, which are designed to protect endangered species. DFW understands that this is an emergency, and is working to issue the permit in one to two weeks,” said Sonoma County Water Agency Director Lynda Hopkins, who also is the 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor. “We are committed to doing whatever we can on our end to expedite the process, and our staff is in constant communication with Green Valley residents and DFW staff. Reducing the flooding and reopening the road is our priority.”

Heavy rain from the latest series of storms resulted in Green Valley Creek, a major tributary to the Russian River, jumping its banks and charting a new course over Green Valley Road. The creek’s passage has covered this highly traveled road in west Sonoma County with swiftly flowing water and damaged the pavement, creating a safety hazard. The new course over Green Valley Road also puts sensitive aquatic species, such as coho salmon, at risk as the creek flows out of its natural channel.

“To protect public safety, the county Department of Transportation and Public Works has closed Green Valley Road, where the road has failed and the creek is overflowing its banks,” said Hopkins. “We recognize that this is an inconvenience as well as a safety concern for residents and businesses. The project team is working as quickly as possible to respond. In the meantime, we ask people to be patient and, for their own safety, please don’t attempt to go around or move the barriers.”

Hopkins, the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD), the Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works (TPW), and the Water Agency held a community meeting on Friday, February 10, to explain the emergency creek repair project to residents.

At the time, it was anticipated that the repair project would begin on Tuesday, February 14. It is now anticipated that the project will start in late February. Notes from the community meeting and project updates can be found at <http://www.goldridgercd.org/htm/GVRdFlooding.htm>.

### **Road Closure**

- The flooding damaged the road surface, creating a serious public safety hazard. In response, TPW closed the road to traffic on Thursday, February 9.
- Once the creek is no longer flowing over the road and weather permits, temporary emergency repairs will begin. If deemed safe, one lane will be opened as soon as water recedes.
- TPW is working to ensure that alternate routes are safe and accessible, and have installed detour signs to help travelers and businesses in the area.
- Emergency responders are aware of the road closure. Graton Fire Department is the area hub for all incoming emergency dispatches from 911 calls. If a call is deemed an emergency, Graton, Forestville and Occidental emergency responders are all dispatched. If the emergency response from one of those three fire departments is expected to not be fast enough, a helicopter from Sheriff’s Office can be mobilized.

### **Emergency Project Information**

The emergency repair will allow Green Valley Creek to remain in its natural channel by removing sediment that is clogging the creek channel in the area near Green Valley Road. Over the past decade the capacity of Green Valley Creek’s channel has been reduced by sedimentation, to the point where the majority of flows are now forced outside the natural channel and over Green Valley Road.

Past high flow events have stranded endangered coho salmon, steelhead trout and California freshwater shrimp. These species are now at more of a risk of stranding as the majority of flows are now flowing outside of the natural Green Valley Creek channel. Due to the severity of this year’s wet weather, the rate of sedimentation has increased to the point where most of the water in Green Valley Creek is going across the road, and the creek is abandoning its existing channel and establishing a new channel through the vineyard.

Due to the threat to both public safety and sensitive species, Water Agency crews will remove non-native vegetation and sediment to deepen and widen the channel parallel to the road to keep the water and fish in its natural channel. This effort will take approximately one week. Once the creek is no longer flowing over the roadway, TPW crews will begin repairing the pavement as soon as possible.

### **Long-Term Restoration Plan**

The RCD has been working for several years on a long-term restoration project to address the flooding issues. This long timeframe is due to the complexity of finding a solution in a manner which meets the most benefits for people and wildlife within current permitting and funding constraints.

The concept project will restore the capacity of nearly 3,000 feet of stream channel through the area which currently experiences the most frequent and severe flooding. The project entails enlarging the channel both upstream and downstream of the existing bridge. The upstream section will include a sediment management area, where sediment will be removed periodically so that the increased channel capacity is maintained throughout the reach.

The project will also include elements that will improve the habitat for threatened and endangered fish, as well as an extensive riparian revegetation effort. Once the project is completed, the RCD expects that the enlarged channel will contain all but the largest floods, dramatically reducing the frequency and magnitude of flooding of the adjacent portion of Green Valley Road.

The RCD is working with other agencies to seek funding for an engineering design and permitting. While the RCD has received grants from the California Coastal Conservancy and matching funds from the Water Agency, the largest impediment to fixing the problem is funding.

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