



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Emergency Green Valley Road Project Slated to Begin Monday** *Road will be closed during construction*

**Sebastopol, CA** – An emergency repair project to divert Green Valley Creek from flowing over Green Valley Road is planned to begin at 7 a.m., Monday, March 6 weather dependent. Green Valley Road will be temporarily closed during the project period, when Sonoma County Water Agency crews will be removing sediment that is clogging the creek channel in the area near the road. This project will reduce the duration and frequency in which Green Valley Creek overtops its banks and floods Green Valley Road and adjacent properties. The project is expected to take about one week to complete.

Environmental specialists and stream maintenance crews from the Sonoma County Water Agency began conducting biological assessments on Wednesday, March 1, and removing non-native vegetation on Thursday, March 2 and Friday, March 3.

“We are thrilled that this project is under way, and that fish will soon have safer passage through Green Valley Creek and neighbors will have safer passage over Green Valley Road,” said Sonoma County Water Agency Director Lynda Hopkins, who also is the 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor. “I know that it has been a long month, with the road closing and with flooding, and I want to thank residents in advance for their patience while the road is closed during construction.”

Heavy rain from the series of storms in January and February 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.

### **Road Closure**

- Green Valley Road will be closed to traffic in both directions at the "S" curve near Sullivan Road, beginning 7 a.m., Monday, March 6.
- The road will be closed 24-hours a day during the project period, which is tentatively scheduled to be completed on Sunday, March 12.
- Project updates will be provided at <http://www.goldridgercd.org/htm/GVRdFlooding.htm>
- Road closure information can be found <http://roadconditions.sonoma-county.org/>
- Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works (TPW) is working to ensure that alternate routes are safe and accessible, and will install detour signs to help travelers and businesses in the area.
- Emergency responders are aware of the road closure. The 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 not expected to be fast enough, helicopters from Sheriff's Office and/or Highway Patrol can be mobilized.

### **Emergency Project Information**

The emergency repair project will allow more of Green Valley Creek's flow to remain in its natural channel by removing some of the sediment that has filled the creek channel in the area near Green Valley Road. Over the past decade the capacity of Green Valley Creek has been significantly reduced by sedimentation. While the emergency project will temporarily reduce overflows onto Green Valley Road, it is likely that floods will continue to occur until a long-term restoration project is implemented (see below).

This year's severe wet weather has resulted in more sedimentation in the creek channel and has blocked most of the water in Green Valley Creek from flowing down the creek. As a result, most of the creek flow is now flowing across the road and flooding an adjacent vineyard. Endangered coho salmon, steelhead trout and California freshwater shrimp are being swept out of the channel and into the vineyard and are at more risk of being stranded.

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 the natural channel. This effort will only remove a portion of all of the sediment that has been deposited in the creek over the past few decades. The project will take approximately one week. Once the creek is back in its channel, TPW crews will begin repairing the pavement as soon as possible.

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

The Gold Ridge RCD, with community partners, has been working for several years on a long-term restoration project to address the flooding issue at this location. This long timeframe is due to the complexity of finding a solution in a manner which meets the needs of people and wildlife

within current permitting and funding constraints. Because of these constraints, it will likely be several years before the long-term project is built.

As proposed, the long-term 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 engineered designs and permitting. While the RCD has received grants from the California Coastal Conservancy and matching funds from the Water Agency for project planning, the largest impediment to a long-term solution to this flooding is funding.

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