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DWR Approves Funding to Strengthen Delta Levees

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has approved funding for 14 reclamation district projects in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to strengthen nearly 90 miles of levees to provide protection against flooding.

The projects will receive a total of nearly \$30 million under the Delta Special Flood Control Projects' Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) Levee Repair and Improvement Project Solicitation Package (PSP). The projects include landslide levee repair, all-weather road construction, erosion repair and other improvements, along with mitigation for any habitat damage.

The largest grant is \$7.2 million, the smallest \$348,000. Negotiations continue with eight other districts that could add 39 miles of levee improvements and \$13.9 million in grant funds to the funding package. A list of all applicants and their projects is available at http://www.water.ca.gov/floodsafe/fessro/docs/special_proposed_projects.pdf.

Funding for these projects has been on hold since December when the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) withdrew from a long-standing agreement that would have assured FEMA flood assistance to reclamation districts that met FEMA's HMP levee criteria. These grant funds are made available for the purpose of improving levees to meet the HMP criteria.

Negotiations with FEMA for a new agreement have been unsuccessful in restoring the HMP criteria. However, DWR considers the projects selected for funding critical to the Delta and all of California and seeks to proceed without further delay.

This is an incremental step in DWR's long-term commitment to work efficiently and cooperatively with local agencies to preserve the Delta levees that serve statewide public interests. The improvements resulting from this investment of public funds will support Delta sustainability and are in keeping with the goals of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan.

Agreements with the districts sponsoring approved projects should be signed no later than December, with funding made available in time for construction to begin early next year. DWR's investment in Delta Integrated Flood Management will provide local agencies with the financial capability to improve freeboard and emergency access and to correct levee system deficiencies.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.