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EMBARGOED MEDIA ADVISORY
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OFFICIALS TO HIGHLIGHT HISTORIC LOCAL/STATE/FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP ON
PAJARO LEVEE PROJECT

WATSONVILLE – To help commemorate California Flood Preparedness Week, U.S. Senator Alex Padilla and members of President Biden’s administration will join Pajaro Valley’s congressional and state legislative delegations, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state and local officials to spotlight efforts to reduce flood risk for the historically underserved and disadvantaged communities of Watsonville and Pajaro.

California Flood Preparedness Week begins October 22. Thursday’s event will celebrate an additional \$82 million in federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding recently awarded to the Pajaro Flood Risk Management Project (PFRMP), as well as Gov. Gavin Newsom’s approval of SB 489, which advances funding to local agencies to help expedite project planning and construction. Once completed, the PFRMP will be a testament to the equitable investment of state and federal infrastructure funding in disadvantaged communities.

Speakers will include:

- US Senator Alex Padilla
- US Congressman Jimmy Panetta
- US Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren
- Regional Administrator Martha Guzman, US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9
- CA Senator John Laird
- CA Assemblymember Mark Stone
- CA Assemblymember Robert Rivas
- CA Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth
- US Army Corps of Engineers Colonel Kevin Arnett, Commander SF District
- Zach Friend, Santa Cruz County Supervisor/PRFMA Board Chair
- Luis Alejo, Monterey County Supervisor/PRFMA Board Member
- Mark Strudley, PRFMA Executive Director

Speakers will be available for media one-on-ones following the official program.

WHEN: 1-2 p.m., Thursday, October 20
Location withheld for security reasons. Please contact Kim Floyd at (916) 838-2666, or kim@floydcommunications.com to confirm attendance and for location details.

WHY: Fulfilling decades of planning, State and federal governments have agreed to fully fund the \$400 million Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project, a first in California for a project of its kind. The multi-benefit project will provide up to 100-year flood protection for portions of Watsonville and Pajaro by improving levees along the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries. Currently, the federal levee system along these waterways only provides an eight-year level of flood protection, among the lowest of any federal system in California. The area has suffered six floods since the levees were first built in 1949, most significantly in 1995 when flooding caused more than \$95 million in damages and two deaths. Levees nearly broke again in the federally declared storm disasters in early 2017.

In just a few short years, a concerted effort by the region's congressional delegation has resulted in \$149 million in federal funding for the project, with more expected. Legislation championed by the region's state delegation and the California Department of Water Resources over the past two years resulted in full funding for the project's non-federal costs, saving the local community at least \$42 million.

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The PRFMA is a joint powers authority of the County of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation, the County of Monterey, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, and the City of Watsonville. Formed in 2021, the agency will plan, finance and implement projects and programs to reduce flood risk from the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties.