

MONTEREY COUNTY



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March 27, 2023

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
U.S. House of Representatives
1401 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: FY24 Community Project Funding for the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project

Dear Congresswoman Lofgren:

On behalf of the County of Monterey, I write in strong support of the request for Community Project Funding in FY 2024 for the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.

As you know, this project has a history that dates to 1949, and thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we are finally looking forward to entering the construction phase. Unfortunately, as you know, the levee improvements did not come soon enough, as a series of atmospheric river events in California resulted in a major breach in the Pajaro River levee on March 11, 2023.

The levee breach resulted in severe flooding of the small, severely disadvantaged community of Pajaro, forced the evacuation of 2,000 residents and damaged 900 homes. The flooding damaged over 20,000 acres of agriculture lands with damage estimates of over \$400 million and resulting in job losses for Pajaro residents working in the agricultural industry – likely for many months.

If there ever was a project that the Army Corps of Engineers could highlight as addressing issues of equity, it is the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project. The City of Watsonville in Santa Cruz County and the Town of Pajaro in the County of Monterey each have per capita incomes that are well below the state and national averages and many of those who are the most vulnerable to flooding are working in the agriculture industry.

We hope that Congress will provide the necessary resources in FY 2024 to fund this project to completion and accelerate the current construction timeline. It is well past the time for these residents to receive the protection they deserve.

Sincerely,

Luis A. Alejo, Chair
Board of Supervisors

Cc: Mark Strudley, Executive Director, Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency