

County of Monterey



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August 29, 2023

The Honorable Robert Rivas
California State Assembly, Speaker
1021 O Street, Room 8330
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: AB 876 (R. Rivas) Pajaro Flood Risk Management Project: Environmental Laws: Exemptions. – SUPPORT

Dear Speaker Rivas:

The County of Monterey is pleased to support your measure Assembly Bill 876, which would expedite the Pajaro River flood control project to protect the community of Pajaro.

An atmospheric river event brought heavy rain across Monterey County leading to a breach of the Pajaro Levee on March 10, 2023. This breach led to life-threatening flooding across the community of Pajaro and caused more than 3,000 residents, many of them low-income families, to evacuate their homes. Due to the impacts on sewer and water, the community was not able to re-enter the town until March 23.

The flooding of the community of Pajaro resulted in intrusion of water into structures including businesses and homes. The County Health Officer declared a Local Health Emergency related to the flood created conditions of potential exposure to hazardous waste, which in turn represents a substantial present or potential threat to human health and the environment. Much of the community continue to be displaced and work to rebuild their homes and community.

Expediting the Pajaro River flood control project aligns with the vision behind numerous state efforts to increase the pace and scale of environmental restoration and land management efforts. By streamlining the state's process to approve and facilitate projects like this in a timely manner, it safeguards the state's economic sustainability and food security, protects, and restores biodiversity, and builds climate resilience.

Executive Order No. N-10-23 suspended Chapter 6 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code and certain statutes, rules, and requirements applicable to activities under the jurisdiction of the Water Board and the California Regional Water Quality Control Boards related to management activities in the Pajaro River and its tributaries completed before November 1, 2023. Because of the unique flood risk challenges the communities along the Pajaro River face, legislation such as AB 876, is needed to provide regulatory consistency over the lifespan of the project.

It is for these reasons that the County of Monterey strongly supports your measure AB 876. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County of Monterey's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis A. Alejo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "A".

Luis A. Alejo, Chair
Board of Supervisors

Cc: The Honorable Anna Caballero, 14th Senate District
The Honorable John Laird, 17th Senate District
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)