

Teamwork lauded as Marysville levee upgrades begin

[By Ben van der Meer/Appeal-Democrat](#)

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As the city of Marysville marked the beginning of a four-phase project to upgrade its ring levee system Monday, representatives from a number of involved agencies said those levees are only as strong as the partnerships that got the project going.

From the local up through the state and federal level, speakers at a kickoff ceremony on the levee near the north end of Sampson Street in northeast Marysville repeated that message, also acknowledging local drive played the biggest part.

"The partners pulled out all the stops to make this happen," said Ben Carter, of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board. "They proved if they have a common goal, they can accomplish it."

Under the scope of the work kicked off Monday, a portion of Marysville's levee will get seepage prevention walls within the levee, mostly paid for by \$10.8 million in federal stimulus funds. Three subsequent phases will begin over the next three years and are scheduled to be completed by fall 2013.

Curt Aikens, Yuba County Water Agency general manager, said getting the stimulus money was a particularly helpful component. The Marysville Levee Commission and other government entities had to move fast to make sure they could get such money for the project's first phase, he said.

"There were a number of things expedited," he said, adding the project's roots go back to an effort beginning in 1988 to improve flood control in all of Yuba County.

Local disasters such as the 1997 flood and high-profile ones like Hurricane Katrina in 2005 increased the urgency.

U.S. Rep. Wally Herger, R-Chico, who spoke at the ceremony before taking a ceremonial turn at the helm of a bulldozer, said the efforts by the water agency, the city and others made the case for why federal appropriators should kick funding.

"It's been a concerted, well-organized team effort keeping after it every day," he said. Herger voted against the stimulus package when it was in the House of Representatives.

Aikens said because the goal was to improve levees across the county, the Marysville side benefited from work now nearly complete on levees near Linda, Olivehurst and Plumas Lake, because it showed county and local officials could carry out a vital project.

Once both the Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority and Marysville levee projects are done, the county will benefit from not only increased flood protection, but a boost in economic development, said Tib Belza, a water agency board member.

"Businesses that are thinking about locating here wonder about the level of flood protection," Belza said. Some public officials pointed out after the 1986 flood in Linda, Peach Tree Mall became virtually deserted as store after store moved out.

"The other parts of the levee system have been shored up and fortified. Now it's time to get the county seat taken care of," Belza said.

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