

ARE YOU READY FOR INCREASED LEVEE ASSESSMENTS?

Levee Districts 1 and 9 in Sutter County are getting ready to expand their assessment areas and increase assessment fees. A meeting on Monday, August 6 at 8 a.m. is scheduled to advance a proposal for a new “Special Benefit Assessment District.” The location of the meeting is the Board of Supervisors chambers on Second Street in Yuba City.

Information concerning this planned meeting was disclosed by the Levee District 1 manager at a Levee District 9 meeting on Thursday, July 12. LD 1 said it would be an ‘emergency’ meeting and, therefore, would only require 24 hours’ notice instead of the 72 hours required to notice a public meeting. Their notices of these meetings are not normally sent to the Appeal Democrat or the Territorial Dispatch to inform taxpaying citizens of the meetings.

The two levee districts are claiming they will need additional funds to operate and maintain our recently rehabilitated West Feather River levees to comply with state requirements for Operation, Maintenance, Repair, Rehabilitation and Replacement (OMRR&R) of local maintenance districts. However, state levee maintenance districts are not requesting more funding for their sections of the levee. Furthermore, all levees along the Feather River are the responsibility of the State of California as noted in the court case regarding the 1986 flood and lack of state maintenance of the levees.

The Sutter County Taxpayers Association (SCTA) is opposed to increasing assessments for OMRR&R as property owners will still be paying for the recently completed levee rehabilitations for the next 25 years. Our assessment taxes have already been in place for eight years. And, yes, SCTA is glad the levees have been and continue to be fixed. However, SCTA is recommending that the state take over maintenance of the sections of the West Feather River levee now maintained by Levee Districts 1 and 9. We believe that it will be less expensive and that it will also remove any potential liability from local property owners should a catastrophic incident happen for which one of the levee districts is found responsible.

A further concern is the fact that the Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency is funding the effort to expand the two districts and hold a special Prop. 218 election for this Special Benefit Assessment District. When we voted for the assessment to fix our levees in 2010, it was repeatedly stated that the money raised could only be spent

on levee repair/rehabilitation and SBFCA administrative costs. SBFCA will be paying an estimated \$228,000 of assessment money (which comes from both Butte and Sutter counties) for financial and technical support to get this new assessment district up and running which is in violation of the restriction we placed on use of our assessment money that we voted for in 2010. The money SBFCA is fronting will only be repaid if the voters approve the new assessment district and increased assessment.

Additionally, in return for SCTA's support of the 2010 assessment, SCTA was promised an advisory committee to oversee SBFCA operations and to act as an interface with the public. Well, you know what happened there, the Citizens Assessment District Advisory Committee (CADAC) was disbanded by SBFCA in September 2017 after SBFCA board members removed the newly elected chair and then loaded CADAC with members who were negative to SCTA and loyal to or employees of SBFCA board members and could be manipulated by them, destroying the concept of 'citizen oversight' and eliminating the single impediment to the 'mission-creep' and 'cost-creep' that appear to be increasingly evident.

Sutter taxpayers have willingly paid their share. It is time for the state to take over the maintenance of this principal waterway, just as they do elsewhere. We urge you to come to the August 6 meeting and oppose the Special Benefit Assessment District and increased assessments.

Pat Miller, President
Sutter County Taxpayers Association

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