

Feds OK dredging in Pajaro River bed

Flood prevention & control 25-95
Sentinel staff report

WATSONVILLE — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officially OK'd a permit Wednesday that allows the county to dredge as much as 700,000 cubic yards of sand from the Pajaro River over the next five years.

As much as 140,000 cubic yards can be removed in any given year, but only between June 1 and Oct. 15, according to the permit, reported U.S. Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, from Washington, D.C. The work is approved on that part of the river between Highway 1 to 3.5 miles upstream of where Salsipuedes Creek joins the river.

The permit also allows the county to destroy 11 acres of wetlands that developed in the river channel

in the years that the flood control maintenance was neglected, Farr said.

Ideally, the sand deposited in the river bed is scoured out with each winter's rains. But in past years, the sand bars in the river channel grew a thriving crop of trees and bushes. During this year's spring floods, that vegetation anchored the sand, keeping it from washing out to sea.

County officials discussed a three-year time frame Tuesday, although they said they hope to finish the work in one year, or at most two. They don't expect to have the money to get started before July 1. They plan to look into ways to borrow the estimated total \$3.5 million now so they can finish the work as quickly as possible.