

# Flooding is a fact of life

Solano County, with its vast network of year-round and seasonal creeks and drainage canals, is a natural flood plain. Dealing with large amounts of water is something that the folks who live here have to get used to. In some parts of the County, this means regular flooding, property damage and risk of life. The suggestions and practices described in this manual are applicable everywhere in the County, but they are especially important for residents in flood prone areas.

No person or organization can absolutely prevent flooding, especially in very wet years or in times of extremely heavy rainfall. People can mitigate for flooding and its consequences, lessening damages and threats to life and property.

Living in flood prone areas is a constant learning experience. No two years are ever the same, and escaping serious flooding one year is no guarantee you will be so lucky a second time. What will protect you is developing a solid understanding of the systems that impact local and regional flooding, implementing land management practices and home design to reduce your flooding risks, and plugging yourself into local weather service information so you can be proactive rather than reactive when the rains come.

## Flooding facts to keep in mind:

- About 30 percent of all flood claims come from outside of the 100-year floodplain.
- Floods are the most frequently occurring natural disasters – equalling 40 percent of all natural disasters in the world and 90 percent in the U.S. Flooding is the biggest weather related killer.
- Financial losses and deaths in the U.S from floods averaged \$3.7 billion, and 110 deaths annually before last year's hurricane season.
- Floods can result in ten to twenty foot walls of water coming out of what seems like nowhere, leaving you little time to prepare or escape.
- Just an inch of water can cause costly damages to your property.
- A car and its passengers can be easily carried away by just two feet of water.
- New land development can increase flood risk, especially if the construction changes natural runoff flowpaths and reduces the amount of surface area that can absorb water, either by paving it or covering it with buildings. This means that construction up in the hills can have big impacts down in the flats.
- We don't know as much about flooding and weather as you might think: 100-year floods don't always happen just once every hundred years, and many of our flood maps are not current or accurate. Storms in recent years have approached or exceeded the 100-year flood level in Solano County, resulting in some of the wettest rainy seasons on record, with some of the largest storm and flooding events in memory.

## So what's your risk?

Your chances of being flooded are much greater than many other risks you face. Living in a 100-year floodplain (most of Solano County), you have a 1 in 4 chance of being flooded during the period of a 30-year mortgage, a risk 27 times greater than your risk of fire.

This manual can help you lower your potential for harm from flooding

# Local Agencies and Flooding

Flood control is the responsibility of many entities in Solano County. The Vallejo Sanitation & Flood Control District and the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer Districts are independent special districts of the State of California to serve the Cities of Vallejo and Fairfield and Suisun, respectively. They collect and treat wastewater, and seek to protect their communities from flooding and storm water damage. The seven Solano County cities (Dixon, Vacaville, Fairfield, Suisun City, Rio Vista, Vallejo and Benicia) all have flood responsibilities as well. All of these organizations try to work together to minimize flooding and the damages it causes.

## Solano County Water Agency

The Solano County Water Agency was formed in 1951. SCWA's boundaries include the entire County of Solano and the property of the University of California at Davis in Yolo County. SCWA provides wholesale, untreated water supply to cities, districts and state agencies. Additionally, SCWA leads efforts to protect rights to existing sources of water and participates in efforts to secure new sources of water for future growth in the County.

SCWA is also responsible for operations and maintenance of the Ulatis Flood Control Project and the Green Valley Flood Control Project and has authority to deal with all flood control matters within its boundaries. SCWA prepared a Flood Control Master Plan to address countywide flooding and drainage problems and developed multiple watershed studies to address flooding problems on a watershed basis. Several projects resulting from these studies are being considered for implementation.

## SCWA Flood Control Objectives

- Manage the Ulatis Flood Control Project to provide the 10-year recurrence level of flood protection for which the project was designed and work with interested agencies, and determine responsibility, for provision of greater levels of flood protection.
- Manage the Green Valley Flood Control Project to provide the 40-year recurrence level of flood protection for which the project was designed and work with interested agencies, and determine responsibility, for provision of greater levels of flood protection.
- Facilitate communication and coordination of flood control projects in Solano County so that projects and developments within a watershed mitigate their runoff impacts on existing and planned flood control facilities.
- Actively pursue adequate protection for Solano County from flooding from the Sacramento River and tributaries by advocating adequate flood protection along the west side of the Yolo Bypass to protect agricultural land.
- Keep abreast of new regulations and technology in flood control management.
- Prepare to be able to respond to flooding situations.
- Monitor and assist in planning for flood protection for areas served by unimproved channels.

## **What SCWA can do for you**

Landowners with flooding or drainage problems on their property can contact SCWA to report the situation. If the problem is reoccurring and affects more than one landowner then SCWA may be able to provide funds through their Flood Control Small Grant Program to help alleviate the issue. For more information about this program see the **PREPARE** section of this manual, go the SCWA's website or contact SCWA staff :

Solano County Water Agency  
P.O. Box 349  
Elmira, CA 95625  
(707) 451-6090  
<http://www.scwa2.com>

## **Solano County Sheriff, Office of Emergency Services**

The Solano County Office of Emergency Services is dedicated to the development, establishment and maintenance of programs and procedures that protect the lives and property of Solano County residents from natural or man-made disasters including the following: floods, earthquakes, major fires, storms, radiological or hazardous material incidents, aircraft accidents, and any other mass casualty incidents.

The Office of Emergency Services works closely with law enforcement, fire agencies and also the Governors Office of Emergency Services and operates out of a new Emergency Operations Center that can be immediately activated during an emergency and will house those people responsible for the coordination, control, communications and function of all emergency preparedness and response.

Solano County Sheriff's Office  
Office of Emergency Services  
Phone: (707) 784-1600  
Fax: (707) 421-6383  
[OES@SolanoCounty.com](mailto:OES@SolanoCounty.com)  
530 Clay Street  
Fairfield CA 94533-6306

## **Other County Help**

Other agencies, while not responsible for flood control, can help you to assess your risks and plan your landscape accordingly. They can also provide recommendations and assistance in implementing flood control/mitigation practices on your property.

### **Solano Resource Conservation District**

The Mission of the Solano Resource Conservation District is to protect, promote and enhance the soil, water, wildlife, plant-life and air quality resources within Solano County. SRCD staff members are available to assist District landowners in applying for any necessary permits or grants that will allow them to implement flood control projects on their property. SRCD staff members are also available to help District landowners with any other conservation planning needs such as designing floodwise landscaping, reducing erosion, or improving water quality on their property. For more information see the SRCD website at: <http://www.solanorcd.org>.

### **Dixon Resource Conservation District**

One of the many tasks of the Dixon Resource Conservation District is to manage the drainage system within their District. If you are a landowner within DRCD boundaries and are experiencing flooding problems, or if you have a ditch maintenance problem to report, please contact the DRCD as soon as possible.

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Since 1935, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) has helped America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. NRCS staff members are available to provide conservation planning and engineering assistance on a variety of projects such as designing floodwater retention basins, swales, vegetated ditches or other waterways. NRCS also has funding available to help agricultural producers implement a variety of best management practices, which will reduce erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on their property.

### **Contact Information for all three organizations**

1170 N Lincoln St. Suite 110  
Dixon CA 95620  
Phone: (707) 678-1655 x 3  
Fax: (707) 678-5001

# Assessing your risk of flooding

## The Basics

Though almost everywhere in Solano County has some flooding risk, some areas are at much greater risk. Some places practically never flood, and some flood almost every year. Keeping yourself and your property safe involves figuring out what your flood risks are, and then doing what you can to mitigate those risks.

Your chances of being flooded are much greater than many other risks. In a 100-year floodplain (which includes several parts of Solano County), you have a 1 in 4 chance of being flooded during the period of your 30-year mortgage. If you live near a creek or stream, you are likely at a higher risk of flooding. One way to assess your risk is to compare the elevation of your home with that of the street. The higher your home is above the street, the safer you are. Newer developments are usually built four to five feet above the street to better protect against flood; older tracts and homes may not be so safely constructed.

## Do you live in a flood plain?

If you don't know whether or not you live in a flood plain, or whether or not your property is at risk of being flooded, you can call one of the following agencies:

Benicia	Dept. of Public Works	(707) 746 – 4240	(All areas)
Dixon	Dept. of Public Works	(707) 678 – 7000	(If you live outside the floodplain)
	Planning Dept.	(707) 678 – 7053	(If you live in the floodplain)
Fairfield	Dept. of Public Works	(707) 428 – 7471	(If you live in the floodplain)
		(707) 428 – 7407	(If you live outside the floodplain)
Rio Vista	Dept. of Public Works	(707) 374 – 6747	(If you live outside the floodplain)
	Community Development	(707) 374 – 2205	(If you live in the floodplain)
Suisun	Engineering Dept.	(707) 421 – 7341	(All areas)
Vacaville	Engineering Dept.	(707) 449 – 5140	(If you live outside the floodplain)
	Dept. of Public Works	(707) 469 – 6500	(If you live outside the floodplain)
Vallejo	Dept. of Public Works	(707) 648 – 5229	(All areas)

If you live outside city limits you can call the County's Department of Resource Management for the same information:

Solano County Resource Management (707) 784 – 6765

## How sure can I be about my risk?

We don't know enough about flooding patterns to make sure predictions about safe locations. Much of the flooding in Solano County has occurred outside the designated floodplain, and different places flood at different times. Because of this, you'll have to look for information from more than one source. Investigate what has happened in the past. Talk to neighbors, the County; look at your land for clues. If there is a risk of flooding on your property, use this manual to take steps to lessen the risks to your life and property.