

Zone 7 To Make Arroyo Stretch More Natural

A rocky, barren stretch of the Arroyo Mocho near Isabel Avenue and Stanley boulevard will be planted with trees, thanks to a project being undertaken by Zone 7 Water Agency.

Directors approved the environmental impact report for the project at their meeting March 20 on a 6-1 vote. Director Sandy Figuers was the dissenter. The board will authorize bidding for construction of the project at the April 17 meeting.

The project will be the first for Zone 7 that will transform a more typically urban flood control channel, with its concrete barriers, into a more natural creek setting.

No total cost estimate was announced. That number will be estimated by staff when directors meet April 17 and go out for bids on the project.

Zone 7 has a funding partner -- the Alameda County Surplus Property Authority. The county built a bridge last summer over the Arroyo Mocho on its Staples Ranch property, and now must mitigate for it. The county will be contributing \$100,000 to the arroyo restoration.

Figuers voted against the motion because planting trees will eventually cause branches to fall into the arroyo, and will add to maintenance expenses. Zone 7 will have to pick up the debris to keep the arroyo clear for flood channel purposes. At the same time, Figuers said that tree branches in the stream would be good for the fish, because it gives them places to hide. Environmentalists have pointed out that benefit in the past.

Environmentalists are on board with the plan. The Alameda Creek Alliance sent a letter of support. One of the organization's announced goals is to encourage the future potential to have steelhead coming up the arroyo to spawn in pools in the Altamont.

The trees will help cool water to a temperature more favorable to fish. Removal of the concrete barriers will help fish travel upstream. Zone 7 says that no steelhead have been seen in the Arroyo Mocho for years.

The plan also received the endorsement of Livermore city government, which identified it as an area of interest for the Iron Horse Trail.