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UPDATE -- COSGROVE CREEK CHANNEL MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of the Cosgrove Creek channel continues to be delayed due to federal permitting issues. As you know, we had planned to be well along in clearing the Cosgrove Creek channel by the time winter rains arrived in late 2006. However, difficulties securing federal permits have delayed the work that we had scheduled.

Work to remove invasive vegetation and accumulated sediment is necessary to restore the flow capacity of Cosgrove Creek. Due to the nature of our work and the potential presence of endangered species within the Cosgrove Creek watershed (red-legged frog, tiger salamander, and giant garter snake), permits are required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Fish and Game, and California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Anticipating agency concerns, we completed a biological assessment that recognized the potential presence of numerous protected species within the Cosgrove Creek watershed. However, reconnaissance-level surveys failed to confirm the physical presence of protected species within the project boundaries. Furthermore, those surveys found an abundance of natural predators and disturbed habitat that diminished the likelihood of finding a viable population of any protected species.

Based on this information, California agencies have granted their approval and we had anticipated a similar response from federal agencies. However, we continue to await the go-ahead from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which serves as a clearinghouse for other responsible federal agencies. The Corps of Engineers is currently consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. By a recent letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Corps of Engineers, we have been advised that further studies (field surveys for red-legged frog) will be required before federal agencies will consider our permit application. Compliance with the established field survey protocols dictates that the project area must be surveyed over a minimum six-week period beginning no earlier than April 15 and extending through the breeding season. Should this requirement hold, we will be unable to obtain the necessary federal permits or to clear the channel anytime this winter.

Public Works is eager to begin the work as soon as all permits have been secured. Crews are ready and we have received permission from most adjoining landowners. Please watch the County website - www.co.calaveras.ca.us for updates. Should you have any questions, please contact Public Works at 754-6402 or email dmullen@co.calaveras.ca.us.

