

Silt . . . 97.8

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"That's a first," said Guerneville Realtor Herman Hernandez.

"This is critical," said Guerneville Resort owner Lynn Crescione.

The silt build-up occurs when River floodwater overflows into the Laguna and the slow-moving stored water drops its sediment load. The loss of Laguna floodwater storage capacity is starting to negate the flood control benefits of Coyote and Warm Springs dams, according to the Water Agency.
A significant loss of flood

water storage capability in the Laguna "could have a major impact" on downstream communities, said 5th District Supervisor Mike Reilly.

"If we're losing the flood control benefits of those two dams the big question is what's the next step?" said Reilly.

"It hasn't made sense to me that we've got both those dams and we're still getting floods higher than ever," said Reilly.

With three major floods in two years the Laguna silt build-up has become more markedly noticeable. "More recent evidence of the rapid filling of the Laguna was the burying of Agency fences along channels in the flood plain," said Water

Agency General Manager Randy Poole in the Agency's Russian River Levee Status Report to supervisors last week. Supervisors last week approved a Water Agency request for \$100,000 to pay for aerial photographs of the Laguna. The photos will be used as the basis for a topographic model that could help the agency predict "possible future flooding increases," said Poole, in his background report to the board.

The topographical model may also determine "how much sediment would have to be removed from the Laguna to maintain its existing flood control capabilities," said Poole.

As part of last week's action

the board of supervisors directed Poole to ask the Army Corps of Engineers to "undertake work" to maintain the Laguna's storage capacity.

The Agency hopes to work with the Army Corps of Engineers to undertake flood control studies and possible mitigation measures.

At this point it's too early to say what the mitigation measures might be, said Poole. One goal of the siltation studies would be to "try to identify where it's from," said Poole.

Historically when the River floods it drops silt in the Laguna. But how much silt comes from potential sources such as the Santa Rosa plain,

River tributaries, or upstream agricultural operations is unclear, said Poole.

The Water Agency is also now looking at Russian River levees in the Alexander Valley and in the River's middle reach above Forestville, as well as the Laguna de Santa Rosa, for possible flood control projects to be carried out with the help of the Army Engineers.

The board last week also directed Poole to contact the offices of U.S. Congressional Representatives Lynn Woolsey and Frank Riggs to obtain funding for flood control work on the levees and in the Laguna.

Historically the 9,000-acre Laguna has been considered the "single most important flood

control feature on the Russian River Watershed," said Water Agency consulting engineer Bob Morrison.

In past floods the Laguna "has reduced the flood crest in Guerneville by as much as 11 to 12 feet, almost twice as much as Warm Springs Dam and Coyote Dam combined," said Morrison, in a memo to the board. "Unfortunately, the Laguna is filling with silt."

As a result, "Much of the benefit of the two flood control dams has been negated," said Morrison. "As the floodplain continues to fill, I would expect flooding to worsen in the lower river for equal magnitude storms." 97.8