

Now we're getting somewhere on Peninsula landslide work

Larry E. Clark, Torrance Daily Breeze, 8-2-10

Clark is a 30-year resident of Rancho Palos Verdes and a former mayor and member of the California Coastal Commission.

For anyone living on the Peninsula, the landslide conditions near the coastline are no secret. If you are not personally dealing with the effects of "moving earth," you probably have a friend or family member who is.

As a Rancho Palos Verdes resident for more than 30 years and a former mayor and member of the California Coastal Commission, I have spent exhaustive amounts of time in planning sessions and neighborhood and council meetings asking, "What can we do to preserve our quality of life and improve safety?"

After carefully studying conditions and asking a lot of questions, I believe there is finally hope for resolving the issues within one particular canyon: San Ramon Canyon, also known as Tarapaca Canyon by locals.

You have probably driven through mud and debris on 25th Street, so you have a visual of the nuisance caused by this canyon where Palos Verdes Drive South turns into 25th Street. If you haven't experienced the mess, imagine 1 to 3 feet of mud, water, branches, rock and debris covering the road and stopping all traffic for up to 24 hours, six to eight times per year.

On May 12, the city of Rancho Palos Verdes held a community meeting at Miraleste Intermediate School to discuss what is being done to mitigate the San Ramon Canyon landslide problems. I'm sure most of the people attending expected some of the same commentary we have heard for the past 15 years and did not expect much in the way of forward progress. This was not the case.

Because I have personally battled mitigating landslide issues and know the difficulty in making progress in the political process, I want to make sure that the residents of Rancho Palos Verdes and the Peninsula know the advancements the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council and staff have made over the past 12 months. There is reason to be hopeful that San Ramon Canyon will be restored. For example:

Congressman Dana Rohrabacher toured the site in August 2009 and subsequently included a \$9.75million funding request in the nation's transportation bill. Rohrabacher has stated that this project is on the top of his list and he wants to get the job done before a crisis strikes. Although the congressman has taken a year furlough from submitting earmark requests to combat the growing federal deficit, we on the Peninsula are relying on his placing this project in his funding queue in the next federal fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1. I encourage our residents to contact their local, state and federal representatives to remind them of this critical project.

A partnership letter was signed in December by L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe, L.A. City Councilwoman Janice Hahn and Rancho Palos Verdes Mayor Stefan Wolowicz - all committing to fund a portion of the project's total cost, estimated to be almost \$20 million.

Rancho Palos Verdes has commissioned and is paying approximately \$1.2 million for a project study report that will provide three preliminary alternative designs addressing the issues in the Lower San Ramon Canyon area. This study will be done in December.

The city of Los Angeles applied for and is hopeful to receive a \$500,000 grant from the Federal Emergency

Management Agency to improve the drainage system at the site.

The Los Angeles district of the Corps of Engineers toured the project site in November 2009 and is assisting the city with federal legislative language to allow its office to provide financial and technical assistance.

A representative from Sen. Barbara Boxer's office toured the project site in October and Boxer will accept nominations for this project in the near future. Rancho Palos Verdes staff expect to submit a \$9.75million funding request to her office when appropriate. A similar funding request has already been submitted to Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Rancho Palos Verdes has aggressively sought federal funding for the project, including a \$9.75million request from the reauthorization of the nation's transportation bill, a \$9.75 million request from the Corps of Engineers, a \$2million request from the annual Transportation and Community and System Preservation account, and a \$900,000 request from the annual energy and water development bill. All of these requests are pending.

Rancho Palos Verdes has secured the services of a professional grant management firm that identified more than 40 funding opportunities for consideration, including six that would specifically help with the San Ramon Canyon project.

Rancho Palos Verdes has secured support letters from California state Sens. Alan Lowenthal, Tony Strickland and Roderick Wright, Assemblywoman Bonnie Lowenthal and Assemblyman Ted Lieu.

The list above clearly illustrates a motivated local, regional, state and federal political delegation. Funding requests are in the queue and realistic alternatives to fixing the problem will be presented in roughly six months.

There is momentum now where none previously existed. For these reasons, I believe we can be optimistic that real mitigation work will be accomplished in the near future in San Ramon Canyon.