



Rio Linda Residents Rise Above the Floodwaters

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Sacramento County, California



Sacramento, CA – The homeowners in a low-lying section of Rio Linda used to worry about flooding whenever the winter storm season arrived. When heavy rains hit the neighborhood, the normally benign Dry Creek overflowed its banks, threatening the row of ranch-style houses on U Street.

Over the past few years, Rio Linda residents have participated in FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program, which have helped dozens of Sacramento County homeowners protect themselves against flooding. Federal and county funds were used to elevate houses along U Street above the base flood elevation (BFE), which is the average floodwater depth for a flood event that has an estimated one percent chance of occurring during any given year. Buildings constructed to this standard are expected to sit above the floodwater and avoid damage during all but the most severe inundations.

When a series of winter storms battered Northern California from late December through New Year's 2005-2006, none of these elevated homes flooded.

"Elevating the house means we have to climb steps, but it gives us better peace of mind," said Michael Brunyansky, who has lived with his wife, Caroline, in their 1,710-square-foot, four-bedroom home since 1991.

Mr. Brunyansky knew when he purchased the house that its previous owners had experienced flooding in 1986, but nothing prepared him for the massive flooding that devastated his house during rainstorms in 1995.

At the height of the storms, the water rose 39 inches in the single-story ranch house, destroying carpets, drywall, furnishings, cupboards, and personal belongings.

When the Sacramento County Department of Water Resources (DWR) offered Mr. Brunyansky and his neighbors a chance to participate in a home elevation program, he seized the opportunity without hesitation.

The project was completed in 2000. While their house was being elevated over a three-month period, the couple lived in a motor home in their yard, where they could observe the progress. Despite the temporary inconvenience, Mr. Brunyansky has no regrets. "I would recommend elevation to anyone who has floodwater, and it's repetitive," he said.

The Brunyanskys' house stands on top of an 81-inch-high cement-block foundation that keeps its living area two feet above the BFE. Specially-designed flood vents near the bottom of the foundation allow floodwaters to pass under the house without damaging it.

The Brunyanskys' home, built in 1961, was among 44 homes in the Sacramento area that was elevated with the help of nearly \$2 million in Federal mitigation funds made available in 1997. The cost to elevate their home totaled \$66,000. They received \$50,000 in FEMA mitigation funds, another \$6,000 from the county, and paid for the remaining costs themselves. Now, all but one of the homes on their low-lying block have been elevated.

Mark Rains, the project coordinator and an associate engineer with the DWR, said the County's goal is to either elevate or acquire and demolish older flood-prone homes in unincorporated areas, as well as Rancho Cordova and Citrus Heights. As of spring 2006, 72 homes have been elevated. "We have acquired and demolished 22 other houses and returned the property to open space," Mr. Rains said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Brunyansky no longer worries about floodwater entering his home, but he understands that he still needs to prepare for the possibility of a flood. For example, he has identified a safe location to move his vehicles whenever Dry Creek overflows its banks.

He has also learned from past experiences with storms and flooding that it is important to safeguard his animals. In the 1995 flood, Mr. Brunyansky lost 11 of the 15 chickens kept in two backyard coops. Subsequently, he installed shelving to raise the

cages off the floor of the coop. Now the chickens and the homeowners can remain high and dry.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IX**

State: **California**

County: **Sacramento County**

City/Community: **Rio Linda**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Elevation, Structural**

Structure Type: **Wood Frame**

Activity/Project Start Date: **06/2000**

Activity/Project End Date: **09/2000**

Funding Source: **Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA); Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Homeowner; Local Sources**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **Sacramento County Dept. of Water Resources**

Application/Project Number: **9999**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$66,000.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1155 , 01/04/1997**

Federal Disaster Year: **1997**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **2005**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/index.shtm>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.oes.ca.gov>

Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



Mr. Brunyansky stands in front of his elevated home.



U Street houses.