

INDIAN WELLS CITY COUNCIL

April 3, 2025



To: City Council
From: Public Works Department
Prepared by: Dina Purvis, Assistant Public Works Director
Subject: **Approval of the Whitewater River Low Flow Flood Channel Emergency Reconstruction Project and Finding the Project Exempt from CEQA**

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Council **APPROVES** the progression of the Whitewater Low Flow Flood Channel Reconstruction project to the bidding phase, for the emergency reconstruction work detailed in the staff report; and

FINDS the project qualifies as an emergency project exemption pursuant to Section 15269(b)(c) of the CEQA guidelines.

BACKGROUND:

The Whitewater River Channel is a vital flood control feature that traverses the City of Indian Wells, including a key component – the concrete "low flow" channel running down the center of the main channel. This low flow channel is critical for maintaining water movement and preventing debris buildup during lower flow events. The concrete channel extends for approximately 5,800 feet, with a trapezoidal cross-section (3 feet deep and 4 feet wide at the bottom).

The low flow channel was severely damaged during two significant weather events: the February 2019 rainstorm and Tropical Storm Hilary in August 2023. These events caused substantial damage to the channel structure, threatening its integrity and the broader stormwater management system. To address this, the City has applied for, and been granted, grant funding to reconstruct and upgrade the stormwater system, focusing on the segment of the low flow channel from Fred Waring Drive to the easterly edge of the Indian Wells Golf Resort.

The proposed reconstruction involves the demolition, removal, and rebuilding of the channel, including regrading and compacting the base and pouring new concrete for the sides and bottom. The replacement channel will have a trapezoidal cross-section with a depth of approximately 3 feet and a bottom width of 10 feet.

The reconstruction will directly benefit areas adjacent to the channel and downstream locations, improving the capacity and resilience of the stormwater system during future storm events. The project will also facilitate faster and more efficient debris removal after a storm event, as equipment will have easier access to the low-flow channel. The failure of the low flow channel poses a significant risk to public health, safety, and welfare, especially during high-flow events. Ensuring the structural integrity of the channel is paramount to maintaining effective flood control for the City.

OPTIONS:

1. Approve the progression of the project to the bidding phase for the emergency repairs to the Whitewater River Low Flow Flood Channel as recommended by Staff.
2. Deny the Project.
3. Provide alternative direction to staff.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The project is included in the current Capital Improvement Plan. The City has been approved for \$600,000 in grant funding from the Department of Water Resources to offset costs.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

This Project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State and local CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. The City acting as Lead Agency, has determined the Whitewater River Low Flow Channel Repair Project qualifies as an emergency project exemption pursuant to Section 15269(b)(c) of the CEQA guidelines:

- b) Emergency repairs to publicly or privately owned service facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare. Emergency repairs include those that require a reasonable amount of planning to address an anticipated emergency.
- c) Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency. This does not include long-term projects undertaken for the purpose of preventing or mitigating a situation that has a low probability of occurrence in the short-term, but this exclusion does not apply (i) if the anticipated period of time to conduct an environmental review of such a long-term project would create a risk to public health, safety or welfare, or (ii) if activities (such as fire or catastrophic risk mitigation or modifications to improve facility integrity) are proposed for existing facilities in response to an emergency at a similar existing facility.

The Project involves emergency repairs to a publicly owned facility, necessary to improve the channel's capacity and resilience of the stormwater system from adversely affecting

adjacent and downstream land uses during future storm events. These emergency repairs are necessary to prevent failure of the stormwater facility, and to prevent any potential near term risks to public health, safety, and welfare.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Vicinity Map