

Crews should begin clearing flood-prone creek next week

By Nick Baptista / THE Valley Springs News / October 3, 2025

Work is expected to begin Monday to clear vegetation and debris from flood-prone Cosgrove Creek, according to Calaveras County District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli.

A biologist survey of the area, which is considered environmentally sensitive and habitat for the red-legged frog, a threatened species, has been completed and sent to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

It has been approved, Tofanelli said, and inmates from the Vallecito Conservation Camp No. 1 under direction of CalFire are scheduled to arrive Monday at the job site and begin the cleaning effort.

The work this year will encompass nearly 100 acres along Cosgrove Creek from the north side of Gold Creek Estates to Silver Rapids Road, he said.

The creek has been prone to flooding over the years, especially in La Contenta subdivision, the latest occurrence being in January 2023.

Removed vegetation will be collected into burn piles. Those piles will be disposed of once the burn restrictions are lifted.

The county has a contract with CalFire to complete the work. However, the inmates first priority is fighting fires. If firefighting assignments conflict with the creek clean-up effort, the county has a back-up plan.

The work along Cosgrove must be completed within a short window depending upon the weather, Tofanelli said. It has to be dry. Once there are significant rainstorms that produce water flows in the creek, work has to cease.

To assure the clean-up will be completed in a timely manner whether or not the inmate crews are available, the county Board of Supervisors last month approved plans to use private contractors if necessary.

The county received quotes from five contractors and staff recommended entering into three “as-needed” contracts with Lone Pine Tree Service, BurnBot and Nate’s Tree Service. The back-up plan is for a three-year period to avoid coming back to the board for approval on a yearly basis.

Overall, the county has budgeted \$170,000 this year for the clean-up effort.

The county is looking at creating a “bathtub” or retention basin upstream on Calaveras County Water District property located off Hogan Dam Road near State Route 26. The basin would “trap” the water during serious storms and release it once the rains stop.

It may take years to go through the competitive process and receive the funding to begin construction, which has been estimated to cost upwards of \$50 million.