



Flood & Inundation Hazards

Riverside County has experienced severe flooding many times throughout its history, resulting in the loss of lives and millions of dollars in property damage. Floods are caused by rivers and creeks overrunning their banks, and most property damage has occurred where development has been allowed without regard for flood hazard. If urban development continues to encroach onto the floodplains without major structural improvements, Riverside County will face an ever-increasing flood hazard, and potential losses will escalate.

The tremendous capital investments made in dikes, channels, levees, and dams over the last half century have not eliminated all flood hazards, and in some instances, the protective facilities may be unable to accommodate the 100-year flood. In recent years, the idea has become increasingly accepted that, while it is essential to protect existing development, the provision of massive flood control facilities merely to permit new development over major floodplains may be unwise. It is often more effective and less costly to locate development outside of hazard areas than to attempt to control the hazard itself.

Furthermore, consistent with the intent and policies of the Multipurpose Open Space Element, the Safety Element recognizes the need to protect watercourses in their natural state. Flood and inundation policies limit the alteration of floodways and channelization when alternative methods of flood control are not technically feasible. The intent is to balance the need for protection with prudent land use solutions, recreation needs, and habitat requirements; and, as applicable, to provide incentives for natural watercourse preservation, including density transfer programs.

One-hundred- and five-hundred-year flood hazard zones are identified in Figure S-9, while dam inundation zones are identified in Figure S-10.

The intent of these policies is to eliminate the need for state or federal flood disaster declarations through aggressive flood mitigation activities.

Flood and Inundation Hazard Abatement

While local agencies operate and maintain many flood control facilities, funding for the construction of such facilities often is shared with federal and state agencies. Nevertheless, local agencies independently fund many local projects without financial assistance from the federal or state governments.

Flooding susceptibility in Riverside County is primarily associated with several major stream drainages, including but not limited to the Santa Ana, San Jacinto and Whitewater Rivers, as well as smaller scale and flash flood events on many of the alluvial fans that flank the County's hillsides. Large-scale developments have utilized golf courses and greenbelts as part of a network of channels that collect flood flows on the upstream side of a project, carry it safely through the project, and disperse it on the downstream side. However, given the low permeabilities of the underlying bedrock, heavy runoff from the surrounding hills and mountains during strong storms cannot be prevented.



Since 1965, eleven Gubernatorial and Presidential flood disaster declarations have been declared for Riverside County. State law generally makes local government agencies responsible for flood control in California.