

MOTION

PUBLIC WORKS

FEB 22 2005

The record-setting rains that occurred in the first weeks of January, 2005 have shown the importance and effectiveness of the City of Los Angeles' flood control system. Overall the system worked exceptionally well. However, in some of the hillside and canyon areas, where the flood control system consists in part or wholly of natural watercourses, there were instances in which the watercourses were blocked by debris, both manmade and naturally-occurring, causing instances of flooding.

Chapter 6, Sections 64.07, 64 .08 and 64.09 of the City's Municipal Code prohibit property owners from obstructing the public right of way without a permit from the City. When a watercourse is blocked, damage can result both upstream and downstream, going far beyond the property on which the blockage occurs. This past major rain event saw flood damage occurring on both private and public property, as mud flow and debris, along with water, ended up on adjacent properties and City streets. Unfortunately, much of this damage can be attributed to obstruction of many of these watercourses prior to the rains. Though certain blockages and obstructions can be traced to new debris brought into the watercourse during these recent rains, many watercourses had previously existing obstructions that constricted the waterways. Had these locations been identified and kept clear of debris or other blockages, such as fences, storm damage might have been significantly reduced.

Mandeville Canyon Road in the Brentwood area of the City has a history of mudslides and floods. This was evident once again when it was particularly hard hit by the recent rains, and significant damage and disruption was due to blocked watercourses. A tremendous amount of City resources were spent to ensure the safety and stability of this road, and its tributary roads and canyons.

City inspectors need to be able to investigate these watercourses on a regular basis to help prevent additional instances of unnecessary flooding, in much the same way the Fire Department is empowered to enforce brush clearance to avoid brush fires. Until funding is provided for such a proactive inspection program, the flooding problem will continue to exist.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council, instruct the Department of Public Works, in conjunction with the Department of Building and Safety, City Administrative Officer and Chief Legislative Analyst, with the assistance of the City Attorney, report back to the Council within 45 days on creating a framework for a pilot program for mandatory watercourse inspections, including: estimated cost; proposed funding; implementation schedule; and challenges that must be addressed.

I FURTHER MOVE that upon approval of a pilot program, the first area for program implementation will be Mandeville Canyon.

I FURTHER MOVE that 180 days after the start of this pilot inspection program, the Department of Public Works report back on a framework, estimated cost, funding source and schedule for implementing this program on a City-wide basis.

PRESENTED BY Cindy Miscikowski
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Councilmember, 11th District

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