

# Cities build protective dike

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ST. GEORGE - Crews are building massive rock walls along the banks of the Santa Clara River to protect the homes that escaped destruction in January.

Many homes were lost in the January flood as the raging water eroded the banks of the river and undercut structures standing above. But now the Natural Resources Conservation Service is paying for the construction of rock walls to armor and stabilize the banks.

"They have a huge army of trucks and they're hauling massive amounts of rock," said Larry Bulloch, director of Public Works for the city of St. George.

Bulloch said Feller Stone and Judd Palmer Excavation are working quickly on the delicate river banks from Sunbrook Golf Course to the Brookside subdivision.

In Santa Clara, Trade West Construction is clearing debris from the riverbed and preparing to armor the banks near the Swiss Village Condominiums, said Matthew Brower, Santa Clara city manager.

Brower said armoring the banks from Swiss Village southeast along Old Highway 91 is important because another 20 feet of the river bank was lost to erosion there during the rain last weekend. He said workers began placing rock along the banks on Thursday.

The Swiss Village area was a top priority for the NRCS because the flood washed away everything from the back side of the condominiums. Brower said another high water event could undermine the wall and damage Swiss Village.

Brower complimented the NRCS for identifying the priority spots along the river and making its initial \$5 million contribution go a long way. The NRCS was able to spend about \$6 million in Washington County, but about \$1 million will go to administrative costs.

Local officials are working with Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah, to try and secure more money from the NRCS and other federal organizations.

The bank armoring began Wednesday near Valley View Drive in St. George. The rock walls will be about 30 feet wide at the bottom and buried 3 feet in the ground, Bulloch said. They will rise 8 feet in a narrowing slope.

Bulloch said the structure is designed to carry a flood equal to the major flood in January.

As the building continues, Bulloch said the public should stay away from the operations up and down the river. Heavy equipment will be moving the large rocks in the construction areas and along nearby streets.

"There's a huge amount of risk to public safety," he said. "(People) absolutely need to stay out of the river at all times."

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**A track hoe is used to add loads of rock to a dike being constructed Thursday along the banks of the Santa Clara just upriver from a home in the Riverside subdivision that was destroyed in the January flood.**