

# SAN CARLOS SPOTLIGHT ON NEWSWORTHY TOPICS

CITY OF  
GOOD  
LIVING  
SAN CARLOS

THIS ISSUE'S FOCUS:

## Storm Preparation & Flood Safety

November 2023

[cityofsancarlos.org/storm](http://cityofsancarlos.org/storm)

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## Weathering the Storm Together

Last winter, San Carlos and much of California experienced unusually heavy rainfall. Once-in-a-decade rainstorms resulted in widespread flooding, forcing road closures, and affecting businesses and homes everywhere in the City of Good Living.

On New Year's Eve, San Carlos City Manager Jeff Maltbie declared a local emergency and staff from all City departments abandoned their plans and reported to work to serve in a variety of capacities. In the days and weeks that followed, our San Carlos Public Works Department worked around the clock with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and the San Carlos & Redwood City Fire Department to clear roadways and alleviate flooding. Crews responded diligently to emergencies and calls for service, always prioritizing community safety.

The actions taken during these storms were crucial to minimizing negative impacts on our community. Proactive citywide storm and flood preparation, however, began months earlier in August, before the first drop of rain had fallen. Without these annual preventative maintenance measures to help safeguard San Carlos, the level of damage might have been significantly greater.

Continue reading inside this Spotlight to learn more about measures taken by the City to protect homes and businesses from flooding, and to find out what you can do to prepare for future storms and stay safe.



Find more information, tips, and resources at [cityofsancarlos.org/storm](http://cityofsancarlos.org/storm).





# Preparing San Carlos for the Winter Season

The City of San Carlos begins preparing for the winter season every August, with mitigation and safety work lasting throughout the fall and winter months until the rainy season is over.

Take a look at the different types of clean-ups, maintenance, and other preventative measures taken by City staff prior to the fall and winter seasons that help keep San Carlos safe.

## Storm Channels and Creeks

City staff clean debris, trash, and vegetation out of major storm channels and creeks that carry storm water to the Bay and prevent it from collecting on San Carlos streets. The clearing of these waterways prevents blockages and potential flooding.



## Stormwater Pump Stations

There are four pump stations located in San Carlos and each station contains two pumps. Each pump is pulled, cleaned, tested, and replaced (if necessary) to ensure they are functioning properly. The pumps are housed in wet wells, which store and retain stormwater until it can be transferred into the storm drain systems and waterways. Staff clean the wet wells to remove obstructions and debris and repair any cracks that may lead to leaks.



## Hillside Erosion Control

Every year, City maintenance crews work with contractors to install erosion control measures on hillsides that are susceptible to mudslides. These measures help protect both homes and roadways.



## Storm Outfalls and Retention Basin Clean-ups

The City has five large storm outfalls and retention basins built to hold excess storm water, located in the rear of some properties and City parks. These are cleaned every season to help curb flooding.



## Flushing and Cleaning Storm Drain Inlets

City staff clean and flush more than 250 storm drain inlets to remove dirt, debris, and trash that prevent water flow or cause overflow and flooding.



## Storm Swales and Gutters

Crews clear trash and debris and remove overgrown vegetation in swales and gutters to prevent blockages and the potential flooding of backyards and city parks.



## Storm Equipment and Machines

All machines and equipment used during the winter season are inspected and preventative maintenance is completed.





# Sandbags

Sandbags are available year-round at the **San Carlos Corporation Yard**, located at **1000 Bransten Road**.

Sandbags can be a pivotal part of protecting your home or business from potential flooding during heavy rains but are often deployed incorrectly. Follow the tips below and watch a video on proper sandbag deployment at [cityofsancarlos.org/storm](http://cityofsancarlos.org/storm).

Use these tips to maximize the effectiveness of your sandbags:



**1** **Fill** each sandbag only to the fill line (or about halfway). Filling the bags all the way up is actually counter-productive, and causes the bags to be less efficient at keeping water out.



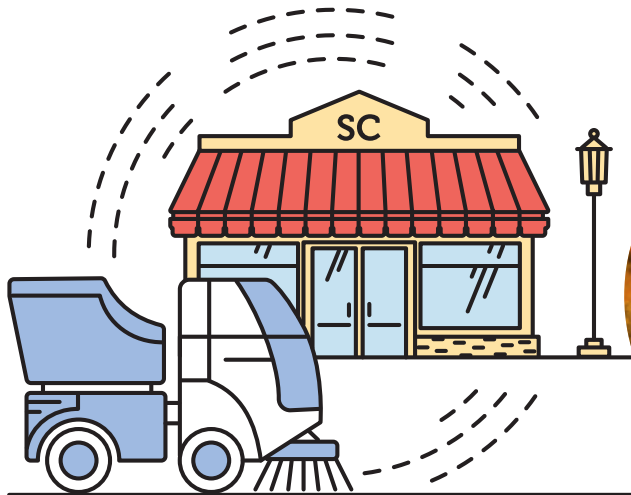
**2** **Close** each bag by folding over the top. Tying bags tightly closed can cause gaps to open up in your wall.



**3** **Lay** the bags flat and horizontally on top of each other, as if you were laying bricks. Let gravity do the work to press the bags together.

## Ongoing Maintenance During the Winter Season

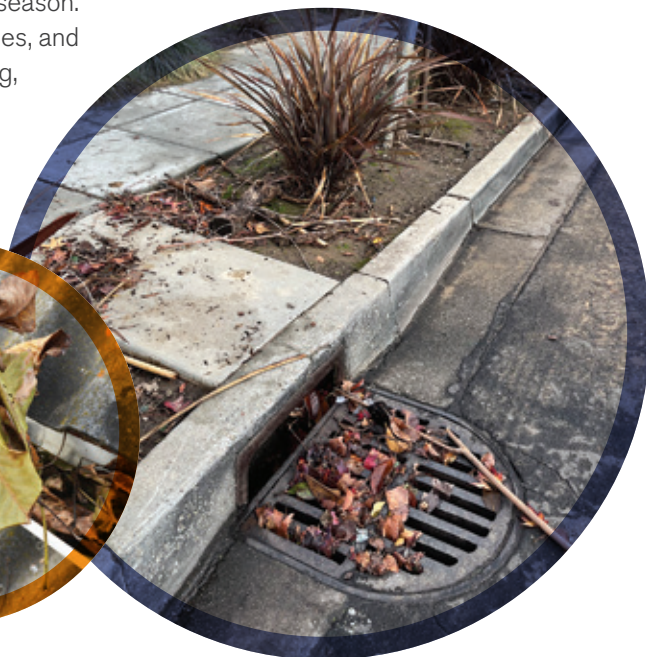
Preventative maintenance does not stop at the beginning of the winter or rainy season. Staff continue to routinely clean and maintain all storm drain inlets, creeks, swales, and gutters before and after each individual rain event to prevent blockages, flooding, and any impacts to the San Carlos community throughout the winter season.



## Curious when street sweeping takes place in your neighborhood?

Familiarize yourself with the City's street sweeping schedule, and be sure to move your car on your scheduled day so sweepers can effectively clean your street.

View the citywide street sweeping schedule, including a complete street sweeping map of San Carlos, at [cityofsancarlos.org/streets](http://cityofsancarlos.org/streets).



### Street Cleaning

The City's street cleaning contractor regularly sweeps the dirt, debris, and leaves from street gutters to prevent blockages.

# How do Property Owners Prepare for and Prevent Flooding?

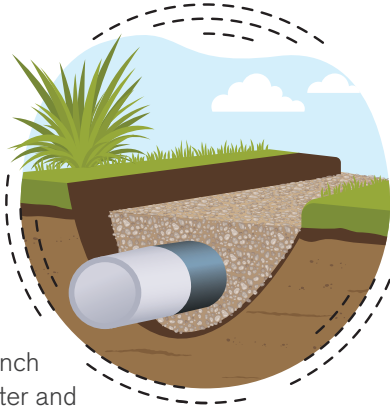
In addition to the proactive and varied efforts of City staff, community members have an important role to play in assisting with flood mitigation and prevention efforts.

If you own a home or business in San Carlos, there are four primary ways that you can help prevent flooding: install French drains, thoroughly clean your gutters and downspouts, install an on-site drainage system, and utilize a swale on your property.

## French Drains

French drains, if installed properly, can be very effective against flooding. French drains are designed with a perforated plastic pipe that is set in the ground, surrounded by gravel, and wrapped around a filter fabric. The intent of the French drain is to capture stormwater and allow it to soak into the ground.

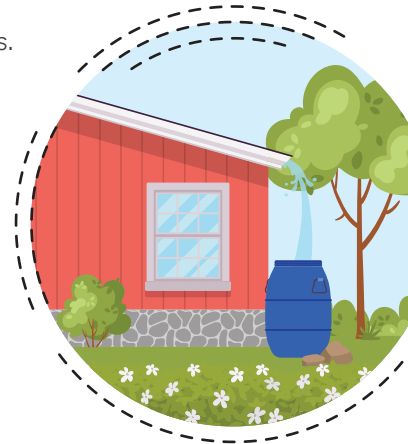
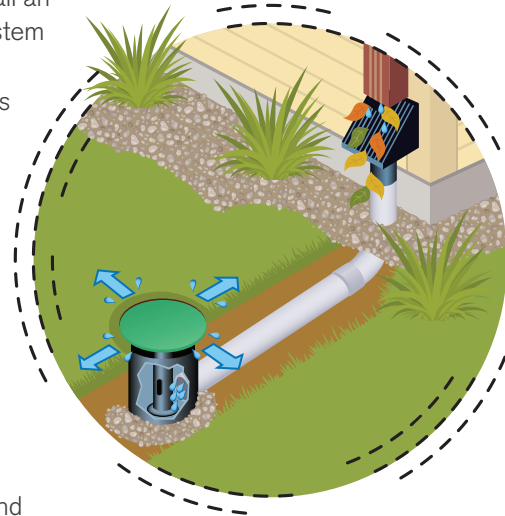
In cases of extreme rain events, French drains also have an outlet that drains out into a bubbler box, a device designed to hold excess rainwater that is unable to soak into the ground to be released through the surface. Many homes employ French drains to protect basements and levels of the house that are located below street level.



## Onsite Drainage Systems

Property owners can install an underground drainage system that connects directly to downspouts, then releases stormwater through curb drains under the sidewalk, and then directly into the gutter in the roadway.

Alternatively, property owners can install a rain collection system such as rain barrels or rain gardens, that collect stormwater and divert it for domestic use or watering gardens, planters, or plants. The County of San Mateo offers rebates to property owners that install collection systems. More information about rain barrels and the rebate can be found through the San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program at [www.flowstobay.org](http://www.flowstobay.org)



## Cleaning Gutters and Downspouts

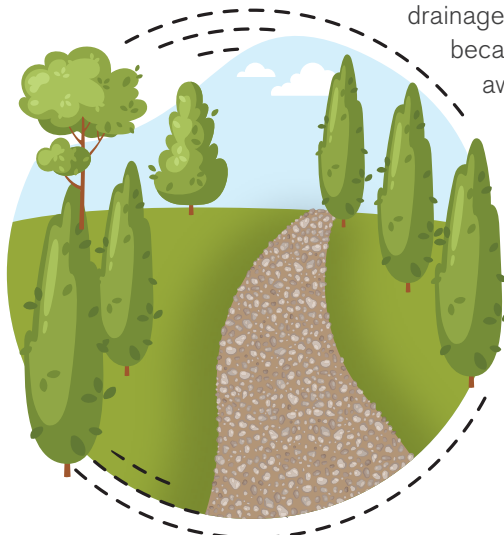
Property owners are encouraged to routinely clean their gutters and downspouts. Leaves and debris can clog or block the gutters and prevent stormwater from releasing away from the home.

Property owners should also investigate where downspouts are releasing to ensure the spouts are effectively draining water away from the home. Stormwater that pools around the downspouts, home, or foundation, can lead to foundation or settlement issues. Downspout extensions can also be installed that direct stormwater to another exterior area of the home (i.e., lawn, yard, or planters) to ensure there are no future foundation or settlement issues.



## Swales

Swales are also a good tool to help combat flooding. Swales are a depression made in landscaping where stormwater can collect. These are usually installed in graded or shallow areas in conjunction with onsite drainage systems. A swale is versatile because it not only keeps stormwater away from the home, but it also retains stormwater onsite and slowly releases it into a gutter or storm drain system. The slow release of stormwater into the gutter or storm drain system can prevent overflows and flooding.







## Message from Steven Machida

### *Public Works Director*

As we head into fall, our Public Works staff have been actively preparing for the rainy season. The City's storm drain pipes, basins, and inlets have been assessed, cleaned, and flushed, and storm pumps have been serviced to ensure they are functional when called upon.

Preparing San Carlos for winter rains is a complex and difficult task that requires months of hard work and coordination between City staff, our Police and Fire departments, and local agencies such as Silicon Valley Clean Water and San Mateo County.

While coordination with these agencies is important, there is one other key to successfully protecting San Carlos from winter storms and subsequent flooding — cooperation with our community. While we take numerous steps to make the City of Good Living storm-ready, we also rely on you to supplement our efforts, and help us reach places we may not have easy access to. Clearing debris and installing or maintaining drainage systems on your own property can make a big difference in our collective readiness to weather the winter rains.

Thank you in advance to all community members who volunteer at our clean-ups, help clear debris from their homes, and take an active role in making the City of Good Living resilient and ready.

Remember, we are all in this together. Take care and be safe.

*Steven Machida,*  
**Public Works Director**

## Annual Creek Clean-up

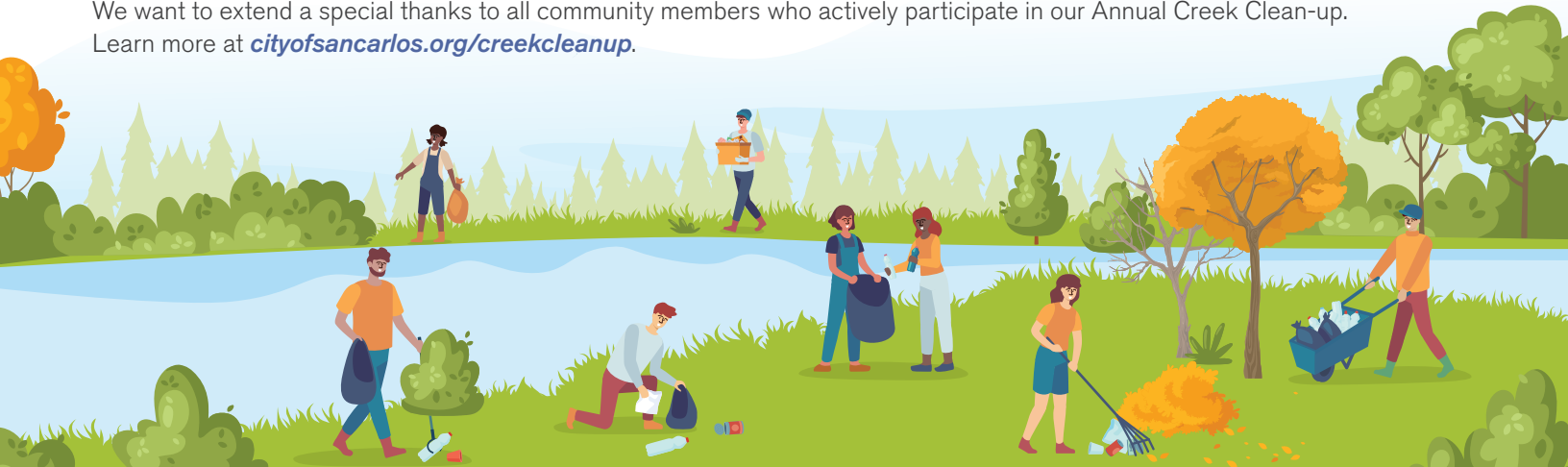
The City hosts an Annual Creek Clean-up Day where property owners join the City and play an integral role in preserving and maintaining the creeks, streams, and waterways along Belmont, Cordilleras, Brittan, and Pulgas Creeks.

These efforts help to avoid flood damage, minimize erosion, preserve water quality, preserve fish and wildlife habitats, minimize creek contamination, preserve the natural state of the creeks, and continue to keep our community beautiful. Private property owners along creeks play an integral part in the clean-up event as they collect trash and debris along the creek adjacent to their property. After the clean-up, the City organizes the pick-up of all collected debris.

The Annual Creek Clean-up is held the third week of September each year, in preparation for the upcoming winter season. This year's event was held Saturday, September 16, 2023, and participants collected nearly six tons of trash.

Although the City hosts the event once a year, property owners are encouraged to continue collecting trash and debris out of the creek throughout the winter to actively participate in mitigating flood damage. Trash can be taken to Shoreway Environmental Center located at 333 Shoreway Road, San Carlos, CA 94070.

We want to extend a special thanks to all community members who actively participate in our Annual Creek Clean-up. Learn more at [cityofsancarlos.org/creekcleanup](https://cityofsancarlos.org/creekcleanup).



Local  
Postal Customer

## Community Resources

### Before a Storm Hits

#### STORM PREPAREDNESS

Sandbag locations, emergency phone numbers, shelter information, and more. [smcgov.org/storm-preparedness](http://smcgov.org/storm-preparedness)

#### Ready BE READY

Tips and general preparedness information including what to pack in your emergency kit and go-bag. [Ready.gov](http://Ready.gov)

#### SAFETY ACTION CENTER

Learn how to prepare for a power outage, get information on emergency planning for seniors, and more. [safetyactioncenter.pge.com](http://safetyactioncenter.pge.com)



### During a Storm

#### STORM AND FLOOD PREPARATION

Find consolidated emergency resources, including safety tips, updates on real-time road closures, facility closures, contact information, and more. [cityofsancarlos.org/storm](http://cityofsancarlos.org/storm)

#### ZONEHAVEN

Get up-to-date, neighborhood-specific emergency information. [myzone.zonehaven.com](http://myzone.zonehaven.com)

#### SMC ALERT

Sign up for countywide emergency alerts and evacuation warnings from SMC Alert. [smcgov.org/dem/smc-alert](http://smcgov.org/dem/smc-alert)

#### CITY OF SAN CARLOS - PUBLIC WORKS

Call the City of San Carlos to report flooding, sewer backups, mudslides, and downed tree emergencies. **(650) 802-4140.**

#### GET HELP 24/7: CALL 2-1-1

Call the County to be connected to resources, including information about temporary shelters.

**2-1-1**

Get Connected • Get Help™

### After a Storm

#### FLOODS

Prepare and stay safe in case of flooding during a storm. [ready.gov/floods](http://ready.gov/floods)

#### MOLD CLEAN-UP

Dealing with mold after a storm? Get information on mold clean up. [cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm](http://cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm)

#### RETURNING HOME

Information on reentering a flooded home. [cdc.gov/disasters/floods/after.html](http://cdc.gov/disasters/floods/after.html)



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## Coming Soon! San Carlos **ADOPT A DRAIN** Adopt-a-Drain Program

Looking for more ways to help prevent flooding and help San Carlos become storm ready?

Join our new **Adopt-a-Drain Program!**

Learn more and adopt a drain today at [cityofsancarlos.org/drain](http://cityofsancarlos.org/drain).