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City of Rancho Palos Verdes Awarded \$23.33 Million FEMA Grant for Portuguese Bend Landslide Remediation Project

Aug. 29, 2023 (Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.) — The City of Rancho Palos Verdes today celebrated the news that the City has been awarded a \$23.33 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to slow the Portuguese Bend Landslide, one of the largest continuously active landslides in the U.S.

The City's project to significantly reduce land movement in the 240-acre landslide was one of 124 infrastructure projects chosen from 803 submitted from across the country for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program. On Aug. 28, [FEMA announced nearly \\$3 billion](#) in awards to help communities build resilience against extreme weather events and proactively reduce natural hazard risks, including \$1.8 billion in BRIC funding. [The City's award](#) is believed to be the first landslide mitigation project funded under BRIC and the largest investment in landslide mitigation under any FEMA program. It is the largest grant award ever secured by the City.

Rancho Palos Verdes Mayor Pro Tem John Cruikshank, who sits on the City Council Landslide Subcommittee, called yesterday's announcement a "game changer" for the City.

"This \$22.33 million grant is a tremendous boost that will make it possible for the City to address the long-looming threat posed to our community by the landslide and prevent a dual public safety and environmental disaster," he said. "We thank FEMA and Cal OES for recognizing the urgency of this critical project, which is underscored by the accelerated land movement we have seen in recent months."

The Portuguese Bend Landslide is part of a larger complex of ancient landslides located on the south side of the Palos Verdes Peninsula in Rancho Palos Verdes. It was reactivated in 1956 by Los Angeles County's planned extension of Crenshaw Boulevard and has been moving ever since, moving homes by hundreds of feet over the years and causing the City to spend nearly \$1 million annually on roadway repairs along a bumpy stretch of Palos Verdes Drive South. The land moves because of the dynamics of surface water percolating into the ground and water trapped deep underground, sliding as much as 8.5 feet per year.

The City is in the process of preparing a Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Portuguese Bend Landslide Remediation Project, which aims to drastically reduce the movement to 2 inches per year through a combination of engineering strategies that would remove the trapped water and prevent rainwater from entering the ground in the future.

"The City has been exploring engineering solutions to manage the landslide for decades," said Rancho Palos Verdes City Manager Ara Mihranian. "In 2017, a renewed process began that culminated in the current project that has a price tag of \$33 million. Receiving the FEMA BRIC grant in the amount of \$23.33 million will enable the City to address the costly and damaging land movement. This will leave an indelible

mark on the City, Peninsula and the South Bay for decades to come by addressing an imminent threat to public health, safety and the environment."

In addition to FEMA, Mr. Mihranian expressed the City's gratitude to Cal OES, Hagerty Consulting, Hout Engineering, and Lisa Scola of Scola & Associates for their work on the City's grant application. He also thanked elected representatives who have lent their support to the City's efforts to address the landslide, including U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Rep. Ted Lieu., California Sen. Ben Allen, Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, California Sen. Steven Bradford, L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn, and L.A. County Assessor Jeff Prang, as well as neighboring agencies on the Peninsula.

The project is designed to significantly reduce the threat of sudden movement that could result in the failure of Palos Verdes Drive South, which would bifurcate the City, eliminating a major connector and evacuation route for the high fire risk Peninsula. Roadway failure could also send raw sewage spilling onto the ecologically sensitive shoreline and ocean from above-ground sanitary sewer trunk lines that serve thousands of homes. A Final EIR could be released in late 2024. If the final project is approved by the City Council, construction could start in 2025.

To complete the \$33 million project, the City will work to identify funding opportunities for about \$10 million needed in non-federal matching funds. The City was previously allocated \$2 million in Congressionally Directed Spending requested by Sen. Feinstein. Because the City already had a federal grant application pending, the funding could not be used for the project, but instead will be used for a nearby drainage improvement project in the landslide area at Palos Verdes Drive South and Peppertree Drive. That work will reconstruct an existing failed drainage system to convey water to the ocean rather than allow it to percolate into the ground and contribute to land movement.

To learn more about the landslide and the Portuguese Bend Landslide Remediation Project, visit rpvca.gov/landslide.

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About the City of Rancho Palos Verdes

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes is located on a coastal peninsula overlooking the Pacific Ocean in the South Bay of Los Angeles County. Incorporated in 1973, the City is home to 42,000 residents, 7 1/2 miles of coastline, a 1,500-acre nature preserve and hundreds more acres of open space. Residents and visitors enjoy expansive ocean views and ample opportunities for recreation, including golfing, hiking, beach access, and whale watching. Notable landmarks and points of interest include the Wayfarers Chapel designed by Lloyd Wright, the Point Vicente Lighthouse, the Point Vicente Interpretive Center, Terranea Resort, the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve, and Trump National Golf Club.