



## El Rio sewage system gets \$8 million

### Federal funds to help county replace septic tanks

By Tony Biasotti

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The county of Ventura announced Thursday it will get \$8 million in federal stimulus money to help pay for the sewage system being built in the El Rio area north of Oxnard.

State water regulators have demanded the county replace the septic tanks in El Rio with sewers that connect to the city of Oxnard's system. The work is already under way and should be finished by the end of 2011, said county Supervisor John Zaragoza, whose district includes El Rio.

The \$8 million in federal funding, distributed through the State Water Resources Control Board, brings the project's total grant funding to \$26 million. The estimated total cost of the work is \$35 million. The portion that can't be funded with grants will be financed through a low-interest, 30-year loan, which the county will repay using revenue from El Rio sewage bills.

The newest grant means the monthly sewer bills in El Rio will be \$64.11, Zaragoza said, down from about \$150 without any grant funding. It will also allow the county's contractor to employ about 22 people on the final phases of the project.

"We're very, very happy," Zaragoza said. "This is a major, major plus for the entire El Rio area and, of course, it is going to help us with the water-quality concerns."

El Rio residents still have to pay to connect their homes to the sewage system and remove their septic tanks.

That cost varies greatly depending on factors like the distance from the house to the public sewer line, but in most cases, it amounts to a few thousand dollars, Zaragoza said.

Property owners who do not connect to the sewer system could be fined as much as \$5,000 a day by the state.



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