



## Flood control officials fix large crack in levee

[By Ben van der Meer/Appeal-Democrat](#)

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Flood control officials quickly dealt with a levee crack discovered in December on the Western Pacific Interceptor Canal in south Yuba County. The crack didn't pose a threat to property owners, according to the Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority.

The crack, about 1,100 feet long, was found by a Reclamation District 784 employee on Dec. 23 during routine levee inspections, according to TRLIA Executive Director Paul Brunner.

At the Jan. 4 RD784 board meeting, board members learned of the crack, and TRLIA officials learned of it the same day. In turn, TRLIA contacted other agencies: the state Department of Water Resources, the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Brunner said representatives from those agencies and his own inspected the crack twice in January to determine its severity and how to solve it.

"The conclusion was, no, we didn't feel it was serious," Brunner said, adding the representatives of other agencies concurred. The crack was caused by drying of clay heavy soils used to build the levees, separating by a few inches, Brunner said.

RD784 and TRLIA filled the crack with concrete slurry, and will reinspect it this summer to see if further work is needed, Brunner said.

"We consider it to be a maintenance issue, and we deal with maintenance issues all the time," Brunner said, adding he knew of two previous cracks in authority levees, though none recently. Both of those cracks were similar to the one on the canal levee, and such cracks aren't unusual in levees, he said.

Yuba County Supervisor Mary Jane Griego, the chairwoman of TRLIA's board of directors, said she was satisfied with how the authority and RD784 responded to the crack.

"The first thing you want to make sure is the construction inside the levee isn't compromised, and it wasn't," she said. "It happens, but it doesn't mean the integrity of the levee is at risk."

The levee drew concern in a piece written for the Feb. 9 Territorial Dispatch by Elden Fowler, a Brownsville resident who has been involved in watchdog efforts on Yuba County and TRLIA. He unsuccessfully ran for a county supervisor post last year.

Fowler said he sees the crack as evidence of an ongoing problem with TRLIA.

"They have a crack in the levee, plain and simple," Fowler said. "There have been other cracks, and how they were resolved financially I'm not really sure."

Fowler and other members of the watchdog group Yuba First have asked for a comprehensive audit of TRLIA's finances, though they have been rebuffed by county officials who have said such an audit would be expensive and unnecessary.

"The amount of money going through that organization is astronomical," Fowler said. "We'll probably ask for the legal compliance and performance audit again."

Brunner said Fowler's article compelled he and RD784 General Manager Steve Fordice to write a letter to the editor of the Territorial Dispatch to set the record straight.

The letter states Fowler wrote the piece largely based on his opinions, and did not confirm the facts of the situation.

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