PRESS RELEASE

$45.8 million granted by Texas GLO for historic disaster mitigation projects in Austin County

Funds to improve wastewater and drainage infrastructure approved for Austin County, the Town of San Felipe and Wallis

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AUSTIN — Today Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, Texas State Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst and County Judge Tim Lapham announce the Texas General Land Office (GLO) approved $45.8 million in flood mitigation projects to improve wastewater and drainage infrastructure for Austin County, the Town of San Felipe and Wallis. These infrastructure projects will directly benefit residents in majority low-to-moderate income (LMI) areas that faced repetitive storm damage in 2015, 2016, and in 2017 with Hurricane Harvey.

“In recent years, Texas has led the nation in disaster declarations,” said Commissioner Bush. “The historic grants we’re announcing today – totaling nearly $46 million for wastewater and drainage infrastructure projects – will help fortify homes, businesses and critical infrastructure in Austin County against future disasters for generations.”

“In the last five years, Austin County has been impacted by six flooding disasters,” said Austin County Judge Tim Lapham. “Austin County needs better infrastructure to handle severe rains, improve drainage, and prevent flooding. With more than $45 million in funding now available to address these critical problems, we’ll be much better prepared for future events such as the rainfall we received just this past week. I want to thank Commissioner George P. Bush and the Texas General Land Office for funding these vital projects that will protect our community.”

Texas State Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) offered her support for the grant saying, “The damage done by floods and hurricanes in our area has been a major issue. That's why I commend Commissioner Bush for recognizing our local needs and allocating these funds. This goes a long way to solve real problems and is a great example of the federal, state and local governments working together."

In May 2020, Commissioner George P. Bush announced the kick-off of the application process for the first round of more than $2.3 billion in Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to protect Texas communities hit by Hurricane Harvey and severe flooding in 2015 and 2016. During the first round, the GLO conducted three competitive application programs from the CDBG-MIT Action Plan. Those programs include:

- 2015 Floods State Mitigation Competition – GLO awarded $31,426,781 to four grantees.

- 2016 Floods State Mitigation Competition – GLO awarded 21 grantees with $135,462,438.
- Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition Round 1 ($1 billion of $2,144,776,720 total).

Applications closed for the first round of funding October 28, 2020, and the GLO evaluated all 290 submitted applications in accordance with the HUD approved scoring criteria. Eligible applications with the highest scores were awarded funds. The second round of the competition will award the remaining $1,144,776,720 in mitigation funding to Hurricane Harvey eligible entities.

HUD defines mitigation as activities that increase resilience to disasters and reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of loss of life, injury, damage to and loss of property, and suffering and hardship, by lessening the impact of future disasters. HUD requires that at least 50% of total funds must be used for activities benefiting low- to moderate-income (LMI) persons.

The State of Texas CDBG Mitigation Action Plan: Building Stronger for a Resilient Future outlines the use of funds, programs, eligible applicants, and eligibility criteria as required by HUD. The plan was sent to HUD on February 3, 2020, after an extraordinary public outreach effort including a 50-day public comment period and eight regional public hearings, far-surpassing HUD requirements. HUD approved the plan March 31, 2020. For more information, please visit recovery.texas.gov/mitigation.

Austin County: Allens Creek Watershed Project - $36,937,293.90

LMI Percentage: 53.50%

This project will deliver significant drainage improvements throughout the southern portion of Austin County, including Sealy, Wallis, and San Felipe. This area depends heavily on Allens Creek for its drainage needs; however, Allens Creek has a limited capacity to accommodate large volumes of floodwater. In the past five (5) years the south end of Austin County has been impacted by six (6) flood events, including four (4) declared flood-related disasters. The Austin County Allens Creek Watershed project will deliver the following improvements:

- Create a diversion channel between Sealy and Wallis that will allow excess flood waters to be diverted into the Brazos-River-Authority-owned reservoir, located within the Brazos River floodplain.
- Increase storage and capacity within dedicated drainage corridors upstream of the diversion channel.
- Build ten small, localized projects draining the waters away from the city of Wallis.

The project will include land acquisition and consists of two sectors: the north sector, which includes the southern portion of the city of Sealy as well as the undeveloped

areas between Sealy and Wallis, and the South sector, which roughly corresponds to City the Wallis. The specific improvements to be delivered by this project are the following:

NORTH SECTOR

Reach 1 – Allens Creek Northwest Tributary

- Increase the existing channel's storage and detention capacity
- Regrade existing channel's side slopes and bottom
- Increase culvert capacity in 3 sections: under Gebhardt road, under Hwy 36, and under the Railroad Trestle

Reach 2 - Allens Creek Northwest Tributary

- Convert existing channel to a naturalized corridor
- Reroute existing channel section between Stockold Road and the confluence of the NW and NE tributaries, and replace with 3,000 LF of new naturalized corridor
- Create an ~10-acre detention area

Reach 3 - Allens Creek Northeast Tributary

- Convert existing channel to a naturalized corridor

Reach 4 - Allens Creek Main Channel

- Convert existing channel to a naturalized corridor
- Create a diversion channel between Sealy and Wallis that will allow excess flood waters to be diverted into Brazos-River-Authority-owned reservoir. Three different diversion options are currently being considered.

SOUTH SECTOR

The South Sector is defined by ten small, localized projects draining the waters of Wallis in all directions away from the town. Water will be redirected toward the bottom reach of Allens Creek, toward the San Bernard River, or toward the Brazos River just south of Wallis. The ten projects in the South Sector are:

1. Excavate 7,500 LF of channel at the Columbus Road outfall
2. Create a detention facility with 2,000 LF of berm, a ditch, and 2 culverts at FM 1093 and Blazek
3. Create a detention facility with 3,200 LF of berm, a ditch, and 2 culverts at Lakeview
4. Excavate 9,750 LF of ditch on Old Orchard Hwy, and install 3 culvert crossings
5. Excavate 8,300-LF of outfall ditch at the Brazos High School
6. Create 800 LF of outfall ditch and install 3 culverts at the Wallis Nature Park
7. Excavate 6,000 LF of ditch and install 3 culvert crossings at the Southwest By-Pass to Elm Slough
8. Improve 6,300 LF of the existing Elm Slough at the Wallis cemetery

9. Excavate 6,000 LF of ditch and install 3 culvert road crossings at the Norcross Road Bypass
10. Excavate 2,750 LF of ditch at the Mynarik Park Outfall

City of Wallis: Wastewater and Drainage Infrastructure Project - $5,748,125

LMI Percentage: 61.78%

The existing wastewater and drainage infrastructure in Wallis are not adequate for heavy rainfall events and flooding. The impact of flooding on the residents of Wallis includes threats to public health and safety from the floodwater itself, damage to residential and commercial properties and overtopping of roadways that can inhibit residents and first responders from traversing the streets. In addition, the floodwaters can overwhelm storm and sanitary sewer systems.

Since much of the city's wastewater system consists of clay pipe constructed in the early 1950’s, stormwater infiltration of the system can cause pipe failure, resulting in surcharges to surface waters during storm events. Surcharged manholes during storm events allow purging of wastewater from the system into street right of ways and ditches. This is a public health risk as it exposes residents to the pathogens contained in the wastewater.

The stormwater drainage mitigation efforts will provide relief from flooded streets, yards, and homes during minimal events not defined as events in areas that are mapped as flood areas. The primary danger due to these high waters comes from poorly navigable streets, limited first responder access and damage to public and private infrastructure. Additionally, providing for better drainage and less ponding and flooding of low areas will reduce the amount of land area and reduce the amount of time that pathogens, mosquitos, and pests can thrive and put lives and welfare at risk. The project includes the following citywide wastewater and drainage improvements:

- Replace 29,380 linear feet of existing pipe
- Repair 40 existing manholes and construct 34 new manholes citywide
- Construct temporary shallow surface storage (2 to 4 feet) that will take some of the pressure off the discharge ditches. The three sites near the center of town are 3, 12 and 22 acres
- Storm sewer improvements include:
    1. Construct four separate drainage ditches with easements totaling 9,700 linear feet, which help route water either to and from the storage area or to one of the county outfalls at the edge of the city jurisdiction
    2. Replace 9,820 linear feet of culverts throughout the entire town

Town of San Felipe: Drainage Improvement Project - $3,209,122

LMI Percentage: 52.11%

During heavy rains, the roadways in San Felipe become impassable for emergency vehicles and residents. The disruption of access and the ponding of water upstream of the culverts impact a large majority of the community's residents.

The project will involve the construction of drainage improvements throughout the Town of San Felipe to eliminate or mitigate known flooding areas. Construction will include:

- Clear and grade existing roadside ditches and the major area outfall ditch.
- Remove and replace inadequately sized roadway culverts to accommodate and provide adequate flows to the receiving streams.
- Improve street elevations and crown roadway surfaces to shed water into the roadside ditch system.