

FLOOD MITIGATION UPDATE (April 2023)

Flood Mitigation continues to be at the forefront for Harris County Water Control and Improvement District No. 110 (the “Water District”). The Water District recognizes that the cost of flood mitigation requires cooperation among all affected entities and is working with local, state, and federal representation and agencies to enact successful flood mitigation projects.

The Water District is pleased to announce that the IH45 exit ramp and bridge over Cypress Creek were opened in March. The Texas Department of Public Transportation (TxDot) reports that some closures may occur as work continues on this project. The contractor is in the process of removing sedimentation underneath the bridge at Cypress Creek. This removal of sedimentation should facilitate the flow of storm water in this area of Cypress Creek. Construction is expected to be completed by Summer 2023.

As previously reported, a policy was adopted by the Water District to work with owners of commercial properties to maintain the private drainage facilities serving each of their developments. There are approximately thirty-one (31) private drainage facilities in the Water District that are not permitted by the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD), and most were not being properly maintained. With the implementation of the Policy, most of the owners of the private drainage facilities have cleared the drainage facilities and are starting to carry out a routine maintenance program. Properly operating private detention facilities is another measure to mitigate flooding in the Water District. It is the intent of the Water District to establish an annual certification process that will ensure that the private drainage facilities will be continually maintained and not lapse into a state of disrepair. To that end, a bill has been filed in the Texas Legislature which will provide the Water District with the authority to administer an annual certification process for the private drainage facilities in its boundaries. Senator Paul Bettencourt and Representative Valerie Swanson are sponsoring the bill. A Senate Committee Hearing was held on March 20, 2023, on the proposed bill. Director Vanessa Sommer and Water District Manager Brian Mills testified at the hearing. As of this writing the Water District is pleased to report that the Senate Bill has been reported out of Committee.

The channel widening of the ponds on the east side of IH 45 undertaken in cooperation with the HCFCD and Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 249 is complete.

The Water District continues to focus on an area of land on the East side of IH-45, South of Cypresswood and North of FM 1960. This area is undeveloped, in the flood plain, and a perfect location to construct regional drainage facilities. With Harris County and the HCFCD owning 174 acres of land on the east side of IH45, an ideal opportunity is presented for immediate action to be taken to curb flooding along Cypress Creek East and West of IH-45. The regional drainage project would benefit not only the Water District, but also the areas south to FM 1960, east to Treaschwig Road, and west to Highway 249. The Water District has filed an interlocal partnership agreement (ILA) with HCFCD to establish a plan for the creation of the regional drainage project. The Water District is willing to kick start the regional drainage project by committing \$500,000 in matching funds, with HCFCD committing \$500,000 for the initial engineering study of \$1,000,000. The initial Engineering Study would be performed by HCFCD. The ILA also provides for HCFCD to commit \$6,000,000 to initiate construction of the regional drainage project. A pledge of \$6,000,000 from HCFCD will require \$6,000,000 in matching funds, thereby establishing funding of \$12,000,000 for the initial construction of the regional drainage project. While the Water District is not in a position to provide the remaining matching funds, it is investigating other sources of funding. The ILA is pending with HCFCD.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the Water District assumed an active role in pursuing flood mitigation to alleviate flooding in the Water District. The Water District’s commitment to flood mitigation began with sponsoring a townhall meeting in July 2020, which was attended by Congressman Dan Crenshaw, representatives from TxDot, HCFCD, and Representative Valerie Swanson’s office. Among other things, and at the urging of residents, the Water District also filed Letters of Intent with the US Army Corp of Engineers. Regrettably, the Corp declined to participate in joint projects with the Water District. However, the Water District is continuing to pursue cooperation with local, state, and federal representation to address flooding. Although the projects outlined above are not comprehensive in nature and will not solve flooding, the cumulative effect of each measure taken will reduce flooding in the Water District and the Cypress Creek Watershed.