

2011 ACTION PLAN
For the
Upper Brushy Creek Water Control and Improvement District

December 6, 2010

From time to time, it is appropriate for every organization to evaluate and analyze whether it is meeting the goals for which that organization was established. Perhaps it has met those goals; perhaps it is delayed in some aspect of the goals. Perhaps the program which it is following has reached a stage such that the various aspects of its mission must be reviewed and re-prioritized. Over a period of years it is likely that the government and society, which created technological solutions for problems at that time, face changed conditions. Thus, the organization's mission and priorities should be reviewed, restated and clarified in light of these changes.

The original Brushy Creek Water Control and Improvement District was created in 1956 and approved by voters and the Texas Legislature in 1957. Water control and improvement districts were established by the State to engage in flood control, irrigation, drainage, reclamation, preservation of water resources, development of forests, development of hydroelectric power, navigation, and sewage disposal (The Handbook of Texas Online, 2006). The original WCID was established primarily to act as the local sponsor for 46 dams constructed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in the 1950s and 1960s. Ownership of the land under each dam and reservoir was maintained by the original property owner, and the local sponsors were required to obtain an easement for the dam structure and the conservation reservoir upstream of the dam. During this period, the County was mostly rural and was sparsely populated, and the dams served to provide local flood and sediment control. **The current demographic transition of the Brushy Creek watershed from rural to suburban and urban requires the evaluation of the role of the District in flood water management.**

The **Upper** Brushy Creek Water Control and Improvement District was created in 2001 when the original Brushy Creek Water Control and Improvement District No. 1 of Williamson and Milam Counties (original WCID) divided into two independent water districts. Since 2002, the mission of the District has been to maintain and improve flood control structures and take appropriate measures to protect public safety as well as economic infrastructure of the District.

The contract between the federal government and the local sponsors was in the form of a "Watershed Protection Operation and Maintenance Agreement" and included responsibilities for dam operation and maintenance and for oversight by the federal SCS (now the Natural Resource Conservation Service or NRCS). The SCS identified a "50 year life cycle" in the design calculations for the dams. The dams in the District have met or soon will meet the "50 year"

limit, at which time they are released from oversight by the NRCS. The easements assigned to the District continue indefinitely. **This delegated permanent responsibility for the dams requires evaluating the priorities of the District for the long term.**

The dams were designed to function within the parameters of a particular flood event. Since their design, the government has redefined the potential maximum flood events which might occur. This redefinition was motivated by real floods in Thrall and Alvin, Texas. As a result, it was necessary that responsible authorities undertake a program of dam renovation and structural modification to remediate the probable flood hazards. The District is approaching the end of this dam remediation program for the functional dams in its responsibility. **The District should now analyze its history, present status, responsibilities, powers, priorities and limitations to plan for the future after the dam remediation program is finished.**

Finally, Tropical Storm Hermine (September 2010) showed that the improved dams functioned as designed, sited, built and maintained. Yet Hermine had some near-disastrous effects. Flooding still occurred. The storm serves as a reminder that much has changed in the District since the dams were built and that **not all hazards from major flood events are addressed by the current dams and programs. The public safety and flood water management role of the District should be defined to identify and address these remaining issues.**

MISSION OF THE UBCWCID

It is recommended that the UBCWCID mission statement be amended to read as follows. Additions to the existing mission statement are underlined.

The mission of the Upper Brushy Creek Water Control and Improvement District is to "maintain and improve flood control structures and take appropriate measures to protect public safety as well as economic infrastructure of the District, in consultation and cooperation with other governmental entities. The District will actively foster a regional perspective and will encourage cooperation among governmental entities. We will accomplish these tasks utilizing cost-effective methods, minimizing the impact to the environment, considering the community values of our stakeholders, and conducting our business with openness, honesty and integrity."

RECOMMENDED ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The District has implemented a plan for renovation of the existing dams to meet current safety criteria. Within a few years, this work will be completed. The plan that will guide the District's activities for the next 5 years will focus on the following roles and strategic actions.

- Be the local sponsor (owner) for the dams in the District.
- Perform actions necessary to maintain the dams in good working condition and in compliance with State and Federal requirements.
- Take appropriate measures to protect public safety as well as the economic infrastructure of the District.
- Be a source of technical information about rainfall, reservoir status, high stream flows, flood events, and inundation areas (modeling and historic data).
- Communicate potential flood hazard to property owners located in floodways prior to flood events.
- Accomplish these objectives without growing government. The District should identify opportunities for existing governmental organizations to work together, bridge gaps, and accomplish benefits that otherwise may not be achieved.

In the near-term, it is recommended that the District also engage in the following additional activities.

- Finish and submit the Emergency Action Plans to TCEQ by the December deadline.
- Participate fully with and encourage FEMA to continue the ongoing Physical Map Revision of Williamson County to include the entire Upper Brushy Creek watershed and to maintain accurate Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps in the future.
- Investigate funding from Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to support work to define flood hazard in the Upper Brushy Creek watershed.
- Establish a location for retention of the District's records. Evaluate the tradeoffs associated with having an independent District office.
- Consider the duties and requisite qualifications of the General Manager and the employment relationship of the General Manager, in perspective of the District's long-term future.
- Improve the website functionality, reliability, and security.

- Evaluate the District's Regional Detention Policy.

In the longer term it is recommended that the District develop its role in the following areas.

- Foster regional solutions by filling gaps in current floodplain administration activities and provide mechanisms for regional coordination and leveraged solutions.
- Consider establishing an Upper Brushy Creek Watershed Coalition, which would be a partnership of the District, Williamson County, and the cities within the watershed. The District's role would be to:
 - Provide administrative and technical support to the Coalition,
 - Coordinate training programs for floodplain administrators and elected officials,
 - Provide leadership in grant applications for flood protection planning and mitigation efforts in the District,
 - Assist member communities to define solutions for flood issues in their areas, especially when the flood hazard crosses jurisdictional boundaries.
- Consider interlocal partnerships to solve acute flooding problems. This could include partnering for new dams, new inundation easements or participation in buyouts of selected properties by municipalities.
- Be a focal point for improving flood safety and the area's response to flood events. For example, support the "Turn Around, Don't Drown" public safety program and other communication projects.
- Establish a program of regular District Strategic Plan revisions, e.g. every 5 years.