

Volunteer Tree Seedling Potting Event Yields Over 3,000 New Trees For Future District Plantings

February 16, 2007

Gearing up for [tree planting](#) season, the Harris County Flood Control District recently held its annual Volunteer Tree Seedling Potting Event at the District's tree nursery in South Harris County. The event drew more than 100 participants, including students from Chavez, Sharpstown and Worthing high schools, parents and school sponsors. More than 3,200 new trees were potted. The potted seedlings will grow at the District's tree nursery, which currently houses about 13,000 trees, throughout the summer before being planted in the fall on project sites countywide. On average, the District [plants about 20,000 trees every year](#), making it the No. 2 tree-planting government agency in Harris County.



Volunteer students prepare tree seedlings for potting. The potted seedlings will be grown for future plantings.

Restocking the Inventory

New, potted seedlings will replenish the current stock at the District's tree nursery, which grows roughly 12 different species including bald cypress, loblolly pine, shumard oak, river birch and cedar elm. The typical planting season lasts from October through March.



The District's tree nursery can accommodate more than 20,000 hard-to-find trees for future plantings.

Benefits From Large-scale Tree Plantings Are Numerous

Although the numbers may seem large, [trees provide a great number of benefits](#). Once a successful canopy of trees is established, the need for mowing decreases and consequently saves taxpayers money. Trees intercept rain and lessen the impact upon soil, thus reducing the amount of erosion that can occur. Less erosion on the banks of a [stormwater detention basin](#) or drainage channel means greater storage for stormwater.



Newly planted trees at The Hill at Sims Greenway stormwater detention basin along Sims Bayou. More than 10,000 trees were planted for this project alone.

In addition to discouraging the spread of undesirable [vegetation](#), trees improve air quality and aesthetics, and can even increase property values and energy conservation.

> [Learn more about the District's tree planting program](#)

> [See more news about the District's tree planting efforts](#)



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Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin Receives H-GAC Regional Excellence Award

February 20, 2007

The [Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin](#), part of the [Brays Bayou Flood Damage Reduction Project \(Project Brays\)](#), has won a regional excellence award for best practices for parks and natural areas from the [Houston-Galveston Area Council](#). The project serves two valuable purposes in Harris County: reducing flooding risks and simultaneously serving as a stellar park with state-of-the-art recreational features. In the third most populous county in America, this approximately \$50 million [stormwater detention basin](#), has become a fun and functional stretch of green space in sprawling suburbia. Not only does the District's uniquely-designed basin spare many residents from flooding, a partnership with the [Harris County Precinct 3](#) has provided recreational components such as trails, ponds and even a Tai Chi court. Complementing these features are natural amenities, including a vast grove of trees and wetlands that attract roseate spoonbills, egrets, songbirds and other migratory waterfowl. The site has become a shining example of how government [partnerships](#) not only protect the public, but improve quality of life.



The Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin, at Brays Bayou near W. Sam Houston Tollway, is a massive flood damage reduction complex with park amenities.

Community Values, Partnership Key to Success

When planning the project, the District worked hard to keep [community and natural values](#) - an integral part of its [mission](#) and that of the Houston-Galveston Area Council - a priority. In other words, preservation and enhancement of the environment and surrounding community were key elements in the process. The [project](#) began in the 1990s with the acquisition of 220 acres of land to be preserved and modified for reducing flood risks. The District designed a project to construct multiple, in-ground compartments to hold 1.2 billion gallons of stormwater to reduce chances of [Brays Bayou](#) from topping its banks during times of heavy rain. Each compartment contains water-loving plants comprising a wetlands habitat. Prompted by a partnership with Harris County Precinct 3 that envisioned the site doubling as a park, the District used a landscape architect to design the basin with park features in mind. This design allowed acres of trees to be preserved, providing an ideal place for picnic tables, park benches and a playground. It also made space for hike-and-bike trails, gazebos, a duck pond, and Tai-Chi court, catering to the surrounding Asian community.



Tai Chi court at the Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin, one of many multi-use facilities available in the park.

Project Involves Significant Environmental Considerations

Creating this site involved many aspects of best management practices. Respecting the environment was a priority. Roughly 25 acres of [trees](#) were preserved near the center of the site, leaving hundreds of oak trees for birds that have long made the area home. As construction of the [stormwater detention basin](#) comes to an end this year, the District has plans to [plant roughly 10,000 more trees](#) throughout the site, improving air quality. Furthermore, the basin's compartments were designed to have "wet bottoms" or mini lakes containing wetlands plants such as reeds and cattails. These plants filter [pollutants and sediment from stormwater](#), allowing it to return to the bayou in a cleaner state. In the middle of the wet bottom basins are small islands that provide a safe haven for ducks and other waterfowl.



Many waterfowl, such as the roseate spoonbill, find refuge at the Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention basin.

Part of a Massive Flood Damage Reduction Project

The purpose of the [stormwater detention basin](#) is to temporarily store stormwater during times of heavy rain when water in nearby Brays Bayou approaches the top of the bayou's banks. The basin contains a [weir](#) that allows water in the bayou to spill into the basin. The basin is part of a larger, \$450 million effort of the District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called [Project Brays](#), which is expected to remove the [1% \(100-year\) floodplain](#) from thousands of structures in the Brays bayou watershed. However, because the basin site comprises a vast amount of land, the endless possibilities of such scarce greenspace quickly made the site's purpose twofold, and a recreational component was born. Visitors to site may be taken aback by the strange topography and functional aspects of the basin's deep compartments, but there is no mistaking the fun. Children play on swings and slides and chase ducks swimming in a shaded pond in front of a large gazebo. Joggers can be seen exercising along trails that parallel the bayou. And, early in the morning, a small group of dedicated individuals come to practice Tai-Chi under the large limbs of towering oaks. In fact, the site has attracted countless species of migratory birds and aquatic creatures and is an ideal place for bird-watching.

Partnership With Harris County Precinct 3 is Model For Collaboration

For all of the flood protection and recreational amenities the site provides, perhaps its most unique feature is how it came to be. As development becomes more widespread, the price of acreage in Harris County continues to rise, making it difficult for public entities to buy land to build projects and parks. With a multi-use project in mind, Arthur Storey, the former director of the District, and [Precinct 3](#) Commissioner Steve Radack entered into a [model collaboration effort](#), creating an ideal prototype for projects that serve more than one purpose. Pairing flood damage reduction projects with parks and much-needed greenspace not only saves taxpayers money, it efficiently uses land and provides citizens with practical and recreational benefits. Because of the success of the site, other entities, namely the City of Houston and other county precincts, have approached the District about using its land for parks during times of dry weather. In some instances, inter-local agreements have been signed and similar multi-use projects are on the way.



Gazebo and duck pond in Arthur Storey Park. The park is the result of an innovative partnership between the District and Harris County Precinct 3.

Establishing the Standard for Multi-use Projects

Of the many parks in Houston and Harris County, this particular site has become a crown jewel in an area covered with concrete and known for burgeoning development. Aside from its functional and recreational features and the partnership that brought them to life, this site has changed the way the District approaches its design of stormwater detention basins. Realizing the value of multi-use projects, the District now designs stormwater detention basins keeping in mind the potential for recreational features to come, whenever possible. Many basins are designed to resemble natural lakes rather than symmetrical holes in the ground. [One basin, The Hill at Sims Greenway, even has a 60-foot tall hill.](#) Others have been planted with thousands of trees, turning basin sites into ideal places to cool off in the summer heat. The Arthur Storey Park site began a trend in Harris County that may very well have revolutionized the way flood damage reduction projects and parks are built, increasing the quality of life for all residents.

[> Learn more about the Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin](#)

[> Learn more about Project Brays](#)



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Dinner Creek Tributary Restoration is Complete

February 22, 2007

The Harris County Flood Control District has completed the restoration of a tributary of Dinner Creek in west Harris County. The tributary, which extends from Fry Road to the confluence at Dinner Creek, suffered from erosion and slope failure typically caused by poor soil quality and the regular conveyance of stormwater. The \$244,000 maintenance project began last September.



Newly restored bank of a tributary of Dinner Creek, located in the Addicks Reservoir watershed.

> Dinner Creek is in the Addicks Reservoir Watershed



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35th Annual Buffalo Bayou Regatta Draws 300 Participants

March 24, 2007

The 35th annual Buffalo Bayou Regatta was a big success this year, drawing almost 300 participants racing down the Buffalo Bayou in canoes and kayaks. The regatta is Texas' largest canoe and kayak race, and endurance was put to the test on the 15-mile course through the heart of Houston. The regatta started near 7700 San Felipe (just west of Voss) and finished at the [Sabine-to-Bagby Promenade](#) in Downtown Houston.



Racing begins at the 35th Annual Buffalo Bayou Regatta.

Photo taken by Katya Horner

Houstonians of all ages participated in the USCA-sanctioned race along the scenic [Buffalo Bayou](#). Some were competitive, others paddled for pleasure, but all got a chance to see Houston from a whole new angle. Those not wanting to paddle were part of the outdoor fun and cheered on the racers.



Spectators at the 35th Annual Buffalo Bayou Regatta.

Photo taken by Katya Horner

The annual regatta is sponsored by the [Buffalo Bayou Partnership](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing Houston's historic waterway. Corporate and private sponsors also participated.

Proceeds from the race benefited the Buffalo Bayou Partnership and its conservation, recreational, and beautification programs for Buffalo Bayou.

[> Learn about the Buffalo Bayou watershed](#)

[> See news item about Sabine-to-Bagby Promenade](#)



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Old Westheimer Road Stormwater Detention Basin Excavation Complete

April 1, 2007

Excavation was recently completed for the [Old Westheimer Road Stormwater Detention Basin](#), located at the intersection of Old Westheimer Road and the Westpark Tollway. This basin is one of four [stormwater detention basins](#) that are part of [Project Brays](#).

The project, which began in 2004, has added approximately 47 acres of greenspace and will hold about 200 million gallons of stormwater. The cost for the project was approximately \$18 million.



Old Westheimer Road Stormwater Detention Basin.
Under construction.

Much More to Come After Excavation

While excavation is complete, aesthetic features are in the process of being added. Turf establishment has started, and more than 1,000 trees will be planted in the basin. The trees to be planted are a mixture of species that include bald cypress, southern magnolia and Shumard oak and will be clustered together to portray a natural look. The final date for basin completion is set for the end of 2008 or beginning of 2009.

Project Brays also includes three additional stormwater detention basins:

[Eldridge Stormwater Detention Basin](#) is located north of Alief-Clodine, between Highway 6 and Eldridge Parkway. It is approximately 40 percent complete, will add approximately 340 acres of greenspace and will hold about 1.5 billion gallons of stormwater.

[Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin](#) is located west of the Sam Houston Tollway, between Bellaire and Beechnut in southwest Houston. Once complete, that basin will add approximately 210 acres of greenspace and will hold about 1.1 billion gallons of stormwater. The overall project is currently 94 percent complete.

[Willow Waterhole Stormwater Detention Basin](#) is located near South Post Oak Road and U.S. Highway 90A. The basin is 33 percent complete. Upon completion, approximately 279 acres of greenspace will be added and this basin will hold about 600 million gallons of stormwater.

More Information About Project Brays

[Project Brays](#) is a flood damage reduction project designed to reduce the risk of flood damage for thousands of residents and businesses along Brays Bayou. For more information, visit the Project Brays website, www.projectbrays.org, or call the Project Brays Information Hotline at 713-316-4820.



Greens Bayou Tributary Repairs Nearing Completion

April 4, 2007

The Harris County Flood Control District is completing a large rehabilitation project on a main drainage channel of the Coverleaf Subdivision in east Harris County. Over the years, the tributary that empties into Greens Bayou just south of Interstate 10 and Market Street has experienced severe erosion at its downstream end. A \$250,000 maintenance project has repaired the eroded side slopes and restored them to their original condition.



Photos showing before and after conditions along the channel.

Erosion is caused by a combination of poor soil quality and the conveyance of stormwater. In Harris County, soils are often sandy and sugary in texture and can easily slough off, especially from the rapid conveyance of stormwater. Repairing eroded side slopes reduces the amount of sediment that falls into a channel and helps prevent a channel's capacity from becoming limited.

This project spanned from Greens Bayou to 100 feet upstream to Haden Road. It is one of many projects performed by the District in an effort to maintain more than 2,500 miles of drainage infrastructure in Harris County.

[> Learn about the Greens Bayou watershed](#)

[> Learn about the Greens Bayou Federal Flood Damage Reduction Project](#)

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Greens Bayou Erosion Repair Project Complete

April 6, 2007

The Harris County Flood Control District has completed repairs to a stretch of Greens Bayou adjacent to Wussow Park, just south of Greenspoint Mall. The maintenance project, which repaired the bayou's eroded side slopes from Greens Road to 1,000 feet downstream, has restored the earthen channel to its original condition.



Portion of the completed Greens Bayou slope erosion repair project.

The \$376,000 job corrected several rotational failures that occurred as a result of poor soil quality and heavy rains. In Harris County, soils are often sandy and sugary in texture and can easily slough off, especially from the rapid conveyance of stormwater. Repairing eroded side slopes reduces the amount of sediment that falls into a channel and helps prevent a channel's capacity from becoming limited.

This project is one of many performed by the District in an effort to [maintain](#) more than 2,500 miles of drainage infrastructure in Harris County.

[> Learn about the Greens Bayou watershed](#)

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Wildflowers Are In Full Bloom Along Many Area Waterways

April 11, 2007

It's that time again... Wildflower season! The colorful canvas of blues, reds, yellows and pinks has shown up once again on the banks of many of our area bayous and streams. And it's no accident. Wildflowers figure prominently into the District's [Vegetation Management Program](#), and they relate directly to the District's [regard for community and natural values](#). Wildflowers not only beautify the infrastructure, but also reduce mowing cycles and save taxpayer dollars.



The banks of many area bayous come alive every year with wildflowers originally planted by the District.

More Than Meets The Eye

While the banks of our channels are full of lively colors for everyone to see, the real show lies underneath: It's a show of strength. The wildflower mix chosen by the District develops a robust root structure beneath the ground's surface that helps hold the soil on the banks. As a result, Harris County's bayous are more resistant to the forces that cause erosion.



Wildflower sites can regenerate naturally, like this stretch along Greens Bayou.

Pretty Proliferation, And Good For Our Environment

Wildflower plantings compete with undesirable grasses, grow to shorter heights than the undesirable grasses and, as mentioned, also reduce maintenance costs by eliminating the first, and possibly the second, of three mowing cycles each year. The reduction of mowing improves [water quality](#) by preventing tons of cut organic material from entering waterways. Over several years, the reduction in cutting costs offsets the initial expense of establishing wildflowers. They eventually provide sustainable landscapes and wildlife habitat.



Bluebonnet and Indian Blanket are some of the many species of wildflowers found on area bayous and streams.

Part of the Bigger Establishment Picture

It's not just wildflowers. Native grasses and tree species are also introduced by the District along certain areas within the nearly 3,000-mile [drainage infrastructure](#). Sometimes, this mix of vegetation species can eliminate altogether the need for mechanical cutting, saving more taxpayer dollars and allowing the District to direct these cost savings toward other flood damage reduction efforts.



Interpretive signs are in place along much of the White Oak Bayou trail system, teaching viewers the importance of wildflowers.

Keep An Eye On Your Bayous

Every year, the District seeds more Harris County waterways. In the last quarter alone, nine sites were seeded for a total of approximately 75 acres. Some of the sites included:

- [Cypress Creek Watershed](#) (Dry Gully and Faulkey Gully)
- [San Jacinto River Watershed](#) (Rogers Gully tributary)
- [Carpenters Bayou](#) (main channel)
- [Barker Reservoir Watershed](#) (Mason Creek tributary)

For More Information

For more information on wildflower establishment at the District, [contact us online](#) or call our Facilities Maintenance Department at 713-684-4000.



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New Flood Insurance Rate Maps Become Effective On June 18

Purchase Flood Insurance Now To Save On Potential Rate Increases

June 13, 2007

Residents and business owners have only a couple of days remaining to purchase flood insurance at the best possible premiums before new [Flood Insurance Rate Maps](#) for Harris County become official on June 18.

Purchase Flood Insurance Now, Save Money Later

Purchasing flood insurance before June 18 will allow people to "grandfather" their existing floodplain status and pay lower premiums for [flood insurance](#). Once the maps become official on June 18 residents and business owners whose properties are categorized in higher-risk flood zones on the new maps may pay higher rates. Buying flood insurance now will not only reduce flood insurance costs, but a grandfathered floodplain status can be transferred to future owners of a property provided coverage doesn't lapse.

Who Needs Flood Insurance? EVERYONE

Despite a person's location on the new floodplain maps, the Harris County Flood Control District strongly encourages all Harris County residents to have flood insurance.

"While many are required by mortgage and lending companies to have flood insurance, the Flood Control District urges all area residents to have flood insurance," said Mke Talbott, director of the District. "The reason is simple: You don't have to be in a mapped floodplain to flood. This area is flat and takes a while to drain. The clay soils don't absorb a lot of stormwater. Above all, being near the Gulf of Mexico makes us highly vulnerable to hurricanes, tropical storms and slow moving storm systems that dump torrential amounts of rain in short periods of time that can overwhelm our drainage systems."

Floodplain Maps Don't Show ALL of The Risks From Flooding

Many people may not know that [Flood Insurance Rate Maps](#) only depict flooding risks from streams and bayous spilling their banks during certain, theoretical storms. The maps do not show flooding risks from water trying to reach the bayous, from roadside ditches or underground storm sewers exceeding their capacity, or from floods greater than the 1% (100-year) and 0.2% (500-year) floods depicted on floodplain maps. [Tropical Storm Allison in 2001](#) is a good example of this, as it was literally "Off the Charts" in measures of magnitude.

Sharing Responsibilities For Protection

"Especially in Texas you can't predict when and where it's going to flood. We've experienced flooding in every month of the year," said David Passey, FEMA spokesman. "There are a lot of things that government can do to reduce people's flood risks, such as building projects that widen and deepen bayous, excavating detention basins and buying out homes hopelessly deep in the floodplain. However, residents must assume responsibility as well, and that means having [flood insurance](#) to protect themselves financially."

Because homeowners' insurance does NOT cover flooding, flood insurance is the best way to recover financially from a flood.

View The Maps And Check Your Status Now

Property owners can learn their floodplain status on the new Flood Insurance Rate Maps by visiting the [Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project website](#) www.tsarp.org or by calling 713-722-7227.

For inquiries about obtaining flood insurance, call your local insurance agent or visit the [National Flood Insurance Program website](#) at www.floodsmart.gov or call 888-379-9531.

Contact The TSARP Team

If you have questions about TSARP or the new FEMA Revised Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps, you may contact the [TSARP team via e-mail](#), or call the TSARP hotline at 713-722-7227.

> [Learn more about the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project](#)

> [Visit FloodSmart.gov, the official website of the National Flood Insurance Program](#)



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 - [July 21, 2009](#)
 - [July 8, 2009](#)
 - [June 30, 2009](#)
 - [June 22, 2009](#)
 - [June 18, 2009](#)
 - [June 3, 2009](#)
 - [April 24, 2009](#)
 - [April 1, 2009](#)
 - [March 27, 2009](#)
- 2008 News Archive
 - [December 8, 2008](#)
 - [September 18, 2008](#)
 - [July 2, 2008](#)
 - [May 29, 2008](#)
 - [April 16, 2008](#)
 - [March 31, 2008](#)
 - [March 25, 2008](#)
 - [March 21, 2008](#)
 - [March 3, 2008](#)
 - [February 13, 2008](#)
 - [February 8, 2008](#)
- 2007 News Archive
 - [November 1, 2007](#)**
 - [June 13, 2007](#)
 - [April 11, 2007](#)
 - [April 6, 2007](#)
 - [April 4, 2007](#)
 - [April 1, 2007](#)
 - [March 24, 2007](#)
 - [February 22, 2007](#)
 - [February 20, 2007](#)
 - [February 16, 2007](#)
 - [February 13, 2007](#)
 - [February 10, 2007](#)
 - [February 9, 2007](#)
 - [February 8, 2007](#)
 - [February 1, 2007](#)
- 2006 News Archive
- 2005 News Archive
- 2004 News Archive
- 2003 News Archive
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Two Public Meetings

Buffalo Bayou and Lower White Oak Bayou Federal Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Study

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

The United Way Community Resource Center
50 Waugh Drive at Feagan • Houston, TX 77007
6 PM– Doors Open • 7 PM– Presentation

Tuesday, November 13, 2007

Westchester Academy for International Studies
901 Yorkchester Drive • Houston, TX 77079
6 PM– Doors Open • 7 PM– Presentation

Important Public Meeting Announcement: Two Identical Meetings

The Harris County Flood Control District, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District, will hold two public meetings to discuss the [Buffalo Bayou and Lower White Oak Bayou Federal Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Study](#) in the greater Houston area. The purpose is to inform you about this federal study and solicit your input regarding study details and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) issues and concerns.

About The Study

The District initiated this study in September 2005. It covers [Buffalo Bayou](#) from the Turning Basin near the Houston Ship Channel upstream to Barker Reservoir, and it also covers lower [White Oak Bayou](#) from where it meets [Buffalo Bayou](#) upstream to IH 610. The District is the local sponsor, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the federal sponsor.

The study will investigate flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration alternatives to identify a recommended plan that is acceptable to the public and competitive for [federal funding](#). It is expected to last about seven years and will include a review of current and past flooding conditions, and the identification and evaluation of opportunities for flood damage reduction and restoration of portions of the environment that have been impacted by urbanization.

Meeting Details

Each meeting will be conducted in English and will consist of three parts: a presentation introducing [the study](#), a period for verbal public comments, and an informal open house. During the period for verbal comments, the public is encouraged to provide information that may be relevant to the study. During the open house, representatives from the District will be available to answer questions.

For special communication or accommodation needs, call 713-684-4114. Requests should be made at least three working days prior to the meeting.

> [Learn more about the Buffalo Bayou watershed](#)

> [Learn more about the White Oak Bayou watershed](#)

