

Harris County Flood Control District and Harris County Precinct 3 Preserve 24 Acres of Old Oak Trees in Developing Area

June 4, 2003

Approximately 24 acres of old oak trees were preserved when the Arthur Storey Park project (including the adjacent detention basins) along Brays Bayou at Beltway 8 was planned and constructed. These oak trees exist on a tract of land that many believe would have been particularly susceptible to land development as the park is located along the Beltway 8 frontage road immediately south of a major intersection (Bellairre) and new development is occurring all around it.

Arthur Storey Park is an excellent example of how partnerships between multiple governmental agencies can produce a project that is better than one that could be accomplished by a single entity on its own. The park area consists of traditional park facilities as well as several large stormwater detention basins still being constructed that significantly reduce flood risks along Brays Bayou. As stormwater detention basin construction continues, the completed basins are added to the park by including passive recreational features including trails, trees, shrubs and created habitats.

When the flood damage reduction project was first conceived by the Harris County Flood Control District, all individuals involved agreed that excavation of the detention basins should be done in a way that minimizes disturbance to the beautiful old oak trees existing on the land. The location of the 24 acres for "traditional" park features (i.e. the land that will not be excavated) was selected due to its density of the old oak trees along the historic alignment of Brays Bayou. Harris County Precinct 3 entered into an agreement with the District and built park features around the existing trees in a manner that did not adversely impact tree health.

The overall project is the result of another successful partnership between Harris County Precinct 3 and the Harris County Flood Control District. The Harris County Flood Control District is the landowner and the entity that is implementing the flood damage reduction components of the project. Harris County Precinct 3 is the entity responsible for construction and maintenance of the recreational components of the project on District land.

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Sims Bayou Project is More Than Halfway Complete

July 15, 2003

Many residents in the Sims Bayou watershed now have a lower risk of flooding than in the past. This is because they are benefiting from the construction of the Sims Bayou Flood Control Project spearheaded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) with the Harris County Flood Control District serving as its non-federal sponsor.

Sims Bayou has been plagued by flooding in the past. For this reason, the bayou was identified by both the District and the Corps as an area in need of a flood damage reduction project. After years of planning and community input, a Local Cooperation Agreement between the District and the Corps was signed in 1990, officially starting the project. The Sims Bayou Flood Control Project continues to receive support from the area's local Congressional delegation that see that the project continues to receive annual federal funding for construction.

The project consists of 19.3 miles of channel enlargements and enhancements, as well as 20 bridge replacements or modifications extending from the Houston Ship Channel to Croquet Street. When complete, approximately 35,000 existing homes and approximately 2,000 existing commercial structures will no longer be in the 1% (100 year) floodplain.

The channel modifications are being done in an environmentally responsible manner, and birds and wildlife can already be seen along completed reaches. This was accomplished by using articulated concrete block mats instead of concrete, and allowing grass and other vegetation to grow through the blocks. Instead of a trapezoidal channel section, the new sections of Sims Bayou have shelves creating plateaus, varying water widths and varying side slopes, creating a more naturalistic feel. Fish pools are being created along some reaches of the channel and trees are being planted to further enhance the value of the habitat. "Input from the Sims Bayou Coalition and public meetings was instrumental to the Corps and District in accomplishing design changes that provided a more environmentally sensitive, aesthetically pleasing, and publicly acceptable project," said Lizette Richardson, Corps of Engineers Project Manager for the Sims Bayou project.

The channel design was selected based on significant input received from the Sims Bayou community.

Currently, twelve bridge replacements/modifications have been constructed, with five bridges currently under design, leaving just three bridges remaining. The project is over half completed with 10.3 miles of the channel improvements completed from the Mouth of Sims Bayou up to Qullen Blvd. The reach from Qullen Blvd. to State Highway 288 is currently under construction. When the project is completed, channel modifications will extend as far west as Croquet Street (west of Post Oak). Channel construction is expected to be completed by 2009.

This project has been a great opportunity for the Corps and the District to embrace both community and natural values. Both entities are glad to be providing flood damage reduction while creating habitat for wildlife along an aesthetically pleasing corridor.

In addition to the federal project, the District will construct three regional detention basins within the Sims Bayou watershed. Initial construction of two of the basins was completed, allowing partial reduction in flood risks to structures along the upstream project reaches prior to the channel modifications reaching them. The third basin, named the Hill at Sims Greenway, planned to begin construction early next year, is being designed with recreational amenities. Upon completion of both the federal project and these three detention basins, the 1% floodplain will remain within banks.

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Halls Bayou Greenway Project Grant Awarded by Texas Parks and Wildlife

September 16, 2003

Harris County just received its first Regional Park Grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission funding \$2 million for the "Halls Bayou Greenway" project. The total project cost is estimated at \$6.4 million. Harris County was the only sponsor (applicant) out of eight who applied whose application for a regional park grant was approved at the Commission's August 28 annual meeting.

"It is gratifying. This additional partnership with the State is a most welcome addition to our efforts to provide flood control and a livable environment to neighborhoods hard hit in Tropical Storm Allison and other severe events over the years. We want neighborhoods to be not only relieved, but also glad that we came by and more parks and trails with the State will make that more likely." Harris County Public Infrastructure Department Executive Director Art Storey said about the State funding.

The Halls Bayou Greenway Project includes work along Halls Bayou providing connectivity to Greens Bayou. It also includes an extensive trail system into Keith Wess Park and through the proposed Bretshire Detention Basin. The Halls Bayou Greenway Project enhances trail connectivity and recreational opportunities along a linear greenway and several prominent parks in coordination with a much needed Harris County Flood Control District project called the Halls Bayou Flood Damage Reduction Project. The projects include land acquisition for the purpose of multi-use facilities, conservation and water quality/habitat features. The trails proposed as part of this project connect Houston parks, County parks, two Harris County Flood Control District detention basins, an existing Harris County jogging trail and approaches two funded TEA 21 hike and bike trails. Other amenities provided for in the Halls Bayou Greenway Project include four detention basins covering approximately 17 acres, reforestation plantings, wetland plantings and a boardwalk, soccer fields and a playground. Environmental education programming related to this project is expected to be developed by the Aldine Independent School District.

"We believe that the Halls Bayou project is an important conservation and recreation action as evidenced by our recent approval of the regional park grant application. The park will be a cooperative effort that will provide multiple public benefits including control of flood waters, preservation of important conservation property that will reforest and replant wetland and provide several outdoor recreation opportunities," said Tim Hgset of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The project has been a true collaborative effort. While Harris County has taken the lead, other project partners include the Harris County Flood Control District, Harris County Precincts 1 and 2, the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, the Aldine Community Improvement District, and the Aldine Independent School District. The team welcomes the addition of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to the collaborative project through this grant.

The Regional Grant has been funded through the Texas Recreation and Parks Account, an account that is funded through a portion of the state sales tax on sporting goods.

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Trees Preserved as Harris County Flood Control District Parking Lot is Expanded - Pervious Pavement Used as Well

November 4, 2003

The Harris County Flood Control District recently determined that a need existed to expand its guest parking lot at its Brookhollow Facility located at 9900 Northwest Freeway. Throughout the design and construction phase a commitment was made by the District to preserve six (6) large healthy trees that currently existed in the only free land available for the parking lot expansion.

A conscientious effort was made to work around those six trees during construction. New landscaping adjacent to the trees was designed by volunteer participants in the Gulf Coast Master Naturalist program. The landscaping is designed to protect existing tree roots, require little water and be pest free. It consists of native plants. Additionally, pervious pavement structures were installed at the added parking spots to allow for water penetration near the trees' roots, contributing to the trees' future health. The trees survived construction and are thriving. They are a welcome amenity in the guest parking lot.

The District is proud of the way it has been able to balance the need for expanded facilities with a respect for trees and nature.

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FEMA Awards \$5.3 million to the District for Additional Voluntary Home Buyouts

November 24, 2003

As part of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) the Harris County Flood Control District has been awarded an additional \$5.3 million to apply toward a \$7.2 million voluntary home buyout project. The District was notified of the grant funding by letter dated November 19, 2003. Both FEMA and the State of Texas Department of Emergency Management approved the grant funding. The grant was made to assist in disaster mitigation from the storm of October 2002. It will allow the District to acquire approximately 56 flood-prone homes in the White Oak Bayou, Greens Bayou and Halls Bayou watersheds on a strictly voluntary basis.

Homes acquired through this grant funding will be purchased using District funds, with 75% of the purchase price to be reimbursed by FEMA. The authorization to accept the grant funding is scheduled to be voted on by Harris County Commissioners Court on December 16, allowing program funding to likely begin in January. The District will be using that time to organize the priority list for acquisitions and begin contacting eligible homeowners.

The voluntary home buyout grant funding will require that the property acquired using these FEMA funds will remain open space in perpetuity.



The District's Tree Planting Program is Growing

November 25, 2003

The Harris County Flood Control District is quickly becoming one of the largest tree planting organizations in the area. Over the last two years, the District has planted over 5,000 trees throughout the Harris County and intends to plant more trees every year.

As part of the District's commitment to tree plantings, there is a plan to pot approximately 20,000 saplings next year at a newly formed District nursery. This nursery will provide a tree source to supplement purchases from commercial growers for the ever-growing tree planting program.

The District has a vision of reforestation for much of the channel and detention basin systems around the County. Reforestation not only helps the environment, but also lessens District maintenance costs.

In addition to the tree planting efforts of the District along its rights of way, over-planting of trees is regularly being performed when mitigation is required for unavoidable tree losses. For example, recently sixty-eight (68) additional trees were planted at a District mitigation site for a new channel project in the vicinity of the Addicks Reservoir. These sixty-eight trees were above and beyond the number of trees required to be planted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit.

As part of the tree planting program, the District has involved the community in its venture. Volunteer tree planting events are scheduled throughout the planting season and continue to be well attended. In this way, the District hopes to engage community leaders and citizens in embracing the value of trees in our communities.

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Critical Flood Control Projects Receive Federal Funds

December 3, 2003

Majority Leader Tom DeLay and Judge Eckels announce over \$21 million to come to Harris County

Majority Leader Tom DeLay will join County Judge Robert Eckels the Harris County Flood Control District and officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to discuss federal funding of several key flood control projects in Harris County on Wednesday December 3, 2003 at 2 pm at Arthur Storey Park 7400 West Sam Houston Parkway South just south of Bellaire Boulevard

Flood Control officials will be available with maps to discuss specific projects to be funded

WHO

Majority Leader Tom DeLay
County Judge Robert Eckels
The Harris County Flood Control District
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

WHAT

Press conference announcing federal funding of critical flood control projects in Harris County

WHERE

Arthur Storey Park 7400 West Sam Houston Parkway South just south of Bellaire Boulevard

WHEN

Wednesday December 3, 2003 at 2 pm



[View this press release](#) (PDF 101KB 12/03/2003)

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Arbor Oaks Civic Association

December 8, 2003

Homeowner Association presidents in the Vogel Creek Project area were invited to attend a status briefing on February 25, 2004 at Living Word Fellowship Church. Attendees included representatives of the Northwest Forest Community Improvement Association, the Northwest Management Association, the Greater Northwest Partnership, the Arbor Oaks Civic Association, the Northwest Forest Country Club & Golf Course and Councilmember Toni Lawrence.

Vogel Creek Conveyance Improvement Project

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