

LOOK UPSTREAM

NOVEMBER 2003

Cypress Creek watershed subdivisions have banded together to pool their political and financial resources in an alliance to obtain stormwater flood reduction / protection which they deem to be dangerously inadequate. Known as the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition (CCFCC), it has steadily grown in 4 years to its present membership representing 70 subdivisions. It is still growing - both in size and ability to obtain the listening ear of county commissioners, officials, state representatives and congressmen. It is believed to be the most prominent organization representing neighborhoods throughout the watershed; the largest watershed in Harris County equivalent to nearly the combined area of Brays Bayou, Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou. Its massive land area has the capacity for the largest stormwater runoff and thus the growing potential for the greatest flooding - flooding that will rise into downstream neighborhoods and into the back doors of homes never previously flooded. CCFCC's mission is to obtain Commissioner Steve Radack's and Commissioner Jerry Eversole's commitment to prevent this from happening.

Research into what has and has not been done about flooding has disclosed many facts generally unknown to the public. One example is failure to implement an extensive technical study / plan made by Turner Collie & Braden in 1984 which calculated to what extent the peak flood volume during a 100-year storm would increase in the future as urban development occurs. Under specified conditions, this would increase to a disaster level as much as 10 times what has been experienced during the worst flooding in the last 50 years with resulting damages of \$420 million (1984 dollars). Commissioners Court adopted this TC&B study / recommended plan as the official master plan for the Cypress Creek watershed. Yet 20 years later its recommendations for

protection against such major storms have not been implemented by HCFCD and the study remains today as the Harris County "official plan". CCFCC has concluded a serious deficiency exists and is worsening. One of their greatest concerns is the **pace** at which construction of the stormwater detention basins and other **flood protection/reduction infrastructure** falling within Harris County's responsibility **is significantly lagging behind urban development**.

Key issues which CCFCC has concluded exist in flood damage reduction and what is being done (or not done) are:

1. Government planning stalled, failed to coalesce and eventually came to a halt in 1997. Planning was re-ignited 3 years later in response to CCFCC urgings. A master stormwater flood damage reduction plan for the entire watershed is now in the 3rd year of a 5-year planning process.
2. The soon-to-be-published new FEMA floodplain / flood hazard maps have serious limitations in areas undergoing rapid urban development. Collaborating with the HCFCD Planning Department, a partnership has been formed to undertake computer modeling simulations to identify where the FEMA calculated flood plains will spread throughout Cypress Creek areas as a result of the tremendous urban development in northwestern Harris County.
3. Major inequities to the detriment of Cypress Creek homeowners exist in allocation of property taxes used for HCFCD capital improvement projects among the county's 22 watersheds.
4. Neighboring county regulatory specifications for flood protection are as much as 10 times more stringent than in Harris County. Why? CCFCC is critiquing HCFCD's revisions to their policy, design and procedures specifications before submittal of the manual to Commissioners Court for approval.
5. New subdivision growth is outpacing construction of additional regional flood detention basins needed to control the resulting increased runoff. Why? Discussions are underway with Art Storey, Executive Director, Harris County Infrastructure and Michael Talbott, Director, HCFCD.
6. Harris County's government data management system covering flooded homes, damage repair permits and home buy-outs appears to be approaching grid lock when it comes to data retrieval. CCFCC has contacted Judge Eckels in their first attempt to remedy the problem.

Information on open meetings, flood insurance, flood maps, projects, events and more can be obtained from the CCFCC web site www.ccfcc.org or e-mail floodalliance@ccfcc.org.

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