

FLOOD CONTROL & FEMA FUNDING

REQUEST

Support S. 2005 to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 requiring FEMA to cooperate with state and local mapping partners in establishing, updating and maintaining flood-risk zone data and the National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994 to direct the Technical Mapping Advisory Council to establish a program for review and maintenance of National Flood Insurance Program rate maps.

Support federal funding of \$150 million for Pre-Disaster Mitigation grants in FEMA budget. This is an increase of \$100 million over the enacted level in order to reduce possible damage from future disasters before they occur.

Support FY2006 funding levels of \$200 million for FEMA's Flood Map Modernization Initiative.

Support H.R. 1105 to amend the National Dam Safety Program Act to establish a program to provide grant assistance to state for the rehabilitation and repair of deficient dams.

Oppose reduced federal funding of the NRCS the Watershed Surveys and Planning, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations, and the Watershed Rehabilitation Program.

Flooding in Texas, and most recently Hurricanes Rita and Claudette, has again emphasized the need for a coordinated, watershed approach to address floodplains and dam safety. With the Administration and Congress looking to the states to take larger roles in preparing for and recovering from natural disasters, Texas has both opportunity and challenge. Texas communities must equip themselves with the tools for planning and preparing for floods. Local and regional governments rely on the several federal agencies to assist them with flood control issues such as pre- and post disaster mitigation, watershed planning and protection, flood risk reduction.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs to assist them with planning and preparing for floods. These programs are helping Texas communities deal with the real threat of natural disasters to communities and manage the rapid urbanization many communities are experience as a result of economic growth. FEMA provides Texas communities the resources and tools to address long-term flooding problems through pre- and post disaster mitigation programs. FEMA's pre-disaster mitigation programs are ongoing efforts to help both large and small communities better understand how to lessen the impact disasters have on people and property. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Flood Mitigation Assistance are two programs serving as major funding sources to acquire repetitive loss structures and relocate citizens out of harms' way. Funding for these programs is 75 percent federal share and 25 percent local share and congress should continue to support for funding for these grants. The Map Modernization Program at FEMA helps provide more timely flood hazard information and enhance the ability to manage risks and other issues locally. The program provides new data reflecting current flood hazard conditions and enables Texans to more readily access their flood

risk and take action, such as purchasing flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). For Texas' growing communities the Map Modernization program provides a comprehensive approach to economic development, mitigation planning, and emergency response. Texas communities will be more effective in managing flood risks, land use, water resources and disaster recovery. The Texas delegation should support increased funding for the Map Modernization program at FEMA.

The unfortunate recent disasters have renewed public interest and concern about the reliability of the nations' aging flood control infrastructure, i.e., levees and dams. In 2005, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) reported on the state of dams in this country and gave the U.S. a grade of 'D'. Although dam failures have been rare, dam safety and security is a major concern in Texas communities. H.R. 1105 amends the National Dam Safety Program Act to require FEMA to establish a program to provide grant assistance to state for the rehabilitation and repair of publicly-owned dams that fail to meet minimum safety standards and pose an unacceptable risk to the public.

United States Department of Agriculture–Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) is actively engaged in many watershed protection and flood prevention activities in Texas. Three NRCS programs – the Watershed Surveys and Planning, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations, and the Watershed Rehabilitation Program – provide assistance to local project sponsors in Texas to address natural resource problems (including flood risk reduction, water quality protection and enhancement, and water supply improvement) and protect public safety from water control structure failures. The programs help local sponsors in Texas to identify local issues (such as water quality and quantity or flood prevention), develop watershed area plans to address the issues, design and construct measures (such as dams, diversions, and water quality improvement facilities), and rehabilitate water control measures once structures have exceeded their planned life-cycles and present a threat to public safety.

The President's FY 2007 budget recommends eliminating funding for most of the NRCS Watershed Program activities on the basis that these funds could be better used to help fund higher priority and more cost effective programs. Numerous local governments in Texas rely on federal government matching programs to assist in rehabilitation of aging flood control infrastructure to ensure reliable protection from loss of lives and property. Congress should not de-emphasize the importance of pre-mitigation efforts over direct disaster aid. Most, if not all, would agree that direct aid to communities who are recovering from the hurricanes is desperately needed; however, Congress should continue to support the ongoing efforts of Texas' pre-disaster mitigation projects, the Map Modernization Program, and NRCS Watershed Rehabilitation Program, these are necessary to protect lives and property from future harm. Maintaining a federal funding commitment to this proactive approach will ensure that Texas communities with the coordinated efforts between river authorities and FEMA are effective and responsive in disaster preparedness.