



Media Contact:
Lillie Laws
713-684-4015

**HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT
RELEASES
FLOOD HAZARD RECOVERY DATA**

New Data on Floodplains and Floodways for Five Watersheds

Information Accessible via Internet

HOUSTON (March 8, 2004) – The Harris County Flood Control District (District) released Flood Hazard Recovery Data (Data) today for the Brays Bayou, Goose Creek, Jackson Bayou, Luce Bayou, and San Jacinto River (north of I-10) watersheds as part of the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project (TSARP).

The Data represents the 1% and 0.2% floodplains (100- and 500-year) and floodways for these watersheds using the latest engineering methods and technology. The Data has been developed by the District and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and will be used to produce new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) for communities in Harris County. The DFIRMs are expected to be released in preliminary format by FEMA in late Spring.

The District believes that the floodplain and floodway boundaries reflected in the Data will be virtually identical to those reflected in the preliminary DFIRMs. This confidence is due in large measure to advances in technology that have allowed a more accurate understanding of Harris County's flood risks than what was previously possible. Of particular note, is the extensive use of an aerial laser technology developed by NASA called LiDAR that was used to define the ground surface.

The District stresses that Flood Hazard Recovery Data is not a preliminary DFIRM. The administrative process to adopt the DFIRMs will begin when FEMA issues the maps in preliminary form in late Spring. Flood insurance requirements and rates are not affected by the current release of Data.

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Educating the Public About Flood Risks

“The Harris County Flood Control District is providing Flood Hazard Recovery Data now in order to provide the public and their communities as much time as possible to learn about possible changes to the mapped floodplains and floodways,” explained Mike Talbott, Director of the Harris County Flood Control District. “To our knowledge, Data in this format and detail has never been released to a community prior to the release of preliminary DFIRMs.”

It is hoped that the public will use the Data and the knowledge generated by TSARP to become aware of their flood risks and take appropriate steps to deal with these risks, including the purchase of flood insurance.

“An informed community is a more damage resistant community,” Talbott said.

Addresses Searches via the Internet

Flood Hazard Recovery Data is available through the TSARP web site: www.tsarp.org.

Residents in the Brays, Goose, Jackson, Luce and San Jacinto watersheds will be able to view Flood Hazard Recovery Data by typing in their street address and zip code. They will be able to view a map of their neighborhood and see the latest information on flood boundaries for the 1% and 0.2% floodplains (100- and 500-year) and floodways for these areas.

Engineering data regarding these watersheds can be ordered on the TSARP web site including LiDAR topographic data, hydrologic and hydraulic computer models (with supporting information) and plotted water surface profiles for the studied streams.

As additional Flood Hazard Recovery Data becomes available for the remaining 17 watersheds in Harris County, it will be released on Mondays in the order in which the work is completed.

While the best information about the TSARP effort and the Data can be found at the web site, the District has also established a telephone number for additional questions at (713) 722-7227.

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Important Facts To Keep In Perspective

As the public begins to review the Flood Hazard Recovery Data, the District underscores the importance of keeping the following in perspective:

- The current FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Harris County are a solid and largely accurate representation of where the highest risks of flooding exist. New technologies and engineering methods allow for a more detailed understanding of these risks.
- TSARP represents an entirely *new* study of flooding potential, not an *update* of old information. As such, it is not correct to characterize floodplain changes as an “increase” or “decrease” in flood risk – it is simply a *new understanding* of our flood risk. For example, the detail of the ground surface defined by LiDAR is unprecedented and represents a significant difference. The new study also uses new and larger rainfall values based on additional years of rainfall records.
- Ongoing and future flood damage reduction projects will help shrink floodplains in many areas, thereby lessening flood risks throughout the County. For example, a massive flood damage reduction project on Brays Bayou, “Project Brays,” is well underway and is the largest flood damage reduction project in the history of Harris County. Project Brays is a \$450 million effort being conducted by the District in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- If an individual finds that they do not lie within an estimated 1% or .2% (100- or 500-year floodplain), they should not assume that they possess no risk of flooding. Every portion of Harris County possesses some risk of flooding due to the flat terrain, clay soils, and intense levels and volumes of rainfall that this region can receive. Intense local rainfall can cause flooding well away from any channel as water tries to flow overland, and severe storms can produce more rainfall than what is depicted by the mapped floodplains (both scenarios were very evident with Tropical Storm Allison). Flood insurance is an important way for individuals to protect themselves from unidentified flooding risks.

Community Outreach and Education

The District encourages organizations that are interested in learning more about TSARP and the Flood Hazard Recovery Data to have members visit the project web site www.tsarp.org, or schedule a presentation by contacting the District’s Planning Department at 713-684-4015.

More information about the history of flooding in Harris County, the evolution of the county's drainage network, and what is being done about local flooding can be found at the District’s web site – www.hcfcd.org.

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