

\$19.5 million granted by Texas GLO for historic disaster mitigation projects in Orange County

Funds to improve drainage infrastructure approved for West Orange and Vidor

AUSTIN - Today Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, Texas Senator Robert Nichols, Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan, Mayor Randy Branch and Vidor Mayor Pro Tem Misty Songe announce the Texas General Land Office (GLO) approved \$19.5 million in flood mitigation projects to improve drainage infrastructure in Orange County and the cities of West Orange and Vidor. These infrastructure projects will directly benefit thousands of residents in a mainly low-to-moderate income (LMI) area that has faced repetitive storm damage in 2015, 2016, 2017 with Hurricane Harvey, and 2019.

“The funding GLO is announcing today is historic,” said Commissioner Bush. “Access to this kind of funding has never been available before to most of the low-to moderate income communities that will be using these funds for systemwide infrastructure improvements that will prevent dangerous flooding and make life better for generations of Texans.”

“In Southeast Texas, storms are exceptionally common and can produce heavy rainfall and flooding that devastates communities,” said Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan. “I want to thank Commissioner George P. Bush for his persistence and steady leadership in securing this funding for Texas communities in need of increased resilience against flooding. He has been a trusted partner throughout this process and we look forward to working together on the second round of funding in the coming months.”

Texas Senator Robert Nichols offered his support from the Texas Capitol saying, "It's impossible to overstate how important these flood mitigation funds are to East and Southeast Texas. Senate District 3 saw severe flooding during the 2015 floods, the 2016 floods, and again during Hurricane Harvey in 2017. These flooding events showed just how vulnerable this area of the state is and how necessary mitigation efforts are. Senate District 3 won over \$105 million in the competitive flood mitigation fund award process because the projects in our region are vital to protecting Texans from future flood events. I appreciate the professionalism of the GLO throughout this process and our local officials who worked so hard to make these projects a reality."

“Aging infrastructure is one of our greatest challenges when dealing with flooding,” said West Orange Mayor Randy Branch. “From hurricanes, tropical storms and major rain events, our drainage system has been stressed beyond its limits. The funding that we’re receiving today from Commissioner Bush and the GLO allows the city to make improvements to our drainage system that will help us be better prepared for these catastrophic flooding events.”

“Over the last decade, disaster events have flooded Vidor streets and inundated structures, many of which remained submerged for several days, preventing the safe evacuation of residents and resulting in millions of dollars in damages,” said Vidor Mayor Pro Tem Misty Songe. “These funds could not come at a better time as we face additional flooding across our region. By funding this request, Commissioner Bush is helping us to mitigate loss of life, damages to property, suffering, and improve access of emergency vehicles and first responders during future events. We could not be more excited to receive this good news as we respond to yet another storm.”

In May 2020, Commissioner George P. Bush announced the [kick-off of the application process](#) for the first round of more than \$2.3 billion in Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to protect Texas communities hit by Hurricane Harvey and severe flooding in 2015 and 2016. During the first round, the GLO conducted three competitive application programs from the [CDBG-MIT Action Plan](#). Those programs include:

- 2015 Floods State Mitigation Competition – GLO [awarded](#) \$31,426,781 to four grantees.
- 2016 Floods State Mitigation Competition – GLO [awarded](#) 21 grantees with \$135,462,438.
- Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition Round 1 (\$1 billion of \$2,144,776,720 total)

Applications closed for the first round of funding October 28, 2020, and the GLO evaluated all 290 submitted applications in accordance with the HUD approved scoring criteria. Eligible applications with the highest scores were awarded funds. The second round of the competition will award the remaining \$1,144,776,720 in mitigation funding to Hurricane Harvey eligible entities.

HUD defines mitigation as activities that increase resilience to disasters and reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of loss of life, injury, damage to and loss of property, and suffering and hardship, by lessening the impact of future disasters. HUD requires that at least 50% of total funds must be used for activities benefiting low- to moderate-income (LMI) persons.

The State of Texas CDBG Mitigation Action Plan: Building Stronger for a Resilient Future outlines the use of funds, programs, eligible applicants, and eligibility criteria as required by HUD. The plan was sent to HUD on February 3, 2020, after an extraordinary public outreach effort including a 50-day public comment period and eight regional public hearings, far-surpassing HUD requirements. HUD approved the plan March 31, 2020. For more information, please visit recovery.texas.gov/mitigation.

City of West Orange: Citywide Flood and Drainage Improvements Project - \$3,790,353
LMI Percentage: 77.24%

The project will mitigate loss of life, damages to property, suffering, and improve access of emergency vehicles and first responders during future events. During several named and unnamed flooding events over the last decade, streets have become inundated with floodwaters and remained submerged for several days, preventing the safe evacuation of residents. Additionally, transport of supplies and access by first responders and volunteers has been limited due to the failure of the existing drainage facilities to adequately direct water away from structures and infrastructure.

The improvements will reduce the risk as well as the duration of flooding along city roadways. Deepening and widening road-side ditches, removing and replacing damaged and undersized driveways and street crossing culverts, hardening existing outfall ditches and installing concrete lining will allow for faster dissipation of flood waters. This will ensure that the residents may safely evacuate and that the supply chain remains open for those unable to do so.

The city of West Orange will improve over 40 different sites throughout the city. The project will provide the following:

- 1) Regrade/reshape approximately 16,850 linear feet of street ditches
- 2) Remove and replace culverts for a combined total of approximately 16,851 linear feet
- 3) Conduct approximately 6,760 linear feet of driveway repairs
- 4) Reshape/regrade approximately 4,500 linear feet of a collection ditch

- 5) Line a collection ditch with approximately 4,500 linear feet of concrete

City of Vidor: Citywide Floodwater Detention and Drainage Project - \$15,801,291

LMI Percentage: 65.97%

During several named and unnamed flooding events over the last decade, streets and structures in the city of Vidor have become inundated with floodwaters and remained submerged for several days, preventing the safe evacuation of residents and resulting in millions of dollars in damages. Additionally, transport of supplies and access by first responders and volunteers has been limited due to the failure of the existing drainage facilities to adequately direct water away from structures and infrastructure.

Following these periods of significant rainfall, the drainage system often remains overwhelmed for significant periods of time due to the currently undersized and inadequate drainage structures, causing the ditches to overflow onto the roadways and into adjacent homes.

To mitigate loss of life, damages to property, suffering, and improve access of emergency vehicles and first responders during future events, the city of Vidor will execute the following citywide flood and drainage improvements:

- 1) Construct three detention facilities at Tram Road, Conn Park and Orange Street, for a total capacity of 391,700 cubic yards.
- 2) Ditch improvements at Lyndale Street, Heritage Drive, Lexington Drive, and Concord Street for a total of 2,500 linear feet.
- 3) Correct roadside culvert sizing and improve culvert crossing at Ferndale Street, Lyndale Street, Heritage Drive, Lamar Street, Lexington Drive, Concord Street, and Orange Street for a total of 2,880 linear feet.
- 4) Replace storm sewer lines at Orange Street, Lyndale Street, Heritage Drive, and Lamar Street, for a total of 10,300 linear feet.
- 5) Install roadway at the Tram Road detention pond, Conn Park detention pond, and Orange Road detention pond for a total of 8,800 linear feet and roadway reconstruction at Ferndale Street and Orange Street for a total of 360 linear feet.

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