



## Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District No. 2 Spring 2010 Newsletter

### Olson Addresses Threat of Floodplain Management Executive Order

Fort Bend County's Congressman Pete Olson was the first member of Congress to challenge the threat to the Fort Bend County economy presented by President Obama's draft Executive Order 11988 on Floodplain Management. The proposed Executive Order could prove to be devastating to the economy in Fort Bend County.

In a recent letter to the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Congressman Olson strongly cautioned about the direction that enforcement of Federal floodplain management policies might take.

Most of the major development in Sugar Land and much of the high quality development in Fort Bend County over the last 30 years is located on land reclaimed from floodplains by well-managed and locally financed levee systems.

Olson's letter emphasized the importance of a rational regulatory policy, saying "Any revised Executive Order should recognize the importance of economic, agricultural, and other uses of land within the floodplain, and provide a balance between these uses and environmental concerns..." He expressed concern that the scope of the Executive Order potentially allows Federal agencies such as FEMA and EPA to drastically expand their authority over development standards in local communities. He also warned that this action could severely affect the ability of communities to manage local floodplain areas, even if they utilize excellent management practices.

Congressman Olson has worked closely on floodplain management issues with Fort Bend County officials who have struggled to address changes to flood management policies introduced over the past few years. Current discussions emphasize that consideration should be made for responsible communities, such as those protected by Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District No. 2, that have taken proactive steps to implement admirable flood management programs.

Olson believes that Fort Bend County offers exceptional examples of the approach that community organizations can take in providing solutions to their local floodplain management issues.

An example of the consequences of arbitrary enforcement of the Executive Order, as well as other Federal directives regarding flood insurance and levee certification, could be a Federal mandate that expensive flood insurance must be acquired by every resident inside of a floodplain at costs that could exceed \$2,400 per household per year despite having adequate levee protection. The effect of such an excessive, mandatory flood insurance directive would be an estimated annual drain in excess of \$100 million from the Fort Bend County economy with no better flood protection than presently exists.

In an effort to protect the interests of residents, many flood management districts in Fort Bend County have created the Fort Bend Flood Management Association (FBFMA). FBFMA will continue to work with Congressman Olson's office in monitoring the evolving regulatory environment for floodplain management.



Congressman Olson (right) reviews infrastructure plans with LID #2 President André McDonald (center) and General Manager Chad Essex.





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## Fort Bend Flood Management Association Sponsors Symposium

The Fort Bend Flood Management Association (FBFMA), a recently created entity consisting of representatives from most of the flood management agencies in Fort Bend County, will sponsor its first 'Flood Management Symposium' for local officials and consultants who have flood management responsibilities in Fort Bend County. The program will feature presentations by recognized flood management experts with a keynote presentation by Congressman Pete Olson.

Organized in 2010, FBFMA represents a large number of local Fort Bend County governmental agencies with the combined responsibility of protecting over 130,000 people and \$10 billion of assessed property value from flooding. These entities manage approximately 60 miles of protective levees, many miles of internal drainage channels, and other flood management facilities (e.g. pump stations and water control gates).

Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District No. 2 Board President André McDonald has been elected as the President of FBFMA and will play an integral role in coordinating the symposium.

## Fort Bend County LID No. 2 Awarded Valuable FEMA Accreditation

Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District No. 2 (FBC LID No. 2) has focused a significant portion of its maintenance and operation efforts since 2007 on meeting the current FEMA accreditation standards for levee management. Failure to meet the latest standards would have exposed FBC LID No. 2 residents to the risks of expensive, mandatory flood insurance costs and reduced property values.

In 2006, FEMA requested data and supporting documentation from FBC LID No. 2 in conjunction with FEMA's updating of the 'Flood Insurance Rate Maps' for Fort Bend County to determine if the district was, in fact, providing protection to the level of the base flood elevation defined by FEMA. The district immediately began efforts to address the requirements of FEMA's revised standards.

FBC LID No. 2 completed the improvements necessary to meet the latest FEMA requirements and provided FEMA with the requested documentation and data related to its compliance. Upon review of the documentation and data, FEMA indicated in a letter received on March 30, 2010 that Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District No. 2 "... meets the minimum certification requirements

outlined in Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 65.10."

This means that the FBC LID No. 2 levee system will be shown on new Flood Insurance Rate Maps as providing the level of protection required by FEMA and the property protected by the levee system will be mapped as a protected area not subject to mandatory insurance at this time.



Congressman Olson and LID #2 President André McDonald view Ditch H levee improvements completed in 2008.

While the critical goal of accreditation has been achieved, future requests could be made by FEMA at any time for design, construction, operation, and maintenance documentation to support any activity on the levee after the date of the current accreditation. That means that any deviation from the documentation and data submitted to FEMA during the recent re-accreditation process could result in the levee system losing its accredited status.

FBC LID No. 2 will continue to monitor the status of all Federal legislation and regulations that could impact levee accreditation and will ensure that maintenance and operations efforts address any vulnerability that would put its levee system at risk of losing accreditation in the future.



To find the potential cost of flood insurance for your residence or business, go to the National Flood Insurance Program web site at [www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/](http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/) and enter the requested information.

For information about FBC LID #2, email [chadessex@cpmguru.com](mailto:chadessex@cpmguru.com)