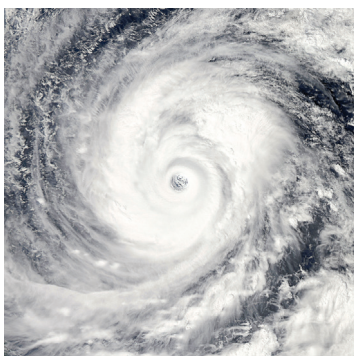


By Commissioner
Vincent Morales,
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A Tale of Two Storms

Recently Fort Bend, particularly Precinct 1, has been hit with two significant rain events within 30 days of one another. The first on Tuesday, May 7th – a storm that was not associated with any tropical system, nor forecast to be as severe as it was – dumped up to 12 inches of rain in some areas in a matter of hours. The second rain event began for some of us during the night of Tuesday, June 4th and continued through the next day as remnants of a developing system in the Gulf of Mexico sent bands of rain over our area, which also dumped several inches of rain in a relatively short period of time.



While I am relieved that we experienced no loss of life, I am deeply concerned about the County's ability to handle such large amounts of rain in such relatively short amounts of time. Also complicating matters is that we have a drainage system predicated on the Brazos River having the ability to accept our runoff. Recent rain events have demonstrated that we cannot always rely on the river having capacity to accept runoff, due to rainfall in central and northwestern parts of the state where the watershed begins. This is also a concern.

Many Fort Bend residents are angry and frustrated with these statistically and somewhat dubiously named "100 Year Events," as am I. Many are wondering what is going on, and what can we do to solve the problem? The opinions are varied but typically fall into one of these categories. Some in the conversation believe the problem is solely with development. Others point to the possibility of climate change or weather-related phenomena, such as El Nino. Some have insisted for years that there needs to be another reservoir somewhere on the Brazos. My feeling is that as with many complex issues, there exists a combination of multiple and significant contributors, and not one answer alone will be the solution.

Currently there is an ongoing study that is examining not just parts of our drainage, but a review of how the system functions as a whole. I think we have to fundamentally start thinking of our drainage system as one unit instead of parts. This study is projected to be complete in late 2020 or early 2021 and will include the analysis of creeks and tributaries that have never before been studied. I view the completion of that study as a catalyst for change and improvement to our existing drainage system and our Drainage District.

Changes and improvements defined by this study will be paramount to secure our future. I believe the first step in utilizing this important information is to hire a Flood Control Manager to manage and facilitate projects that align with the Army Corps of Engineers – an experienced manager with an Army Corps background preferably. Currently, Fort Bend County has not created new drainage projects – solely maintained existing drainage projects – but Commissioner's Court has the autonomy to make this vital position happen to both oversee and create drainage projects.

What will this mean? I think everything is on the table. In the meantime, we must take advantage of every opportunity individually and collectively to improve our ability to weather these storms. One of those things I think we can do and should consider is acquiring our own meteorologist who can advise us and provide data analysis with special regard to our own rain events, in our own watershed. Additionally, I think we all should invest in flood insurance. We live in an area that is prone to flooding, and we all have to be as prepared as possible, especially now that we are in hurricane season.

In closing, I am reminded of a statement that I heard and truly believe in: "We should take no action that harms current or future Fort Bend County citizens." It is my commitment that I will view every decision through this prism. ●

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