

Lower Brazos Regional Flood Planning Group Submits Final Flood Plan for the Basin to the Texas Water Development Board for First Cycle of Planning

WACO, TEXAS — On July 14, 2023, the Region 8-Lower Brazos Regional Flood Planning Group (RFPG) submitted their Final Amended Regional Flood Plan to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). This regional flood plan is the first of its kind for the basin and represents 43 counties and 191 communities located at least partially within the Brazos River basin. Alysha Girard, P.E., Chair of the Lower Brazos Regional Flood Planning Group, said that “our volunteer voting members put in countless hours to assess, review, and ultimately approve the tremendous work product produced by the Region 8 consultant team that was led by Halff Associates.”

The regional plan was approved at the TWDB Board meeting on July 25, 2023, and will be incorporated into the overall State Flood Plan, which is due to the Texas Legislature by September 1, 2024. The Lower Brazos Regional Flood Plan, as well as the State Flood Plan, will be updated every five years thereafter. “I am grateful to the RFPG members, consultant team, and many various contributors. It took the whole team along with the vital community feedback to create this first plan,” said Girard.

In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 8 directing the creation of the first-ever State Flood Plan for Texas; funding for this flood planning effort was appropriated to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) as a result. The preparation of this new flood plan has been led by the TWDB and follows a similar regional approach used for water supply planning in Texas for the past 20 years. TWDB designated 15 flood planning regions within the state based on the corresponding river basins, including Region 8 for the Lower Brazos basin.

The Brazos River Authority (BRA) has served as the sponsor agency for the Lower Brazos Regional Flood Planning Group since 2020; duties include the management of the regional flood planning grant agreement with TWDB. The overarching goal of regional flood planning, and the comprehensive state flood plan that will result from the plans created by these regions, is to protect against loss of life and property from flooding.

The focus of the Lower Brazos Regional Flood Plan included: (1) identifying both current and future flood risks, including hazard, exposure, vulnerability, and residual risks, (2) selecting achievable flood mitigation goals, as determined by the Region 8 RFPG, and (3) incorporating strategies and projects to reduce the identified risks. The amended regional plan also identified a variety of recommendations to mitigate flood risk in the region, including:

- 97 Flood Management Evaluations (FMEs) with a total estimated study cost of approximately \$30 million;
- 49 Flood Mitigation Projects (FMPs) with a total estimated project cost of approximately \$4 billion; and,
- 10 Flood Management Strategies (FMSs) with a total estimated cost of approximately \$370 million.

The regional flood plan for the Lower Brazos Region will serve as a guide to the state and was developed using the best available science, data, models, and flood risk mapping. The Brazos River basin regularly experiences major storm events, and the state wants to be prepared with proper flood mitigation planning for flood prone areas.