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Hidalgo County Precinct 3 covers portions of Mission, Sullivan City, Penitas, Palmhurst, Palmview, La Joya and Granjeno. Currently, a total of two Rural Drainage Development Projects are under construction in the precinct and they include, the La Joya Watershed and the FM 676 Drainage Outfall.

The primary purpose of the La Joya Watershed Project is to develop a cost-effective drainage infrastructure for the Peñitas basin area to incorporate existing and future drainage needs. Currently, the project is in the feasibility study phase and has not yet started construction. The total cost paid to date is \$2,290,240.77.

An area that has consistently experienced flooding is Hidalgo County Precinct 4. This area incorporates portions of Edinburg, McAllen, San Manuel, San Carlos and Faysville. The Rural Drainage Projects cur-

rently under construction include, North Seminary Estates; Hoehn; the Kenyon and Mile 17 1/2 area; Alamo Brisas; and Trenton Phases II & III.

The North Seminary Estates project consists of installing a drainage network of pipes ranging in size from 18" to 42" designed to transport storm water that collects in roadside ditches through grated inlets and pipe stub-outs to discharge into the Edinburg Lateral Drain. The project is 90% complete and will cost \$435,795.66 when finished.

The 2012 Bond Referendum has also assisted in funding specific 2006 Bond projects. One such project is the Raymondville Drain. With a cost estimate of \$350 million, it continues to move forward.

Though funding the Raymondville Drain project was included in both bond referendums, alternative funding such as grants also have been considered.

The district is hard at work in Hidalgo County. Crews are busy upgrading, improving and reinstalling the drainage pipes and tools needed to make the county's drainage system more sufficient for its residents.



Residents and county officials experienced the urgency of improving Hidalgo County's drainage after the weather event the county experienced last spring. Above, a trench was cut to help drain flood water. Water flowed through the trench at a high rate of speed for nearly two weeks, alleviating flooding by redirecting the water into a nearby drainage ditch.

Delta Area Connector/East Lateral Project Groundbreaking



The project will provide drainage improvements to more than 56 square miles in the Delta area.

Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush joined Hidalgo County Precinct 1 Commissioner A.C. Cuellar Jr. and several local and state leaders for the groundbreaking of a major drainage project in the Delta area.

Cuellar hosted the ceremony for the Delta Area Connector/East Lateral Project in La Villa on August 13. The project is a joint effort between Precinct 1, the Urban County Program, Drainage District No.1 and the Texas General Land Office.

The \$15 million project will provide drainage improvements to more than 56 square miles with

approximately 55,000 residents. Once completed, urban areas within eastern Hidalgo County served by the Mercedes Lateral drainage system will be interconnected to the Main Floodwater Channel providing seven miles of immediate drainage relief to 15 rural communities, said Cuellar.

"This project will offer long term drainage improvements that will help serve distressed areas for years to come," said Cuellar.

Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, who was the keynote speaker at the groundbreaking, credited the project to several government agencies

working together across party lines for the betterment of the community.

"We have to prepare and this is the opportunity to do that," said Bush.



Pictured L to R: Commissioner A.C. Cuellar Jr.; Urban County Program Director Diana Serna; State Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, McAllen; Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush; County Judge Ramon Garcia; State Senator Eddie Lucio Jr., Brownsville; and State Representative Armando "Mando" Martinez, Weslaco.

The project - which will be completed in three phases - is partially funded by Disaster Recovery grants received by the Urban County Program for damages received from Hurricane Dolly in 2008.

The General Land Office serves as the lead state agency for managing Disaster Recovery Grants appropriated through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said Bush.



COUNTY CONNECTION

HIDALGO COUNTY NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2015

Message from County Judge Ramon Garcia

When Raul Sesin was appointed General Manager for the Drainage District on February 9, 2015 the proceedings were pleasantly interrupted by two hearty rounds of applause, indicating a strong endorsement of the Drainage District Board of Directors' decision.



The Board of Directors, which I chair and serve on along with the four Commissioners, appointed Mr. Sesin because we felt it was crucial to have the Drainage District overseen by a licensed engineer, and, more importantly, we wanted the

General Manager to be a county employee, rather than a contracted consultant.

There are more than \$1 billion in construction projects that need to be completed. When Mr. Sesin first took over there was a lot of catching up to do, and organizational issues to resolve; especially in documentation and record-keeping, so that the Drainage District board and the community can better understand where projects stand. The spring flood events caused some of that work to be set aside while the Drainage District worked hand-in-glove with our Office of Emergency Management, county precincts, and other emergency responders in addressing immediate needs to relieve flooding issues.

Hidalgo County offers unique challenges for drainage, for example the natural topography of our area is much higher in the northwest part of county; in some cases there is up to a 250-foot difference in elevation.

The flood-producing rains this year have been extraordinary, producing the same impact as major hurricanes. In those extreme cases, our task is to minimize the storm's impact and shorten the time that neighborhoods are flooded.

With Mr. Sesin at the helm, we expect to see real progress on projects; solid and regular updates; and, most importantly, to see projects completed in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Drainage is Hidalgo County's top priority

Flooding from rain events in late October and last spring are stark reminders that some storms are so powerful that they will overwhelm any drainage system.

The 100 year event last spring generated more than 25 inches of rain from April through June. The storm that pummeled the eastern Rio Grande Valley October 23-25 brought 10 to 13 inches of rain to the Donna, Weslaco and Mercedes areas in Hidalgo County and hit Willacy and Cameron counties even harder.

"We measured 9.69" of rain at our studios in Weslaco on Saturday ... the most we've recorded in one day in the entire time I've worked here."
- Tim Smith via Facebook

Both events produced enough rain in a short period of time as to overwhelm any drainage system. However, the situation is compounded in Hidalgo County because there remains much work to do to update and improve drainage.

"There is no doubt that if Hidalgo County were to experience a hurricane the size of Beulah, the loss would be catastrophic," said Hidalgo County Judge Ramon Garcia.

Meteorologist Tim Smith, with KRGV-TV 5 said the October event brought the most one-day rainfall recorded at the Weslaco studios in the nearly

34 years that he's been with the station.

"More than Hurricane Bret (7.48" over three days), more than Hurricane Dolly (8.86" over two days), more than any one day in almost 34 years," Smith posted on Facebook. "Not many drainage systems can handle that kind of rain in such a short time."

Garcia, in his role as County Judge, signed a local state of disaster declaration on October 27. The declaration is the first step in requesting state and federal disaster aid. The order was extended during a brief Commissioners Court meeting Monday, Nov. 2 at the request of Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Ricardo "Rick" Saldaña.

The county's preparation, emergency coordination and collaborative efforts were successful in minimizing damages. In an editorial printed Tuesday, Oct. 27, *The Monitor* commended Hidalgo County's emergency response.

"Despite the torrent of water flowing down roadways, not a single life was lost. County leaders and law enforcement should be credited for not only being proactive in passing out sandbags to residents in anticipation of the storm on Friday afternoon, issuing constant



County emergency responders Juan Martinez, left, and Rolando Casas in Willacy County.

"County leaders and law enforcement should be credited for not only being proactive ... but also for reaching out to other areas."

- The Monitor Editorial, Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2015

warnings to residents via social media about heavy rainfall on Saturday afternoon, but also for reaching out to other areas for help in the aftermath of this storm."

Garcia, who chairs the Drainage District No. 1 Board of Directors, said the county's growth has outpaced its drainage system, which was originally designed for farming. Since 1908, when the Drainage District was created, the county's population has grown from about 13,000 to 900,000.

"Residents need to realize that upgrading our infrastructure will always be ongoing and will take years to complete," said Garcia.

Currently, the Drainage District owns, manages and maintains 256 miles of drainage systems, and maintains an additional 328 miles of drainage systems through inter-local agreements with surrounding entities.

The Drainage District's top priority is to complete current and upcoming projects resulting in the improvement of the county's drainage infrastructure, said General Manager Raul Sesin.



In September 1967, Hurricane Beulah produced from 25 to 35 inches of rain, causing widespread flooding.

New Drainage District leader's first order of business was to review the 2006 and 2012 Bond projects and prioritize work

Since reporting to work as the new Hidalgo County Drainage District General Manager on February 9, Raul Sesin, P.E., CFM has made significant progress on getting the office in order so that the Drainage District can focus on construction of its drainage projects.

Sesin is responsible for maintaining 584 miles of drainage systems, and is in the planning phase to construct an additional 18.43 miles of ditches. The grand total of the drainage system, including the new projects, is equivalent to the distance between McAllen and Oklahoma City – although not in a straight line.

“As General Manager, my first task was to evaluate the status and/or completion of all drainage projects including approved projects by the 2006 and 2012 bond referendums,” said Sesin.

“The district’s new initiative is to conduct more in-house design and construction projects, which allow the department to go further with the district’s funding.”

At this time, several projects are under construction or in the design phase from the 2006 and 2012 Bond Referendums as well as

projects from the state’s General Land Office. The district is also working with various cities and agencies to provide drainage outfalls to many transportation projects that are being developed within the county. Hidalgo County’s rapid growth has prompted the district to examine its staffing and equipment needs, said Sesin.

“Although funding for the projects may be limited, my primary focus is on actual construction, to prioritize the needs of the district, and to complete all projects as funding becomes available.”

– Raul Sesin

Due to the county’s growth, the district has acquired the addition of many channel systems that have been developed by the county and are now maintained by the Drainage District. In addition, interlocal agreements with various Irrigation Districts has doubled the district’s drainage systems.

The Drainage District was developed to serve a rural, agricultural community that has since grown over a thousand-fold into thriving cities with developed subdivisions.

In 2008, the county received a FEMA decertification letter concerning the county’s levees. The letter notified the county of the requirement to carry flood insurance due to an inadequate levee system.

In an effort to remedy the requirement, the previous district manager, recommended the rehabilitation of all county levees to the Drainage District Board of Directors.

That same year, approximately \$68 million was transferred from the bond, to fund the rehabilitation of the county levees, thus delaying the original projects.

Sesin is examining the postponed 2006 Bond projects to determine whether the projects need to be redesigned or if portions still remain to be completed.

“Although funding for the projects may be limited, my primary focus is on actual construction, to prioritize the needs of the district, and to complete all projects as funding becomes available,” said Sesin.



Raul Sesin, PE, CFM

Highlights from some of the projects funded by the 2012 Bond Referendum show progress as work continues

The 2012 Bond Referendum included the issuance of \$84 million to upgrade the county’s drainage system as well as allocating \$100 million to fund an independent segment of the Raymondville Drain.

The bond includes a Master Plan Update of 25 specific improvements at a cost of \$84 million, including \$15 million for rural drainage development within county precincts and \$10 million for the Delta Watershed Development Project.

The \$15 million allocated for Rural Drainage projects was divided evenly among the county’s four precincts. Each precinct received \$3.75 million.

Hidalgo County Precinct 1 is currently undergoing six Rural Drainage Development Projects. They include, SH 68 Segment D Portion, Adams & Black, Spanish Palms, Ditch 23, Tijerina, and Delta West.

The goal of each project is to provide drainage of storm water in Precinct 1. With the

installation of storm systems, regrading of ditches, and outfalls, the district will provide a better living environment for its residents.

An example of a Precinct 1 project is the Spanish Palms Rural Drainage Development.

The \$362,711.13 project consists of a storm drain system, the regrading of roadside ditches, and road turnout improvements



Seminole Valley Rural Drainage Development

at Spanish Palms and Mile 13 N Road. The completed project, provides an outfall for the Spanish Palms subdivision storm system and will alleviate flooding issues.

Hidalgo County Precinct 2 covers portions outside of city limits in the McAllen, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Hidalgo, and Mission areas.

The Rural Drainage Development Projects currently under construction in Precinct 2 are Seminole Valley, Northside Village, Hidden Valley, Minnesota Meadows, Trenton Crossing, and Wisconsin Crossing.

In an area of 169 acres, the Seminole Valley Rural Drainage Development has been completed. A new storm sewer pipe, larger in diameter than what was previously there, was installed to drain storm water from North Owassa Road, south of the LJ Drain, West of Cesar Chavez Road and to the East of Alamo Road. The project cost \$388,514.55.

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\$84 Million 2012 Bond Referendum Projects

Project Name	Status	Total Cost to Date
Raymondville Drain	Design Phase	\$9,007,286
Mission Inlet Recertification	Study	\$2,579,785
J-09 Drain System	Under Construction	\$1,701,965
PSJA Lateral Drain Ditch Improvement	Design Phase	\$171,000
Jackson Drain Vulvert Improvements	Design Phase	No expenditures
South Pharr/McAllen Lateral-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Design Phase	No expenditures
Alamo Expressway Drain-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Under Construction	\$1,063,004
South Floodwater Channel-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Under Construction	\$601,866
East Donna Drain-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Under Construction	\$1,006,632
Weslaco Drain Lateral-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Design Phase	\$160,807
Mercedes Lateral-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Under Construction	\$774,892
South Mercedes Lateral-IBWC Outfall Improvements	Under Construction	\$827,596
Rado Drain Re-Route (Rehabilitation Project)	Complete	\$6,053,833
Delta Area Watershed AKA Delta Rural Water Management System Aquisition	Acquired	\$8,959,876
Rural Drainage Development	Under Construction	\$13,464,982
Control Structure	Under Construction	\$982,702
Weir System Rehabilitation Project	Under Construction	\$759,239

\$100 Million 2006 Bond Referendum Projects

Project Name	Status	Total Cost to Date
Raymondville Drain	Engineering Phase	\$11,497,885
Mission Inlet Bypass	Engineering Phase	\$466,026
J-02-00 Monte Cristo Outfall	Under Review	\$1,600,111
W-01-00 La Villa Drain	Under Review	\$858,337
Z-01-00 Peñitas Drain Basin	Under Review	\$636,046
Jackson Drain	Completed	\$328,207
W-06-00 NW Weslaco Outfall	Under Review	\$306,045
Laterals - Alamo Drain	Completed	\$1,929,713
Laterals - Goodwin Drian	Under Review	\$117,781
Laterals - Linda Vista	Under Review	\$46,558
Pharr - McAllen Drain	Completed	\$927,628
Detention Ponds	Under Review	\$1,545,602
Levee Systems	Under FEMA and IBWC Review	\$77,492,168

*As of 9/30/2015

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