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HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT WILL RELEASE FLOOD HAZARD RECOVERY DATA FOR THE GREENS AND CEDAR BAYOU WATERSHEDS

Data on Floodplains and Floodways Accessible via Internet

HOUSTON (August 3, 2004) – On Wednesday August 4th at 9:00 am, the Harris County Flood Control District (District) will release Flood Hazard Recovery Data (Data) for the Greens Bayou and Cedar Bayou watersheds, as part of the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project (TSARP).

Work is ongoing along three additional streams in the Greens Bayou watershed that were not previous studied by FEMA. The Data for these streams will be added when it is complete. The southern most part of Cedar Bayou is affected by costal flooding and Data for that area will be released at a latter date, when it is complete.

The Data will represent the 1% and 0.2% (100-year and 500-year) floodplains and floodways for the watersheds using the latest engineering methods and technology. The Data has been developed by the District and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and will be used to produce new Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for communities in Harris County. The FIRMs are expected to be released in preliminary format by FEMA later this year.

The District believes that the floodplain and floodway boundaries reflected in the Data will be virtually identical to those reflected in the preliminary FIRMs. This confidence is due in large measure to advances in technology that have allowed a more accurate understanding of Harris County's flood risks than what was previously possible. Of particular note, is the extensive use of an aerial laser technology developed by NASA called LiDAR that was used to define the ground surface.

The District stresses that Flood Hazard Recovery Data is not a preliminary FIRM. The administrative process to adopt the FIRMs will begin when FEMA issues the maps in preliminary form later this year. Flood insurance requirements and rates are not affected by the current release of Data.

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Educating the Public About Flood Risks

"The Harris County Flood Control District is providing Flood Hazard Recovery Data now in order to provide the public and their communities as much time as possible to learn about possible changes to the mapped floodplains and floodways," explained Mike Talbott, Director of the Harris County Flood Control District. "To our knowledge, Data in this format and detail has never been released to a community prior to the release of preliminary FIRMs."

It is hoped that the public will use the Data and the knowledge generated by TSARP to become aware of their flood risks and take appropriate steps to deal with these risks, including the purchase of flood insurance.

"An informed community is a more damage resistant community," Talbott said.

Addresses Searches via the Internet

Flood Hazard Recovery Data is available through the TSARP web site: www.tsarp.org.

Residents in the Greens Bayou and Cedar Bayou watersheds will be able to view Flood Hazard Recovery Data by typing in their street address and zip code. They will be able to view a map of their neighborhood and see the latest information on flood boundaries for the 1% and 0.2% (100-year and 500-year) floodplains and floodways for these areas.

Flood Hazard Recovery Data released previously for Addicks, Barker, Brays, Buffalo, Carpenters, Hunting, Jackson, Little Cypress Creek, Luce, San Jacinto (north of I-10), Sims, Spring Gully/Goose Creek, Spring Creek, and Willow Creek watersheds is also available through the web site.

Engineering data regarding these watersheds can be ordered on the TSARP web site including LiDAR topographic data, hydrologic and hydraulic computer models (with supporting information) and plotted water surface profiles for the studied streams.

As additional Flood Hazard Recovery Data becomes available for the remaining 6 watersheds in Harris County, it will be released on the TSARP website as soon as it is completed.

While the best information about the TSARP effort and the Data can be found at the web site, the District has also established a telephone number for additional questions at 713-722-7227.

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Important Facts To Keep In Perspective

As the public continues to review the Flood Hazard Recovery Data, the District underscores the importance of keeping the following in perspective:

- Ongoing and future flood damage reduction projects have and continue to help shrink floodplains in many areas, thereby lessening flood risks throughout the County.

- The current FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Harris County are a solid and largely accurate representation of where the highest risks of flooding exist. New technologies and engineering methods allow for a more detailed understanding of these risks.

- TSARP represents an entirely *new* study of flooding potential, not an *update* of old information. As such, it is not correct to characterize floodplain changes as an "increase" or "decrease" in flood risk – it is simply a *new understanding* of our flood risk. For example, the detail of the ground surface defined by LiDAR is unprecedented and represents a significant difference. The new study also uses new and larger rainfall values based on additional years of rainfall records.

- If an individual finds that they do not lie within an estimated 1% or 0.2% (100- or 500-year floodplain), they should not assume that they possess no risk of flooding. Every portion of Harris County possesses some risk of flooding due to the flat terrain, clay soils, and intense levels and volumes of rainfall that this region can receive. Intense local rainfall can cause flooding well away from any channel as water tries to flow overland, and severe storms can produce more rainfall than what is depicted by the mapped floodplains (both scenarios were very evident with Tropical Storm Allison). Flood insurance is an important way for individuals to protect themselves from unidentified flooding risks.

Community Outreach and Education

The District encourages organizations that are interested in learning more about TSARP and the Flood Hazard Recovery Data to have members visit the project web site www.tsarp.org, or schedule a presentation by contacting the District's Planning Department at 713-684-4015.

More information about the history of flooding in Harris County, the evolution of the county's drainage network, and what is being done about local flooding can be found at the District's web site – www.hcfcd.org.

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