
Anti-flood projects here are winding up

By John W. Gonzalez

STAFF WRITER

Eight years into its 10-year flood-control initiative, Bexar County is whittling down its long to-do list.

Most of the mega-projects are completed, such as Olmos Dam upgrades and bridge-building over flood-prone creeks.

Others are nearly finished, like the \$30 million Laddie Place floodwater retention site on the Northwest Side.

What's left of the \$500 million construction fund will be focused on smaller projects including low water crossings, road safety measures and creek stabilizations.

"We're going to finish the shovel-ready projects and we're changing the emphasis to early-warning systems on street crossings," Precinct 2 Commissioner Paul Elizondo said Fri-

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day as he inspected the Laddie Place construction site on Fredericksburg Road.

Due for completion in December, Laddie Place is designed to avert habitual flooding between Fredericksburg Road and the Woodlawn Lake area. The dual-basin storm-water facility will combine flood-control features with recreational amenities that should be available next year when the site becomes a city park.

To make way for the basins, 371,000 cubic yards of dirt had to be removed.

When dry, the basins will have soccer fields and walking trails. During floods, water will be retained before release into the San Antonio River watershed. One of the basins has already functioned as planned during recent storms.

Named for a nearby street and located on the site of the former Northwest Shopping Center, Laddie Place epitomizes the county flood-control program: It's located in San Antonio. The badly needed remedy involved multiple political jurisdictions. The project's high cost

was beyond municipal resources. And it improved on previous anti-flood measures that were overwhelmed in the biggest storms.

Another dozen flood projects currently are in play, several in suburban areas.

Work commences this month along Huebner Creek near Hollyhock Drive in the Whisper Creek subdivision.

A December start is slated for work on two low water crossings on Casias Road near South Foster Road. In January, construction starts on low water crossings along Knoll Creek at Classen and Jung roads and at North Verde Road low water crossing.

County officials outlined the newest projects last week at Commissioners Court, as part of a review of the long-term program. Officials said the county has planned, started or finished 80 projects totaling \$492 million. Funding the program with flood-tax proceeds was approved by commissioners in 2007.

Completed projects include the rehabilitation of Olmos Dam, new crossings on Shepherd, Evans and Ingram roads, drainage upgrades at St. Mary's University and installation of a

countywide high water alert system with railroad-style crossing gates at some problem-prone sites.

Perhaps the most controversial pending project is a plan to upgrade San Pedro Creek, which runs through downtown.

Its proposed cost of \$175 million, most of it coming from the county, has turned into a political issue, with County Judge Nelson Wolff in favor and his GOP opponent Carlton Soules against it.

Ten proposed projects were not recommended for construction. The remaining 70 include 19 completed projects, 10 under construction and 31 in the design phase.

"Over the last several years, these projects have declined in design and increased in construction," said county Engineer Renee Green.

Some of the 10 works in progress are well known to neighbors and motorists. Traffic-disrupting drainage work on San Pedro Avenue in the Monte Vista area and on VFW Boulevard are due for completion early next year.

Also under construction and due for completion in the next several months are the Henze Road low water crossing and



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The \$30 million Laddie Place floodwater retention site on the Northwest Side is nearly completed. It's named for a nearby street and located on the site of an old shopping center.

other projects on Huebner Creek and Rosillo Creek, but work on Rock Creek won't

wrap up until 2016.

jgonzalez@express-news.com