NRCS Assisted Watershed Dams in Texas
35th Congressional District

In the mid-1930s, Congress began looking at ways to complement the downstream flood control program of the Corps of Engineers. It passed flood control acts in 1936, 1944, and 1954 and assigned responsibility of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program to the USDA Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Since that time, NRCS has assisted watershed sponsors in construction of nearly 2,000 floodwater retarding structures (dams) in 145 watershed projects across Texas. In addition, NRCS has assisted watershed sponsors with the installation of land treatment practices and channel improvements for watershed protection.

Texas watershed projects provide **$150 million** in annual benefits.

The watershed projects which impact the 35th Congressional District provide **$11.9 million** in annual benefits, as well as capturing 447,000 tons of sediment annually. Over 230 bridges and numerous county, state, and federal roads are also protected.

In just one storm on June 29, 2007, the Salado Creek Watershed dams provided $900,000 in flood damage reduction benefits.

There are **19 watershed dams** in 5 watershed projects in the district. *See the table on the back of this page for the annual benefits provided by each watershed project in the 35th Congressional District.*

Operation and Maintenance of Watershed Projects

The annual operation and maintenance of dams and their components is the responsibility of project sponsors (local units of government, usually conservation districts, city and county governments, and special purpose districts).

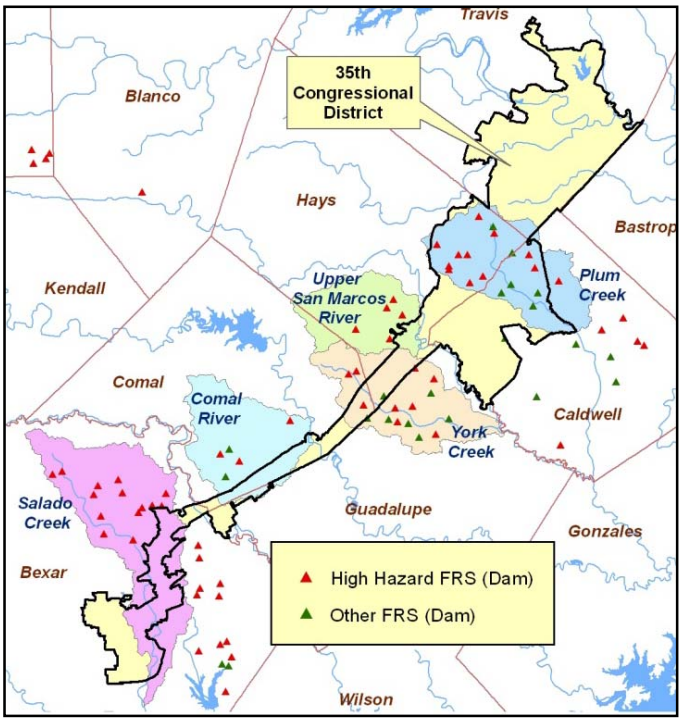
Operation and maintenance of watershed dams can be expensive and labor intensive, but is necessary to ensure the dams function as designed and remain safe. Maintenance work includes clearing trees from dams and spillways, repairing soil erosion damage, repairing damages after heavy storm events, and keeping the principal spillway inlet clear of debris.

Five dams in the 35th Congressional District are in need of funding for repairs at an estimated cost of $2.75 million.

Rehabilitation of Aging Dams

NRCS assistance is available to rehabilitate aging watershed dams. A typical candidate site for rehabilitation was constructed between the late 1950's to the middle 1960's and no longer meets current safety criteria.

There are 16 dams in the 35th Congressional District that are over 40 years old and 3 dams that are 30-39 years old.



The majority of 35th Congressional District was in a rural setting when the watershed projects were planned. Conversion from agricultural to urban land use has taken place and is intensifying. Many dams originally constructed as low hazard are now classified as high hazard, or will soon be high hazard as a result of downstream urbanization.

Rehabilitation of these dams is needed to protect lives and downstream property. Twelve dams in the 35th Congressional District are classified as high hazard dams. Ten of these dams need to be upgraded to high hazard criteria at an estimated cost of $15 million, including $5.3 million in sponsor's cost.

Planning studies have been completed on two Plum Creek Watershed dams. One dam has been rehabilitated, and a second has been authorized for rehabilitation.

Annual Watershed Benefits in 2011 Dollars
(Entire Watersheds)

Watershed	Total Dams Constructed	Dams in District 35	Monetary Benefits	Bridges Benefited	Wetlands Created/Enhanced (acres)	Reduced Sedimentation (tons of soil)
Comal River	5	0	$1,041,000	59	99	45,200
Plum Creek	18	17	$801,000	73	962	252,300
Salado Creek	14	0	$5,111,000	40	340	35,900
Upper San Marcos	5	0	$3,699,000	40	0	0
York Creek	16	2	$1,276,000	25	502	113,600
Total	58	19	$11,928,000	237	1,903	447,000

Monetary benefits include reduction in flood damages to agricultural lands and rural and urban infrastructure including roads and bridges. Other benefits include soil erosion control, recreational areas, irrigation water, municipal and industrial water supply, and wildlife habitat.

Listed below are the sponsors for watersheds located in the 35th Congressional District:

Alamo Soil and Water Conservation District
Caldwell-Travis Soil and Water Conservation District
City of New Braunfels
City of San Antonio
Comal County Commissioners Court
Comal-Guadalupe Soil and Water Conservation District
Edwards Aquifer Authority
Hays County Commissioners Court
Hays County Soil and Water Conservation District
Plum Creek Conservation District
San Antonio River Authority
Upper San Marcos Reclamation and Flood Control District
York Creek Improvement District

Information about watershed projects and other conservation programs is available at the local conservation district or NRCS offices. For further information, refer to the Texas NRCS website located at:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/tx/programs/planning/wpfp

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