



# FACT SHEET

## Texas Severe Flooding Events - May/October 2015 Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

### Description

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program was created by Congress to respond to emergencies caused by natural disasters. EWP is designed to help people reduce imminent hazards to life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding caused by heavy rains, drought, earthquakes, windstorms and other natural disasters. The purpose of EWP is to help communities with a common problem. All projects undertaken must be sponsored by a political subdivision of the State such as a city, county, or a flood control district. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for administering the program, working through local units of government.

### Severe Flooding Background

Texas has experienced two historic rainfall events that have ravaged more than 38 counties in May and October of this year, and sponsors are requesting assistance through EWP. May rainfall totals across 34 counties have been described as a one in 400-year event by Texas State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon. Unfortunately, these rains fell at a time when lands were already wet. From January through June, Texas received on average 23.97 inches of rain across the state breaking previous records set in 1941. Then, to put into perspective just how quickly flooding occurred in the October event, consider the following data from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) rain gauges at Onion Creek on Highway 183 in Austin. Rain totals were 6.98 inches within the first hour; 10.81 in two hours; 13.07 inches in three hours and 15.50 inches within 24 hours.

Nielsen-Gammon anticipates October rainfall totals to break records set back in 1895. The counties of Hays, Travis, Hill and Navarro were four of the hardest hit in October. Two weeks after the flooding, some areas are still not accessible due to high water, debris and inaccessible roads.

With existing El Nino weather conditions forecast to continue into the New Year, landowners, communities, municipalities and others could be faced with more flash flooding, raging waters and the resulting damage to land, water sources and property.

### May Flooding

Texas counties impacted totaled 34 and included Austin, Bastrop, Blanco, Burleson, Caldwell, Calhoun, Clay, Collin, Comal, Cooke, Coryell, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Erath, Fort Bend, Gonzales, Grayson, Guadalupe, Harris, Hays, Hill, Jack, Kendall, Lamar, Lee, Montague, Red River, Refugio, Victoria, Washington, Williamson, Wilson and Wise. Texas NRCS requested \$15.2 million in EWP funds for counties covered by a Presidential declaration (Stafford Act), and \$1.6 million for counties that suffered damage, but were not included in the Presidential declaration.

### October Flooding

In October, Hurricane Patricia brought extra moisture and instability to Texas. Counties impacted the hardest included Navarro, Hill, Travis and Hays. Information and data is still being gathered and assembled. Texas NRCS requested \$300,000 of EWP funds for a non-Stafford Act disaster. This request was submitted to NRCS National Headquarters to potentially assist sponsors with critical needs associated with floodwater retention structures in Navarro County. As of November 3,



about 45 out of the 99 dams in Navarro County have been checked. Washed out roads and debris continue to hinder assessment and recovery efforts. The October storms were extreme, however, were more limited geographically than those in May. Based on past experience, it is anticipated that sponsor requests for EWP funding for this event will be in an estimated range of \$10 million once all damage can be assessed. (Note – These preliminary numbers do not reflect or affect any official requests.)