



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA Board OK's process to develop flood cleanup programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, February 17, 1999

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SEGUIN- The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) Board of Directors took action today authorizing general manager Bill West to contract with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to administer projects that will remove the worst debris from the October 1998 flood.

West said the Board's action is an important step in developing a comprehensive agreement specifying how NRCS will coordinate debris removal projects in cooperation with other local sponsors. It also authorizes GBRA to provide in-kind services such as personnel time, equipment, and a cash matching contribution. Under the NRCS program, local sponsors must provide a 25 percent matching share of funds for qualifying debris removal.

October's severe flooding damaged large portions of the Guadalupe River Basin. Since then, local governments and officials have assessed damages, developed cost estimates and in some cases begun debris cleanup programs. In areas where programs have not been started, West said GBRA has been working with local entities to coordinate a joint cleanup effort in cooperation with NRCS.

"The magnitude of the flood damage will make it very difficult for local entities to pay their 25 percent without assistance from other sources," said West. "State legislators and officials are aware of this situation and are looking at ways to provide some funding to help pay the local match for any NRCS or Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) funds."

West said the Senate Finance Committee will hear an Emergency Appropriations Bill (SB-472) tomorrow, sponsored by Senator Bill Ratliff. "GBRA has been in contact with every mayor and county judge in the basin asking them to provide us with damage assessments and documentation of their total losses for FEMA and NRCS. This information has been forwarded to Austin so that it can be included in the total SB 472

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funding request. We expect a number of mayors and county judges to attend the committee meeting and personally explain their individual situations.”

FEMA funds cover rebuilding of homes and removal of household-related debris, while NRCS funds generally are designated for natural debris removal.

According to West, FEMA-related damages in the Guadalupe River basin “are staggering. We’re looking at several million dollars just for the local matching 25 percent allotment. Local sponsors don’t have these kinds of resources and are going to need all the help they can get to clean up and rebuild their communities.”

GBRA and NRCS have already begun efforts to identify several major debris removal projects and develop Damage Survey Reports (DSR's). The first involves the area from the IH-35 bridge in New Braunfels to FM 466 Seguin. It includes Lakes Dunlap, McQueeney, Placid and Nolte that were lowered approximately six feet on January 23 to identify and evaluate obstructions and determine the extent of cleanup efforts. Potential local sponsors of a \$2-million debris removal project are the City of New Braunfels, City of Seguin, Guadalupe County and GBRA.

Two additional hydro lakes located in Gonzales County, Lakes H-4 and H-5 (Lake Wood), will be lowered approximately two feet on February 20 and 21 to conduct a debris evaluation and finalize damage assessments that are currently estimated at approximately \$100,000.

West emphasized that while the NRCS program is designed to take care of large debris accumulation and obstructions, homeowners will still be responsible for cleaning and repairing most of their private property including boat docks, waterfronts and yards.

A second project focuses on the downstream reaches of the lower Guadalupe River Basin. NRCS reports estimate it will cost approximately \$600,000 to remove debris from five Guadalupe River sites and portions of the San Antonio River.

NRCS is also preparing additional reports and estimates for the San Marcos River as well as the Guadalupe River areas of Gonzales and DeWitt Counties.

West said he expects it will take at least one month for NRCS and FEMA to process the applications. Hydro lake cleanups are targeted for late April and other cleanups along the Guadalupe and San Marcos Rivers will occur as funding and equipment are available.