



# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4, NO. 14

SEPTEMBER 1986

## NEWLY ORGANIZED FLOOD MANAGEMENT UNIT *by R. E. Murphy*

The Texas Water Commission (TWC) is the State Coordinating Agency for the National Flood Insurance Program in Texas. Under a reorganization effective October 1, 1986, that coordinating function will be accomplished by the newly created Flood Management Unit headed by James Mirabal, P.E. and staffed with the following personnel:

- James Mirabal, Flood Management Unit Head 512/463-8011
- Isabelle Espinoza, Unit Secretary 512/463-8000
- Don Andrews 512/463-8010
- Roy D. Sedwick, NFIP Coordinator 512/463-8013
- Loyd Blackmon 512/463-8267
- Keith E. Krause 512/463-7916
- Robert E. Murphy 512/463-8012
- Donald W. Ragin 512/463-7750

The Flood Management Unit is part of the Dam Safety and Flood Management Section headed by John R. Clarke, P.E. under the Water Rights and Uses Division, headed by Dr. Harry E. Pruett, P.E.

The staff of the Flood Management Unit can be contacted at the above listed numbers for assistance or may be visited during normal state working hours at:

Employee Retirement System Building  
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Austin, Texas 78711

Correspondence may be addressed to:

Texas Water Commission  
Flood Management Unit

1700 N. Congress Avenue  
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Austin, Texas 78711-3087

This reorganization consolidates the responsibilities and federal money that were previously shared between the Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Water Commission under FEMA's Community Assistance Program—State Support Services Element (CAP-SSSE) Grant. The reorganization will, in effect, place total responsibilities within the Texas Water Commission.

The personnel of the Flood Management Unit are looking forward to assisting the many communities and citizens of Texas in administering sound **floodplain management measures**.

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## STATE COORDINATOR'S PROFILE *by Roy Sedwick*

Before I begin this quarter's profile, I must correct an error in the June Newsletter. In the profile on Williamson County, Kay Anderson was incorrectly named. Kay is a fine lady and certainly deserves recognition for her excellent work with the Williamson County Health Department. Kay, I apologize for the mistake and I wish all of the staff continued success with your programs.

In this issue of the newsletter, I will profile the Floodplain Management Program of Tom Green County. Tom Green County is located in West Central Texas,

and covers an area of 1,515 square miles with a 1982 census of 90,700 people. The Concho River, with its major forks and tributaries flows through the heart of the County. Three major reservoirs, O. C. Fisher, Lake Nasworthy, and Twin Buttes moderate flood flows on tributaries to the Concho. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has identified the floodplains in the County and published a Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) on March 4, 1978.

The Tom Green County Commissioners Court passed the necessary Floodplain Management Regulations and on June 19, 1978 entered the Emergency Phase of the National Flood Insurance Program.

The Floodplain Management Program has been combined with the County Septic Tank Inspection Program under the jurisdiction of the San Angelo-Tom Green County Health Department. This combined program effort again has proven effective in better enforcement of both programs and an efficient, economical county operation.

Wayne Farrell is the designated County Floodplain Administrator and is ably assisted by Gary L. Deitiker and Joe A. Reyes. Gary and Joe are Environmental Control Officers with the County Health Department and Gary handles the additional responsibilities of Floodplain Supervisor. Two other staff members, David B. Hale and Versal Bilbo, work primarily with the sanitation program but do provide back-up support to the floodplain program.

Tom Green County has developed an excellent permit program to administer their floodplain management program. They have a County Development Permit Application form, Class A and Class B Development Permit forms, a Notice to Development Permit Applicant form, and a Development Permit Exemption Certificate form. Besides these forms, they have developed a three-sticker job-site system to aid in the enforcement of the County's program. An adhesive backed compliance sticker (green) is issued for placement on-site when a development permit is issued. When noncompliant developments are located, a Notice Sticker (yellow) is placed on-site advising that information regarding the property is needed so an evaluation of the County Floodplain and Septic Tank Regulations can be completed. Failure to provide the necessary information will result in the posting of a Citation Notice (red) at the job-site. This notice states that all construction must stop until a permit is obtained. Any violation is a class C misdemeanor and the Commissioner's Court may file for Injunctive Relief and/or civil penalties. One other form, the FEMA Elevation Certificate, has been incorporated into the County's Permit process.

Since the County does not yet have detailed Flood Insurance Rate Maps with Base Flood Elevations, the Health Department uses the FEMA Flood Hazard Boundary Maps supplemented with U.S. Geological Survey Maps. Permit development sites are scaled off on these maps and with on-site elevation determinations, an estimated 100-year base flood elevation is determined for permit use. All subdivision plats are required to delineate flood boundaries and developers must have a study done to determine base flood elevations for those lots in the floodplain. As an alternative to the study, a developer can prohibit construction in the 100-year floodplain through deed restrictions, thus eliminating the need for detailed base flood elevations. The FEMA flood boundaries must still be clearly shown on the plat. Many of the new subdivisions are using this approach and are dedicating the floodplain as a greenbelt area. This approach makes use of the aesthetic values of floodplains, enhances the quality of the neighborhood, and eliminates the need for major channel modifications.

Temporary bench marks are also established in subdivisions to aid in determining the proper slab height and to facilitate the completion of the Flood Elevation Certificate. San Angelo, the County's only city, has a ETJ of five miles. There is a good working relationship between the two governments, with the county making floodplain and septic tank reviews of subdivisions in the ETJ prior to the city's approval of plats in the ETJ. County Commissioners then approve the plats for filing.

In the area of public awareness, Wayne and his staff have made a determined effort to keep the public informed on the flooding potential in Tom Green County. Articles are placed in the local newspaper and staff members have served as guest speakers for area service clubs and the Home Builders Association. An information packet has been provided to the area realtors, bankers and insurance agents. The County also assists these professionals in making floodplain determinations, a service Wayne feels will minimize the County's liability when the next major flood occurs. Wayne also keeps the Commissioners Court briefed on the Floodplain Program and he makes copies of this newsletter available to all the Commissioners and the County Judge.

Good idea, Wayne! It is hard for a local Floodplain Administrator to operate a successful program without the support of local authorities.

The most recent flooding in Tom Green County occurred in September 1986 when three to five inches of rain fell in the northern part of the county. There was some flood damage to residential and commercial structures but these were constructed

prior to identification of flood areas in the County and before the County entered into a Floodplain Management Program. The last major flood occurred in May 1957 when hundreds of people were forced from their homes in San Angelo and Christoval by raging flood waters. Wayne and his staff have researched newspaper files for historical flood data and pictures of the '57 flood as well as other flood events in San Angelo and Tom Green County. When flooding occurs in the county, staff will make an on-site inspection, taking pictures of the flooding and documenting high water marks. All of this flood history is then used to supplement the FEMA maps and the County's Floodplain Management Program. While visiting with Wayne, I saw the use of this type of data in action. A couple came into the office after moving a trailer onto property they had purchased, and then finding out they needed a County Permit. The property was in an identified floodplain on FEMA maps. Then Wayne supported the determination by showing the couple pictures of the property completely underwater during the 1957 flood. It is hard to refute photographic evidence! Wayne was also successful in stopping the development of a 100-unit mobile home park in an area inundated by the same 1957 flood.

One of the factors contributing to the County's success is the dedication of its staff to do the best they can. I have worked with Wayne for a number of years now and he has attended many of our workshops and seminars to expand his knowledge of floodplain management. Gary just recently attended the three-day Flood Loss Reduction Workshop in Austin. It is through the workshop effort that we at the Texas Water Commission are able to pass on information which can be used to build a good program, and Tom Green County is a good example.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the fine staff at the San Angelo-Tom Green County Health Department and the Commissioners Court of Tom Green County for a job well done. Keep up the good work.

Next quarter, I will profile the City of Abilene.

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## **FLOOD LOSS REDUCTION WORKSHOP A GREAT SUCCESS** *by Roy D. Sedwick*

Two major Flood Loss Reduction Workshops were conducted by the Texas Water Commission during the month of September. The first was held in Austin on September 16-18, 1986 and the second was held in Corpus Christi on September 23-25, 1986. The three day workshops were the first of their kind presented by the Texas Water Commission. The work-

shop was formatted to present structural and non-structural flood loss reduction techniques and to explore various ways of obtaining funding for flood loss reduction projects. The first half day of each workshop covered program briefings by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Weather Service. The second day activities included presentations by local cities and counties on various flood loss reduction elements, a presentation by FEMA on new regulations and a flood insurance presentation by the NFIP servicing company. All of this was then followed by a field trip to see some of the flood loss techniques in action. At a noon luncheon, attendees heard Robert Lansford, State Coordinator for the Governor's Division of Emergency Management, speak on new disaster assistance requirements.

The final day featured briefings on state funding sources and availability of technical assistance, a presentation on State mitigation activities, and a preview of things to come under the FY'87 FEMA Grant.

These workshops were made possible through partial funding by FEMA under the FY'86 CAP-SSSE Grant.

I would like to thank the following people for their contribution to the success of the workshops: Alton S. Ray, Jr. and Jim Le Grotte, FEMA; Mike Mocek, Jim Graham and Paul Wilson, Corps of Engineers; John Patton, Bill Hare and Fred Rouch, National Weather Service; O'Gene Barkemeyer, Soil Conservation Service; George Oswald, Greg Toth and Andrea Faucett, City of Austin; Lee Roy George, City of Abilene; Dan Shanahan, P.E., Consulting Engineer; Bill Barton and Jim Allen, National Flood Insurance Program/CSC; Jack Purcell, Williamson County Health Department; Bill Pluta, Texas Department of Community Affairs; James Fries, Texas Water Development Board; Robert A. Lansford and Bob Gibson, Texas Department of Public Safety; Bill Evans, Harris County Flood Control District; Fritz Lanham, City of Baytown; Lorenzo Gonzales, City of Corpus Christi; Penny Sturdivant, Brazoria County; Walter Hill, City of Sinton; Steve Elliott, San Patricio County Drainage District; and John Michael, Jim Naismith, Naismith Engineers. Thanks also to Bob Wademan, with Sierra-Misco, for his vendor display of flood warning system technology.

A special thanks to my staff for their tireless effort and support: Keith E. Krause, Robert Murphy, Don Ragin, Loyd Blackmon, James Mirabal and Isabelle Espinoza.

And a final thanks to all of you who attended and supported our effort. Without you, the workshop would not have been a success.

## HEAVY FLOODING IN SAN ANTONIO AREA

*by Roy D. Sedwick*

Numerous flood events have been reported throughout the year in all areas of the state, but the major flooding in June in the San Antonio area warrants some additional coverage. The flash flood situation began to set up when on June 2, up to two inches of rain fell over the north side of the city resulting in flash flooding of low water crossings. One man was crushed to death when the swift water in a flooded low water crossing flipped his automobile over. Firemen were making a valiant attempt to rescue the driver when additional high water rose around the car and prevented a successful rescue.

The flash flood situation worsened when, on June 4, over 9 1/2 inches of rain fell on the northeast side of San Antonio. Widespread flash flooding occurred from these heavy rains with all streams and creeks in the area out of banks and the San Antonio River, at Elemendorf, rose to a stage of 53 feet, the second highest stage on record.

Floodwaters in the Olmos Creek Basin pushed the level of water to within 20 feet of the spillway on the Olmos Dam flood control structure. Below the dam, numerous evacuations from the floodplain were made in anticipation of flood water releases. Over 100 low water crossings in the city were barricaded, yet 18 persons still had to be rescued by emergency crews. Four firemen attempting to rescue a motorist from a swift swollen creek, became stranded themselves when their boat overturned. A daring helicopter rescue saved the lives of all involved in this incident. The cost of the flooding in San Antonio alone, was estimated at nearly \$3 million and local officials stated that it was a miracle that no one lost their life in this second round of flooding.

Can we learn from this event? We still have a long way to go in educating the public to the dangers of low water crossings and we must strive to provide more accurate dissemination of flood information to the public. The City of San Antonio is installing a new automated flood warning system to assist in its continuing efforts to combat losses from flooding and should be better able to warn residents of impending flooding.

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## SAYING THANKS TO A SPECIAL FRIEND *by*

*Roy Sedwick*

Back in October 1980, when FEMA first offered the State of Texas a grant program to enhance its floodplain management capabilities, the Texas Depart-

ment of Water Resources was the coordinating agency for the NFIP. Several reasons prevented Texas Department of Water Resources from accepting the FEMA Grant so rather than lose the program, the Flood Insurance Assistance Program was established in the Governor's Division of Emergency Management, Texas Department of Public Safety. Until October, 1985, Ashley Eledge was the Administrator for that program. Many of you met Ashley through the extensive workshops and seminars held jointly by the Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Department of Water Resources.

As I travel throughout the State, many of Ashley's friends have asked me, "What has happened to him?" Well, Ashley is still with the Division of Emergency Management but is no longer involved with the National Flood Insurance Program. Changes in funding of the grant and consolidation of the program's responsibility under one agency, the Texas Water Commission, led Ashley to seek new responsibilities in the field of emergency management.

Ashley was successful in obtaining a Federal Disaster Improvement Grant to study the effects of hazard mitigation activities on past flood disasters and his new grant involves the preparation of a Disaster Recovery Handbook.

I have worked with Ashley during his tenure with the FIAP and I can honestly say I have not met anyone more dedicated to the goals of floodplain management than he. Ashley gave me encouragement and support during those early years and through his efforts, we were all successful in advancing the goals and principles of floodplain management.

Ashley, you are a professional in all aspects of the word. From all those Floodplain Administrators you helped, from all our staff at the Texas Water Commission, Flood Management Unit, and especially from me, a large, heartfelt **THANKS** for all your efforts and our wishes for your continued success. (P.S., This is not a good-bye letter. We will continue to work with Ashley on common program elements, and if any of you would like to call Ashley, he would love to hear from you, 512/465-2196.)

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## FY'87 CAP-SSSE GRANT *by Roy D. Sedwick*

On October 1st the Texas Water Commission was awarded the Community Assistance Program-State Support Services Element Grant by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The purpose of the Grant is to expand and enhance the State's capability in performing Floodplain Management activities associated with the National Flood Insurance Pro-

gram. Staff of the Flood Management Unit, Texas Water Commission will be conducting 100 Community Assistance Visits to selected cities and counties throughout the State. The purpose of a CAV is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the local Floodplain Management Program and to assist the community in understanding and implementing effective flood loss reduction measures. The CAV will consist of collection and review of basic community data, a tour of the floodplain to assess levels of development within the flood hazard areas, and a meeting with local officials to discuss all aspects of the NFIP, including program innovations, permits, violations corrective actions, etc. If your community is selected for a CAV, you will receive a letter and telephone call requesting a meeting date.

Another major task element under the grant is Floodplain Ordinances assistance. New FEMA Regulations have been sent to all communities with a requirement to amend local Ordinances and Court Orders to reflect the revised minimum development standards. The Texas Water Commission will be able to assist those communities needing help and we will have sample Ordinances which will make it easier for local governments to remain in compliance with the NFIP requirements.

Additional work elements under the grant include: conducting twelve regional seminars across the State to cover Floodplain Management and Flood Loss Reduction; conducting ten half-day community-wide workshops for local builders, developers, real estate agents, bankers, community officials, etc.; maintaining a Floodplain Administrator's List; maintaining a NFIP Community Status computer printout; publishing the State of Texas Floodplain Management Newsletter; and developing a flood history of Texas Counties.

You will be hearing more about these task elements in future newsletters.

If you need assistance under any of the grant activities, please contact us.

A special thanks to FEMA, and to Wayne Fairley of the FEMA Regional Office in Denton for their support of the State's activities under the CAP-SSSE Grant.

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## **GREAT PLAINS FLOODING** *by R. E. Murphy*

The normally dry, southwest city of Big Springs, Texas in Howard County which annually receives an average of 15.88 inches of rainfall has received an excess of +7.2 inches of the annual average amount of rainfall, totalling 23.09 inches as of September.

Upper-level storm troughs rumbling across west Texas's Great Plains took their toll late this summer, claiming the life of a Big Springs woman on Saturday night, August 30, 1986.

Strong water currents at the intersection of Birdwell Lane and the Big Springs Draw (which runs through the city from west to east), swept the pick-up truck containing the woman, a man, and a young child, off of Birdwell Lane Bridge into the Big Springs Draw. The man and young boy swam to safety; unfortunately, the woman did not.

Besides the loss of human life and trauma experienced by the man and young child, the city itself experienced damage to numerous structures and property from the 5.3 inches of rainfall on Saturday night.

The largest structure damaged was the city's earthen Cosden Lake Dam which breached Sunday afternoon causing flooding and road damage to State Highway 87 as it enters Big Springs from the south.

The seven foot wide breach caused water to flow from the lake (a 1,000 acre retention structure) across Route 87 dislodging guard rails, and continued downstream, damaging approximately 68 residential structures along Big Springs Draw. Red Cross officials estimated that between \$75,000 to \$100,000 in damages occurred to the downstream residential structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area along Big Springs Draw. Goliad Street and Birdwell Lane both sustained excessive structural damages along with the city's treatment plant.

The "act of God" certainly surprised the citizens of Big Springs, Texas, and without proper floodplain management administration, the city will experience another damaging flood disaster event in the future, "statistically speaking."

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## **WEST TEXAS FLOODING** *by R. E. Murphy*

"Two Die in Alpine Flood Waters"—IN BIG, BLACK, and BOLD style letter type, this is what was printed in the Thursday, September 11, 1986 Alpine Avalanche Newspaper after flood waters roared through the City of Alpine the night before.

Flood waters for this area of West Texas are nearly unheard of but two elderly women and a female high school student were victims of the raging flash flood waters of this unusual event. The three women experienced the life threatening situation of fighting the forces of flood waters in three separate incidents, in the same local area of the city. On Wednesday night,

September 10, 1986 the two women lost their lives. The high school student narrowly escaped drowning.

Field investigation revealed possible reasons for the two catastrophes and mishap. The lack of flash flood warning systems (besides the National Weather Service posting) for the many surrounding sub-watersheds associated with the highly dissected Del Norte Mountains and the range country side of the Alpine area reduced the probability of accurately determining the severity and intensity of rainfall in the upper reaches of the watershed. The six square mile catchment of a tributary of Toronto Creek which has headwaters near the Twin Peaks area and flows in a northeasterly direction to the north of Alpine apparently experienced back water effects as it entered the S-shaped channel and concrete lined waterway at the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (AT&SF) and the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) service line intersection.

The back water effects diverted water across the county's flat range land and along the south side of the SPRR in an easterly direction paralleling Murphy Avenue and eventually entered Alpine Creek at the intersection of 9th Street and Murphy Avenue, which flows directly through the city. The normally dry, open, storm water ditch along the SPRR could not facilitate the diverted waters as the small 3' x 1' rectangular culverts filled to capacity and allowed water with extreme velocities to flow across the railroad-street crossings.

All three women were crossing railroad-street intersections, all three were in automobiles, all three were carried along the SPRR channel and into Alpine Creek.

The \$20,000 to \$30,000 worth of damage to residential structures can be replaced. The loss of two lives cannot.

Manually monitored flood warning systems in the remote catchment basins of this area can be implemented to help prevent catastrophes like these. Deaths related to flash flooding in West Texas do not have to happen, but running water across roadways must be respected.

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## **HURRICANE BONNIE—The Disaster That Wasn't** by Roy Sedwick

Hurricane Bonnie, the first June Hurricane to affect the Texas coast since 1957, made landfall between High Island and Sabine Pass on the morning of June

26. Bonnie was labeled a category one storm and produced high wind gusts of 97 mph which were recorded at Sea Rim State Park. While the storm caused no major structural damage, there was wide spread minor damage and debris littered the streets of Port Arthur and Beaumont. Highest tides from the storm were 5.4 feet at Sabine Pass with tides of 3-4 feet on Bolivar Peninsula.

More severe problems began when inland flooding occurred from torrential rains as the storm center moved north and west of the Beaumont area. As much as 13 inches of rain fell at Ace, in southern Polk County producing a rise on Mill and Menard Creeks. Run off from these Creeks produced a sharp rise on Bear Foot Lake (Liberty County) and flooded some homes surrounding the lake. Flood waters also eroded part of the Big Thicket Lake Estate Dam, causing major damage to the structure and blocking access to many area homes. Below the dam, about 200 families were evacuated in anticipation of a complete dam break.

Local flooding occurred around Bridge City where 7 1/2 inches of rain fell. Six inches of rain was recorded near Kirbyville along the Jasper-Newton County line. In Hardin County, rains in excess of 6 inches fell on the headwaters of Pine Island Bayou and resulted in the flooding of hundreds of homes and businesses.

An estimated 25,000 persons evacuated the upper coastal areas in the advance of the storm. There were no deaths attributed directly to the hurricane, but four people did lose their life in other incidents relating to the storm. An estimated 24 people received various minor injuries.

While complete damage figures are not available, the National Weather Service placed storm damage in category six—\$500,000 to five million dollars in property damage, yet the Federal Emergency Management Agency did not declare the area a disaster, therefore, federal disaster assistance was not available for the recovery effort.

What makes a disaster? Certainly not an official declaration. When just one person has his or her home flooded, it is a disaster for that individual. If there was no flood insurance coverage, then it becomes a double disaster. Without a federal disaster declaration, flood insurance is the only protection against financial loss. That is why it is important for Floodplain Administrators to have a good public awareness program so that local residents will be aware of the availability of flood insurance. If you need help in putting together a program, give us a call.

## NEWS AND BRIEFS:

*Reorganization in FEMA Regional Office in Denton, Texas.* Over the years, many of you have dealt with Dell Greer as Director of the Natural and Technological Hazards Division. Well, Dell has been named as the Acting Regional Director of the FEMA Region VI Office to fill the void left by the departure of Jerry Stephens. Alton S. Ray, Jr. has been named Acting Director of the Natural & Technological Hazards Division, and he will be directing FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program. There has also been some reassignments of work areas within the Region so some of you may be seeing new faces when a Regional Flood Insurance Specialist calls on you. Dell and Al, we congratulate you and wish the best for you both.

*New FEMA Regulations* have been published in the August 25, 1986 issue of the Federal Register. All Texas communities participating in the NFIP will receive a written notice from FEMA National Office concerning local adoption of the new requirements. The Regional Office will also be sending out letters with sample Floodplain Ordinances in about three weeks. Communities have until April 18, 1987 to make formal adoption of the new regulations. If you need help, let us know.

*Floodplain Administrators* have a tendency to move from job to job making it difficult to keep current on who is the designated Floodplain Administrator in the local community. If you are new at the job, please contact us, or if you are the administrator but your name is not on the mailing label of this newsletter, then our Administrator List is outdated. Please help us by notifying TWC of any changes in your Floodplain Management Program.

*The State of Texas Floodplain Management Manual* was mailed out to all Floodplain Administrators several years ago. The green covered binder contains information useful in running a successful Floodplain Management program. If you are new at the job and need a manual, or if yours has disappeared or you need extras for additional staff, please let us know. We have a lot left in storage and would like to get them into circulation.

*Speaking of Manuals* FEMA has finally promised delivery of several new manuals in sufficient quantities to mail a copy to all of our Floodplain Administrators. In late October we will start mailing out copies of "Manufactured Home Installation In Flood Hazard Areas"; "Floodproofing of Non-residential Structures"; "Appeals, Revisions and Amendments to Flood Insurance Maps—A Guide for Community Officials" and a new "Coastal Construction Manual."

*The Number of NFIP Participants is Growing* I would like to extend congratulations to the following communities for taking the steps necessary to qualify for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program:

Brazos County, eligible 01/13/86; Town of Hebron, eligible 03/18/86; Jasper County, eligible 04/04/86; City of Sanctuary, eligible 04/16/86; and Town of Stagecoach, eligible 05/05/86. Several other communities have submitted applications and soon will be approved for participation. They are: Madison County; Henderson County; City of Buffalo Gap (Taylor County); and City of Crane (Crane County).

The NFIP application for counties covers only the unincorporated areas of each county.

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