Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

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Temple, Texas
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Hale County Flood Control Structural Rehabilitation Completed, Strengthening Protection for Plainview Community

TEMPLE, TX — The rehabilitation of the Lower Running Water Draw Site 4 Flood Control Structure in Hale County has been successfully completed, marking a major milestone in protecting the Plainview community and surrounding agricultural lands from potential flooding.

For over 70 years, the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) has constructed 2,038 floodwater-retarding structures, or dams, across Texas through federal programs. These dams play a vital role in protecting lives and property by reducing floodwater velocity and mitigating the impacts of flooding. Collectively, they provide more than $600 million in annual benefits to Texans.

Recognizing the importance of these flood control dams, the Texas Legislature has appropriated funds to Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) to support maintenance and rehabilitation efforts through two key programs: the

Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Grant Program and the Structural Repair and Rehabilitation Grant Program. These programs provide grants to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to ensure that flood control structures continue to serve their protective function effectively.

This project was a joint effort between the USDA-NRCS, the TSSWCB, and local project sponsors including the Hale County SWCD, Hale County Officials, and the City of Plainview.

Originally constructed in 1977, the flood control structure was designed to reduce downstream flooding along Running Water Draw. However, after nearly five decades in operation and with significant real estate development occurring downstream, rehabilitation of the structure became necessary to ensure its continued safety and effectiveness.

“After this dam was built, more homes and businesses were developed below the structure,” said Rickey James, Chairman of the Hale County SWCD. “There was concern that if the dam ever failed, it could cause serious damage. Rehabilitating it means we’ve strengthened that protection for our community.”

The rehabilitation project included installation of a new principal spillway inlet tower, flattening the side slopes of the dam to improve structural stability, and construction of a 340-foot-wide roller compacted concrete spillway designed to safely handle large storm events.

The total cost of the project was $7,896,000, funded through a combination of federal ($5,133,000), state ($2,625,000), and local support ($138,000).

According to project estimates, the structure provides average annual benefits of $147,100, including approximately $68,200 in urban flood protection benefits for

the citizens of Plainview and $44,000 in agricultural benefits such as Reduced erosion and sedimentation on cropland and pastureland; reduced damage to farm equipment, fences, and barns.

The rehabilitation project significantly reduces the potential risk of dam failure and protects a large portion of the surrounding community. Approximately 446 people live in the area that could be impacted by flooding, including 66 homes, 58 commercial buildings, 12 public buildings, and Interstate Highway 27.

“Seeing the project finally completed is a huge relief,” James said. “It took years of planning and coordination, but now we know it was engineered and built the right way, and that brings peace of mind to everyone downstream.”

The structure stands 28-feet-high, draining a 28-square-mile watershed and providing 713 acre-feet of floodwater retarding storage. During major storm events, runoff from up to 10.9 inches of rainfall can be temporarily stored and slowly released through the outlet pipe, helping prevent dangerous downstream flooding. At maximum storage capacity, the structure can manage storms producing up to 31.8 inches of rainfall within the watershed.

Flood control structures like Site 4 are particularly important in the Texas High Plains, where rainfall can occur in short but intense bursts.

“In our area we may only average 18 or 19 inches of rain a year,” James explained. “But when we do get a storm, it can come fast. You might get seven or eight inches in an hour. That’s where these structures become critical.”

The need for flood protection in the area became clear after a devastating storm in 1960, when approximately 14 inches of rain fell and large portions of Plainview were flooded.

“That event showed just how much water can move through Running Water Draw,” James said. “Water from several counties drains through this system, so when big storms happen, it builds quickly.”

Planning and funding for the rehabilitation project took approximately seven years before construction could begin, requiring coordination among federal, state, and local partners.

“This project shows what can happen when local districts, state agencies, and federal partners work together,” James said. “Everyone recognized the importance of protecting the people and businesses in this area.”

The successful completion of the Lower Running Water Draw Site 4 rehabilitation reflects the continued commitment of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and their partners to protecting Texas communities, infrastructure, and agricultural lands through long-term conservation planning and flood control investment.

View Pictures of the Site Here