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*“We couldn’t go to school for days when Salt Creek was out - the school bus couldn’t cross the creek. The watershed program and flood control dams have greatly improved the situation.”*

**Lou Vee Bridges**  
**Wise Co. Water Control and Improvement District**







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## SALT CREEK AND LATERALS WATERSHED: AN INVESTMENT WORTH PROTECTING

Through Public Law 534, Congress invested \$6.1 million (current dollars) in construction of the Salt Creek and Laterals Watershed project. The local sponsors and landowners have contributed \$4.7 million toward land rights, conservation practices, and maintaining the dams for the past 33 years. Local people are continuing to use their own tax funds to operate and maintain the project.

The monetary benefits of the project have already exceeded the costs. Tangible benefits have been produced that significantly impact the community:

-  Annual benefits average \$692,000
-  30 miles of roads and 40 bridges are safer
-  17 reservoirs provide opportunities for fishing and other outdoor recreation activities
-  270 acres of wetlands have been created or enhanced. Migratory water fowl, as well as native wildlife species utilize this vital habitat
-  20,000 acres have enhanced upland wildlife habitat
-  Sediment has been greatly reduced to Eagle Mountain Lake, water supply to 250,000 people in the Fort Worth metropolitan area



## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

New issues have emerged in the region that expand the importance of preserving this investment and reveal opportunities for additional benefits. Rural fire protection, development of recreation, more wildlife, more productive farmland, and quality water supply are but a few of the many areas that can profit from a healthy watershed.

A strong partnership between local sponsors and Tarrant Regional Water District has initiated new efforts to protect



*Development upstream and downstream may cause a need for upgrading to meet dam safety criteria.*

the resource base, reduce sediment into Eagle Mountain Lake, and improve wildlife habitat. A reinvestment initiative would enhance these benefits.



## STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE ON TEXAS' AGING WATERSHED DAMS

Salt Creek and Laterals is one of 144 Texas watershed projects completed or still under construction. The local investment in these projects is \$870 million statewide. The USDA investment in these projects is \$630 million.

Nearly 2100 dams have been built as part of these projects, beginning as early as 1948. While not all of these dams are in critical need of rebuilding at this time, many will soon be reaching or surpassing the 50 year useful life. Approximately 160 dams have changed hazard classification due to downstream development.

An organized approach is needed now to analyze the extent of the reinvestment needed, to prioritize those with greatest need, and to make necessary renovations or improvements. The Texas Association of Watershed Sponsors, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, and other state agencies are also in support of this effort.

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*“We dreaded any kind of heavy flooding. Before the project most of the county budget was used to replace bridges and culverts-81 were lost in one night. After the flood control dams were in place the damages have been reduced drastically.”*

**Charles W. Wilhite**  
**Former Wise County Judge**

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