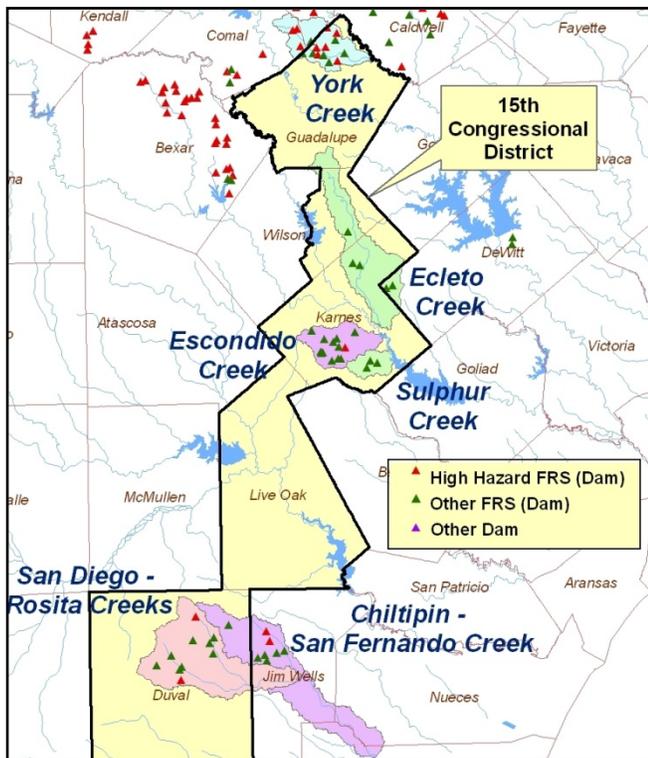




NRCS Assisted Watershed Dams in Texas 15th Congressional District

In the mid-1930s, Congress began looking at ways to complement the downstream flood control program of the Corps of Engineers. It passed flood control acts in 1936, 1944, and 1954 and assigned responsibility of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program to the USDA Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Since that time, the NRCS has assisted watershed sponsors in construction of nearly 2,000 floodwater retarding structures (dams) in 145 watershed projects across Texas. In addition, the NRCS has assisted watershed sponsors with the installation of land treatment practices and channel improvements for watershed protection. Texas watershed projects provide **over \$150 million** in annual benefits.



The watershed projects which impact the 15th Congressional District provide **\$3.8 million** in annual benefits, as well as capturing over 845,000 tons of sediment annually. About 160 bridges and numerous county, state, and federal roads are protected.

There are **42 constructed watershed dams** in 6 watershed projects in the 15th Congressional District. *See the table on the back of this page for the annual benefits provided by watershed projects in the 15th Congressional District.*

Operation and Maintenance of Watershed Projects

The annual operation and maintenance of dams and their components is the responsibility of project sponsors (local units of government, usually conservation districts, city and county governments, and special purpose districts).

Operation and maintenance of watershed dams can be expensive and labor intensive, but is necessary to ensure the dams function as designed and remain safe. Maintenance work includes clearing trees from dams and spillways, repairing soil erosion damage, repairing damages after heavy storm events, and keeping the principal spillway inlet clear of debris.

Rehabilitation of Aging Dams

NRCS assistance is available to rehabilitate aging watershed dams. A typical candidate site for rehabilitation was constructed between the late 1950's to the middle 1960's, and no longer meets safety criteria. Sixteen dams in the 15th Congressional District that are over 50 years old, 21 dams that are over 40-49 years old, and 2 dams that are 30-39 years old.

The majority of this area was in a rural setting when the watershed projects were planned. Conversion from agricultural to urban land use has taken place and is intensifying. Many dams originally constructed as low hazard are now classified as high hazard, or will soon be high hazard as a result of downstream urbanization.

Rehabilitation of these dams is needed to protect lives and downstream property. Nine dams in the 15th Congressional District are classified as high hazard dams. Eight of these dams need to be upgraded to high hazard criteria at an estimated cost of \$12 million, including \$4.2 million in sponsor's cost.



Sediments are accumulating in this aging Floodwater Retarding Structure allowing shallow water vegetation to grow.

Annual Watershed Benefits in 2011 Dollars
(Entire Watersheds)

| Watershed | Total Dams Constructed | Dams in District 15 | Monetary Benefits | Bridges Benefited | Wetlands Created/Enhanced (acres) | Reduced Sedimentation (tons of soil) |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Chiltipin – San Fernando Creek | 8 | 1 | \$781,000 | 35 | 441 | 152,900 |
| Ecleto Creek | 5 | 3 | \$325,000 | 40 | 230 | 190,700 |
| Escondido Creek | 13 | 13 | \$914,000 | 21 | 567 | 189,000 |
| Hondo Creek | 3 | 3 | \$116,000 | 6 | 117 | 79,800 |
| San Diego – Rosita Creeks | 10 | 10 | \$419,000 | 37 | 539 | 119,100 |
| York Creek | 16 | 12 | \$1,276,000 | 25 | 502 | 113,600 |
| Total | 55 | 42 | \$3,831,000 | 164 | 2,396 | 845,100 |

Monetary benefits include reduction in flood damages to agricultural lands and rural and urban infrastructure including roads and bridges. Other benefits include soil erosion control, recreational areas, irrigation water, municipal and industrial water supply, and wildlife habitat.

Listed below are the sponsors for watersheds located in the 15th Congressional District:

*Agua Poquita Soil and Water Conservation District
City of Bishop
City of Kenedy
City of San Diego
Comal-Guadalupe Soil and Water Conservation District
DeWitt County Soil and Water Conservation District
Duval County Commissioners Court
Ecleto Creek Watershed District
Escondido Creek Watershed District
Hondo Creek Watershed Improvement Dist.*

*Jim Wells County Commissioners Court
Jim Wells County Soil and Water Conservation District
Karnes County Soil and Water Conservation District
Kleberg-Kenedy Soil and Water Conservation District
Nueces County Commissioners Court
Nueces Soil and Water Conservation District
San Antonio River Authority
Wilson County Soil and Water Conservation District
York Creek Improvement District*

Information about watershed projects and other conservation programs is available at the local conservation district or NRCS offices. For further information, refer to the Texas NRCS website:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/tx/programs/planning/wpfp