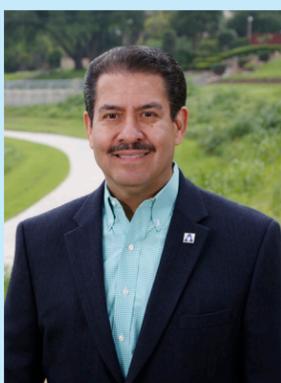


# Superfund NEWS

May/June 2020

## Environment: Precinct 2 ready for Hurricanes, Flooding

Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia has been planning for a busy hurricane season, and possible street flooding, he recently reported in an interview on a local news blog. Gar-



COMMISSIONER ADRIAN GARCIA

cia told Michael Palmer of NNB that his precinct prepares every day of the year, not just hurricane season, for responses to natural disasters, man-made accidents, and even a pandemic. He noted that last year the county saw a series of natural disasters that they responded to. These included the ITC fire, the KMCO explosion, a lightning strike at a refinery, a barge accident under I-10 and another in the ship channel, and the flooding from Tropical Storm Imelda.

Garcia noted his own experience with disasters includes hurricanes such as Alycia, Katrina, and Ike. "And so I understand these events," he said. "We have good coordination with our area mayors, and work closely with all of the entities necessary when it

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## EPA says deeper toxic waste will mean more time & money

### EPA Update for San Jacinto Waste Pits June 2020

By Jennah Durant  
EPA Press Office

Here is more information on recent SJR waste pits questions.

**1. Have you received the 30% Design package for the South impoundment?**

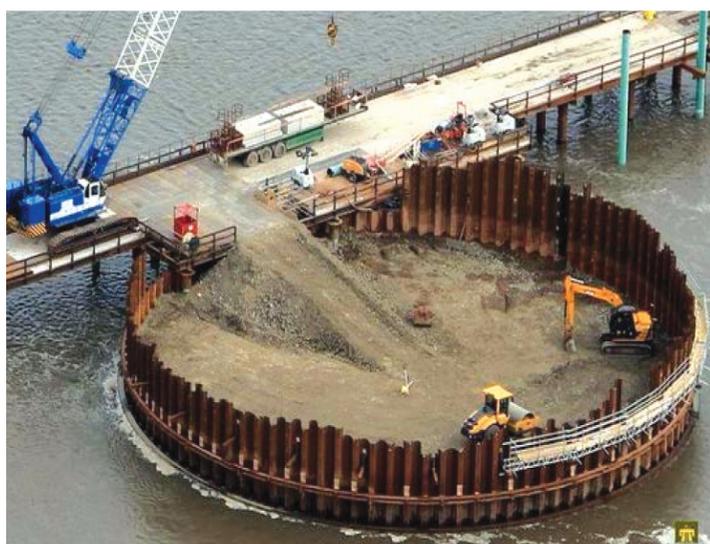
**Yes. The 30% design package for the south impoundment was submitted to EPA on April 13, 2020.**

**2. Have you received the 30% Design package for the North impoundment?**

**Yes. The 30% design package for the north impoundment was submitted to EPA on May 28, 2020.**

**3. Will these documents be available to the public? When?**

**The documents are currently under review by the regulatory agencies. Following EPA's review of the document and determination that the design is appropriate based on the remedy selected in the Record of Decision, EPA will make the document available to the public.**



This illustration of a typical cofferdam and dewatering process furnished by the EPA may be the type of work called for in the Design Package now being reviewed.

**4. Regardless of whether the reports are public, could you furnish an executive summary or your own summation of what they say?**

**The pre-design investigations have refined the volume of waste to be removed in the north and south impoundment;**

**Waste in some areas of the northern impoundment are deeper than presented in the Record of Decision;**

**Excavation of waste will occur during periods of the year that are not prone to flooding and hur-**

**ricanes. The waste will be excavated in cells. The size and number of cells will be based on the volume of waste that can be removed during periods of the year that are not subject to flooding or hurricanes.**

**5. Is there a new timeline or schedule for remediation, due to the fact that the material in the pits may be deeper than originally expected? Jackie Young said that the toxic waste may go down as far as 25'.**

**The remedial design documents**

**have been submitted by the due dates outlined in the remedial design legal order. Concurrent with the remedial design work, EPA along with the Department of Justice are working on a settlement agreement with the responsible parties. This settlement agreement will detail how the final remedial design packages will be implemented. Cleanup of the northern impoundment will take longer than presented in the Record of Decision. The cleanup will take longer because the volume of waste has increased, and excavation of the waste will be done in cells during periods of the year that are not subject to flooding or hurricanes. A preliminary cleanup schedule is presented in the 30% design package. The schedule will be updated and refined as part of the pre-final design.**

**6. Will there be a public meeting in the local area before the end of the year to update the community on progress? What would be an approximate date? Also, please feel free to make a report to the public through our publications, we still reach 12,500 every week on both sides of the river.**

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## SJR Coalition holds Virtual Meetings in May and June due to COVID-19 Virus

The San Jacinto River Coalition normally meets every month on the first Tuesday, at a local community center. But since the Covid-19 lockdown mandated by Harris County, the community centers have been closed. To keep the community informed, SJRC/THEA director Jackie Young has been holding virtual reports that are

available on the TxHEA.com website.

In her May Report, she discussed the importance of the I-10 bridge and roadway to commerce locally and throughout the nation. She said that TxDOT is planning on replacing the bumper structures that protect the columns supporting the bridge. These columns were

severely damaged twice last year by barge strikes. She said that TxDOT is planning a public meeting in the fall to inform the public and receive comments on the project.

In regard to the waste pits, EPA is testing the crushed concrete and blocks that are part of the Cap cover. The idea is that they might be re-used as landfill after the toxic waste is removed, but only if they have no toxicity. As part

of the study, they are also checking the quality of the groundwater, to know how to treat it during remediation.

The next step in remediation is for the engineers to present the 30% Design Package to the EPA for review and approval. At some point this will be made public, and THEA can review

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### Who is involved in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund?

#### US EPA

The federal Environmental Protection Agency is the lead in dealing with the Superfund site. Congress has designated them with the responsibility to solve the problem.

#### PRP

Potential Responsible Parties include successors to the perpetrators of the Waste Pits. These include International Paper, and Waste Management.

#### US CONGRESS

Most legislators whose district includes the San Jacinto River, have expressed the need to remove the Waste Pits. This includes Congressmen Gene Green, Brian Babin, Ted Poe and others.

#### HARRIS COUNTY

County Attorney Vince Ryan led a lawsuit to make the Responsible Parties pay for remediation of the site. He won a \$29.2 million dollar judgement to be spent on environmental improvements in the area.

#### SJRC/THEA

A Citizens movement, led by previous Highlands resident Jackie Young, has been the leading voice to have the Waste Pits totally removed. She heads San Jacinto River Coalition, and the new Texas Health and Environmental Alliance, Inc.

#### KEEPITCAPPED

A Citizens Group named San Jacinto Citizens Against Pollution located in Baytown has a web site espousing its belief that a permanent cap is the best solution. Thomas Knickerbocker is their attorney, but the leadership is anonymous.

## Environment: Precinct 2 ready for Hurricanes, Flooding

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comes to a disaster of any sort."

Garcia also spoke about flooding from storms, and areas in his Precinct that have been inundated.

"Precinct 2 is a Downstream Side of many surrounding counties, and we get 70% of everyone else's water. I supported the \$2.5 Billion flood bond election, but I want to make sure that we're using the money wisely."

The commissioner said that he works closely with the Harris County Flood Control District, to insure that new projects don't add to the flood problem. He said an important step the county took was to adopt the Atlas 14, an environmental regulation to control development and retention.

Garcia said one of the most important projects he has undertaken is ditch maintenance. He said his office has increased the linear feet of ditch maintenance and outfall grading almost 3 times what it has been in the past. "effective local drainage is by far the single most significant way to protect our neighborhoods from flooding."

Garcia said that during the lockdown mandated by the county, his public works staff has continued to work when possible, to send a message that the community will survive the pandemic and come out better in the future.

He said that his precinct has bought new excavators for ditch work with the latest technology, to replace the older machines, so that he can continue the high pace of maintenance and preparation for all disasters in the county.

## TCEQ to monitor Air Quality in area by using sensor equipped helicopters

By Carolyn Stone

Precinct 2 Community Liaison Cindy Miller reports that two helicopters, a black one (tail number N808LL and a white one with yellow & black stripes (tail number N300AR), will be flying in our area from May 18th through June 30th, sometimes at very low altitudes and at length over various areas and companies.

The helicopters are a part of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) aerial survey for air emissions. The helicopters are equipped with a specialized infrared camera that can image volatile organic compounds (VOC) and other hydrocarbons invisible to the eye. VOCs pose serious health hazards and sight of these helicopters attempting to identify the sources of the VOC's in our area should be a welcomed event. Included are photos of the helicopters for your help in identifying them when they are in your area.

Following is the official press release regarding this aerial survey:

**HOMELAND SECURITY  
NOTIFICATION-**  
Update May-June 2020

Texas Gulf Coast Survey-Houston/Galveston/Brazoria  
The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has hired a contractor to conduct aerial surveys in the Houston/Galveston/Brazoria area of the Texas Gulf Coast starting May 18, 2020. The areas to be surveyed include but may not be limited to Brazoria, Galveston, and Harris Counties. In addition to a white helicopter with yellow and black stripes and tail number N300AR a black helicopter with tail number N808LL may also be seen in the survey area.

The helicopter is equipped with a specialized infrared camera that can image volatile organic compounds (VOC) and other hydrocarbons invisible to the eye. VOC are a class of compounds present in common things like gasoline and solvents. VOC can combine with nitrogen oxides in the presence of sunlight to form ground-level ozone.

The helicopter will perform surveys over and around petrochemical operations and other industrial type facilities. During these surveys the helicopter may hover and fly a path over and around a facility or area multiple times in a manner that allows for



One of the Helicopters to be used for Air Monitoring in the Harris County area.



One of the Helicopters to be used for Air Monitoring in the Harris County area.

the collection of images and other information on potential emission sources. The helicopter may fly a non-grid style search pattern over some areas to avoid tall structures.

At times the helicopter may fly or hover at an altitude as low as 250 feet above ground.

The helicopter flights are scheduled to conclude by June 30, 2020.

## SJR Coalition holds Virtual Meetings in May & June

*Continued from Page One*

it to check what direction the process will be headed.

Jackie raised the question of the Sand Separation area, which in general has not been part of the remediation study. She said it has lower concentrations of dioxins, but needs to be addressed as to how it will be remediated, too. She said that only 9 samples were taken in the area, and that more might be needed for a proper assessment.

Jackie emphasized that full remediation and removal of toxic wastes is essential, so that the river is "safe, for

recreational or residential use, not just industrial use."

In the June Report, Jackie noted that weather authorities are expecting an active hurricane season, therefore threatening the waste pits with flooding and realignment of the riverbed.

The toxic waste was originally thought to be 12-14 feet deep, but recent studies and probes indicate it might be as deep as 24-25 feet. That could seriously affect the cost and time for remediation, extending it from 2 years to 4 years, according to the

EPA. This deeper removal will also require a design for the cofferdams that will take into account the hydrostatic pressure differences, wave action, and increased risk to the remediation workers. The goal is to remove all waste material until what is left is contaminated to less than 30 parts per trillion.

The Coast Guard originally was restricting barge traffic to daylight hours, due to the threat to the I-10 bridge, but that has now been modified to allow night traffic of one vessel under the bridge at a time.

## EPA Update

*Continued from Page 1*

It is unknown if there will be a public meeting in the local area before the end of the year due to COVID-19. As regional travel restrictions are lifted EPA will begin looking into safe and effective ways to interact with local community members, whether in person or virtually.

**7. The PRP have removed their website, keepitcapped.org, from the internet. Is this a sign they are being more cooperative toward remediation?**  
EPA does not know why the website "keepitcapped.org" has been removed from the internet.

Jennah Durant  
US EPA Region 6 Press Office

### Who is involved in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund?

#### USArmy COE

The Army Corps of Engineers has completed Technical Studies on the Environmental impact of 6+ strategies to Cap or Remove the toxic wastes. Their recommendations are included in a 237 page report, favoring a modified cap over removal, but stating either is possible.

#### TPWD

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was designated by the Legislature, with the help of former Representative Wayne Smith, to administer \$10 million of the lawsuit settlement funds for environmental projects along the River.

#### HC PCT 2

Pct. 2 received \$10 million of the \$29.2 million settlement, and plans to use it for environmental projects within 5 miles of the Waste Pits. Pct. 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia leads this environmental effort.

#### HARRIS COUNTY

Various departments are involved, including Grants Administration, Pollution Control, and Public Health.

#### GBF

Galveston Bay Foundation maintains a website with information on all of the Waste Pits parties actions, and other matters of interest to the environmental health of the River and Galveston Bay.

#### OTHERS

- TCEQ
- US Coast Guard
- Private Attorneys
- Houston Chronicle
- City of Baytown
- KRIV ch26
- Star-Courier