



The Northeast Action Collective Demands Equity and Justice from Harris County Flood Control District

About Us:

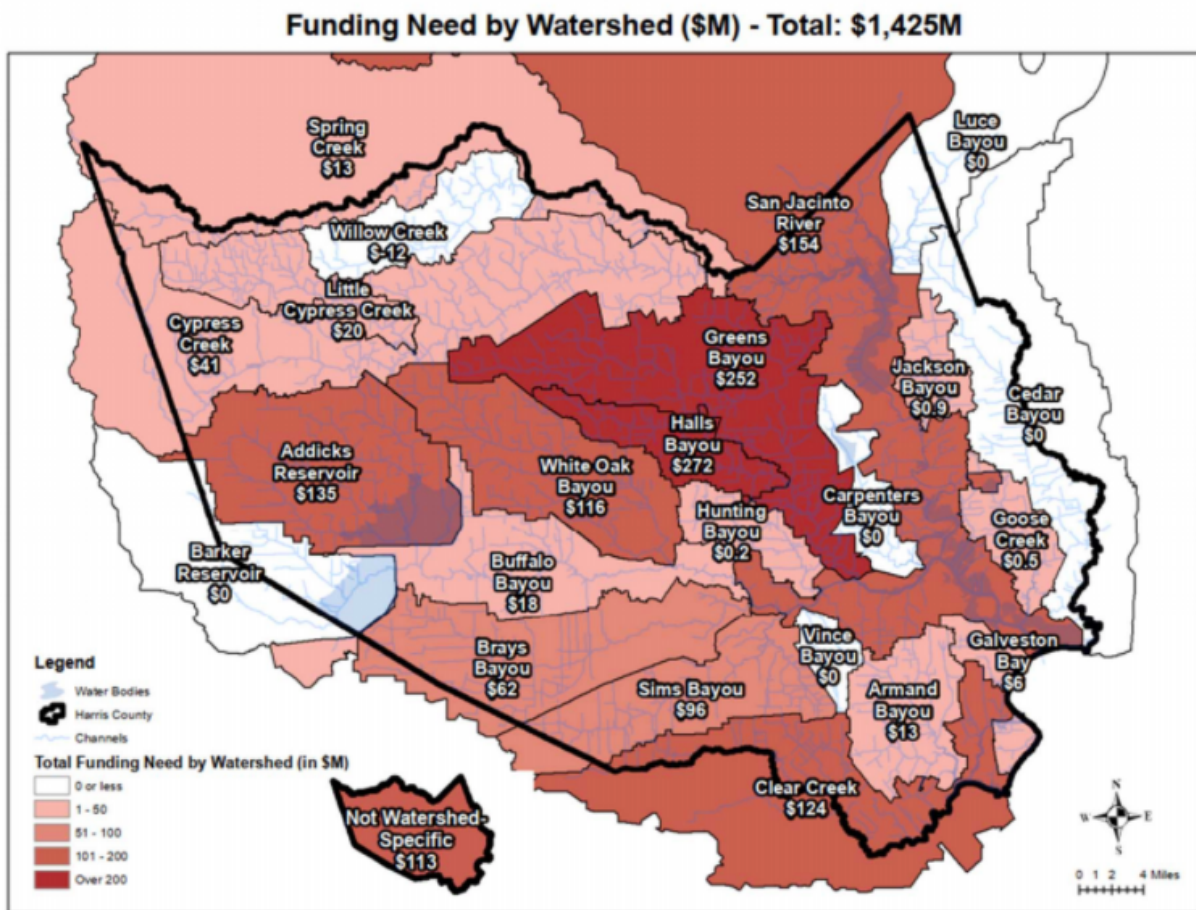
The NAC is a group of neighbors from Northeast Houston that are trying to improve our quality of life. We help each other recover from Harvey and prepare for storms that will come our way in the future. Since we began in October 2018, we have been fighting for better drains and more regular drain upkeep in our communities. We know that the city won't pay attention to neighborhoods where Black and Brown people like us live unless we band together and demand action! Please join our unified group, to make our neighborhood healthier and safer, and to build

Mission Statement. The mission of the Northeast Action Collective is to improve the quality of life in our communities and to win environmental justice for our neighborhoods. We work to achieve this by improving resilience and sustainability through organizing, advocacy, education, and training. By building power, teaching our neighbors and engaging collaboratively with political actors and allied organizations we can make our communities healthier, safer and more equitable as we continue to fight to lessen the flooding in our and surrounding communities.

Why are we Here today: Voters who supported the 2018 Harris County Flood Bond were promised equity, but 3 years later, BIPOC and LMI watersheds face disproportionate funding shortfalls and slower timelines. This is probably why people in northeast Houston are very worried about future flooding, and why they have little trust in city or county governments to deliver flood protection.

The plan we expect to be released doesn't guarantee equity as required by the bond. At the end of the day today we will be no closer to equity in the here and now. It is yet another promise for equity down the line, But Justice delayed is Justice denied. The NAC supports raising new funds but the only path to equity is to reallocate money from the 2.5 Billion already raised. Below is an image of funding gaps per watershed.

Map of Project Funding Gaps:



Details and NAC position

The 2018 Flood bond included equity language that explicitly required “equitable distribution of funds” for flood mitigation infrastructure. This promise, that the bond would address and counteract the historic racism of unequal flood protection in Harris County, was a central part of what motivated residents in the NAC to vote for the flood bond even if it meant we’d have to pay increased property taxes. In March, Harris County revealed a \$1.4 Billion shortfall in funding for the projects outlined in the bond program. While the overall funding gap is 27%, it is a shocking 74.4% in Halls and Greens Bayou, where our neighborhoods are located. Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD)’s plan was to use CDBG-MIT money allocated by the Texas General Land Office (GLO) to close some of this gap, but the GLO decided to send money elsewhere. Even if the GLO’s withdrawal of federal funding is out of the counties hands their HCFCD had a responsibility to distribute the money it already had equitably to begin with. The unavoidable reality is that, as it stands, the watersheds where marginalized people live remain the least funded in the county.

If HCFCD had truly wanted equity, they would have spent the \$2.5 billion which they have complete control of in watersheds that are home to historically disinvested communities. Today, HCFCD is requesting the creation of an “Annual Mobility Transfer” which would over time help to fund all \$5 Billion of flood bond projects proposed in 2018. The NAC is in favor of this proposal, the proposal to continue pursuing federal funding, and the proposal to use the equity prioritization framework more broadly. However, these plans are not the quickest path to equity, nor the simplest. “Justice Delayed is Justice Denied”.

The most viable path to equity is to reallocate money for projects in wealthier watersheds to projects in watersheds with predominantly BIPOC and LMI residents. Without a doubt this requires political risk. But that risk is nothing compared to the risk to human life that the status quo, or slow steps away from it ensures. In the context of rapid climate change, a rising white supremacist movement in Texas and the county and decades of underinvestment, the only strategy rooted in justice is to move as much money as quickly as possible to low income watersheds that have had the hardest time recovering from Alison, Ike, Harvey, Imelda and the winter storm. We support the strategies outlined today, but, we do not believe that current HCFCD leadership is actually committed to racial equity or justice. We know that the court has the jurisdictional power to reallocate money and deliver on the promise of equity. We hope you join us in demanding that they do so.

THE NAC DEMANDS THAT:

1. Harris County Flood Control District honor the equity requirements in the 2018 flood bond. The Flood Control District must fully fund all projects, beginning with projects in BIPOC communities that have seen historic disinvestment and which are the poorest and most impacted areas. If there is not enough money, funds should be moved from projects in wealthier areas towards projects in Northeast Houston.

2. Harris County Commissioners Court ensures full transparency on decision making processes, how much has been spent, and in what watersheds since the passage of the bond. They must compel HCFCD to provide clear and current information about project status, projected timelines and regular updates. We demand transparency on spending and planned spending from this point forward.

3. Judge Lina Hidalgo must appoint an interim HCFCD that prioritizes equity and request the resignation of Matt Zeve. Zeve has proven through his actions to not fully believe in or understand the equity goals. Furthermore he has been condescending, and elusive to community members who have tried to engage in a well meaning dialog. Finally the committee to determine Zeeve and Poppe replacements must include community members.