

Support Proposition 8 on the ballot - New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung (TX) - October 20, 2019

October 20, 2019 | New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung (TX) | Annalisa Peace is the executive director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, a non-profit uniting 52 member organizations to advocate wise management of our water resources within 22 counties in Central Texas.

If you've recently moved to Comal County, you may not know that you now reside in Flash Flood Alley, a region of central Texas that includes San Antonio and the Hill Country.

Designated by the National Weather Service as the most flash flood prone region in North America, our part of Texas has the greatest number of flash and river flooding-related deaths annually.

Longtime residents will recall all too many occasions when rainfalls in the amount of 8-15 inches fell in a few hours, causing rivers to rise 11-15 feet in some cases.

On Nov. 5 we have the opportunity to vote for Proposition 8 (HJR 4) "The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the flood infrastructure fund to assist in the financing of drainage, flood mitigation, and flood control projects."

Proposition 8 will authorize a flood infrastructure fund (created by Senate Bill 7) to be managed by the Texas Water Development Board to be used for planning, seeking permits for, or constructing flood-related projects. If approved by voters, the flood infrastructure fund would be created at the start of 2020.

This flood infrastructure fund will require no new taxes or bonds as money will come, appropriately enough, from a one-time distribution of \$793 million from the State's rainy day fund, which currently stands at \$11 billion dollars. The fund would be distributed to local governments through loans or, in some cases, grants. As loans are repaid, money would become available for new projects.

Funded projects would require cooperation among all impacted parties. A local government would receive funds only if it worked with other regional entities and hosted public meetings to hear stakeholder concerns. This provision to incorporate public input into the process for prioritizing funding will contribute substantially to the success and usefulness of flood control projects as local residents are usually most familiar with the impacts of storm water on their communities and are thus able to provide valuable expertise.

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance and our allies across the state have been working hard to insure that the funding will be administered equitably and used wisely. Thanks to concerted efforts, green infrastructure and opportunities to purchase land and conservation easements to mitigate flooding are eligible for funding under Proposition 8. In some instances, purchase of land and/or conservation easements may be the most cost effective strategy for flood control. We are

delighted that legislators recognized the role privately held lands play in providing ecological services to mitigate flooding.

Additionally, as proponents of water conservation, we supported provisions to require that applications for funding include an analysis of whether the proposed flood project could use floodwater capture techniques for water supply purposes, including floodwater harvesting, detention or retention basins, aquifer storage and recovery, or other

methods of capturing storm flow or unappropriated flood flow.

Passage of Proposition 8 presents enormous opportunities to protect Texans from flooding with cost effective and ecologically sustainable projects. Flood infrastructure funding will encourage municipal and county governments to work with citizens, their neighbors, and the Texas Water Development Board on large scale planning that incorporates green and grey infrastructure, riparian preservation and restoration, and strategic preservation of land to recharge groundwater supplies.

With increased development in the Texas Hill Country comes increases in impervious cover. Already, cities like Boerne and Bulverde wrestle with torrents of storm water flowing into ephemeral streams to flood previously unaffected properties. This scenario, complicated by predictions of even more severe storms on the horizon due to changing climate, will lead to tragedy if not addressed. Comprehensive planning for flood control projects that considers entire watersheds is long overdue.

Early voting begins on Monday, Oct. 21. We urge all Texans to vote FOR Proposition 8.

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

Annalisa Peace is the executive director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, a non-profit uniting 52 member organizations to advocate wise management of our water resources within 22 counties in Central Texas., 'Support Proposition 8 on the ballot', *New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung* (online), 20 Oct 2019 <<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=NewsBank&docref=news/176B22D763E20CE8>>

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