

Managing Flood Risks in Clark County, NV



State passes enabling legislation for district formation – The 1985 Nevada Legislature passed a bill allowing for the creation of local Districts for the control of floods.

The residents of southern Nevada had the foresight to address flooding, the nation's number one natural disaster – In 1985, the County Commission approved the Regional Flood Control District's creation, but funding was left up to Clark County voters. On September 2, 1986, by an overwhelming 2-to-1 margin, residents agreed to a one-quarter of one percent sales tax increase to protect not only themselves, but also businesses, visitors and our quality of life from the damaging floodwaters for current and future generations. The District continues to respond by proactively building improvements to mitigate the flood threat.

Completed to date - 86 detention basins and 568 miles of channels (of which 132 miles are to remain natural) and stormdrains representing an investment of \$1.6 billion.

Remaining to be built – 35 detention basins and 235 miles of channels and stormdrains at an estimated cost of \$1.9 billion (2012 dollars).

Funding flood mitigation projects – The Regional Flood Control District has bonded \$580 million over the past 21 years. Currently the total outstanding debt is \$405 million with an annual debt payment of \$33 million. Future debt is anticipated in the amount of \$75 million. The maintenance of flood projects is approximately \$10 million per year. In FY 2013 it is estimated that sales tax will generate \$77.4 million in financial resources.

Maximizing Tax Dollars – The Regional Flood Control District improvements remove areas from flood zones, saving southern Nevada taxpayers in the elimination or reduction of flood insurance premiums. To date over 51 square miles have been removed from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zones. In addition, flood control projects are also being used for recreational purposes, in a safe manner, maximizing the use of public tax dollars. Studies have shown that every \$1 spent on flood improvements produces \$2 worth of benefits.

Clark County's local population has nearly doubled every 10 years – Developers have done their fair share in funding regional infrastructure to provide flood safe new developments, but the District needs to continue to build regional flood control projects for the rest of the community.

The flood improvements made in southern Nevada help the entire state by minimizing the need for state financial disaster relief – During the January 1997 northern Nevada flood event, the state tapped the rainy day fund for more than \$4 million. In the southern Nevada flood of July 1999, because of the work of the Regional Flood Control District, more than \$100 million of flood damage was averted and no state rainy day funds were used.

Floodwaters do not recognize political boundaries – Prior to the Regional Flood Control District, flood control was conducted in a piecemeal fashion. Local entities would look just as far as their own corporate boundaries. One entity would build a project, only to have it end in another entity's jurisdiction. Now, because the Regional Flood Control District looks at all of Clark County, the improvements and the protection are seamless, efficient and effective.

The federal government recognizes the number one natural disaster – Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States. The average annual U.S. flood losses were nearly \$2.7 billion in the last 10 years (2001-2010). There is a 26 percent chance of experiencing a flood during the life of a 30-year mortgage in high-risk flood areas. Since 1978, the National Flood Insurance Program has paid over \$36.9 billion for flood insurance claims and related costs (as of 12/31/10). (*FloodSmart.gov*)

Nevada's congressional delegation has recognized the local need for floodwater mitigation programs – The Regional Flood Control District brought in federal dollars by leveraging the one-quarter of one percent sales tax through the federal government/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Finalized in 2011 was the \$335 million Tropicana and Flamingo Washes project. The federal government contributed \$251 million of the total cost or 75 percent. The Regional Flood Control District contributed the remaining 25 percent. It is because of the dedicated local sales tax funding source that the District was able to contract with the federal government.

Regional Flood Control District has always kept the annual operating expenses (salaries, engineering studies, etc.) at less than 10 percent of sales tax revenues to maximize the funding of projects and programs that minimize the impacts of flooding.