



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

**TESTIMONY**  
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS**  
**LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, March 22, 2017**

My name is Laura Blackburn and I am testifying as a member of and on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas in **OPPOSITION to HCR 106**. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. Thank you for allowing us to share the positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX).

Our positions relating to this topic are:

**LWVUS:**

*Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.*

**LWV-TX**

*Growth and development of an area being compatible with the degree of availability of essential natural resources in that area*

*Identification and protection of areas of particular significance (historical, archaeological, aesthetic, recreational) and rare or fragile ecosystems)*

After Hurricane Ike and previous hurricanes, serious consideration was given to the need to protect the Texas Gulf Coast. An interim committee was formed to explore possibilities and a number of universities and other groups were involved to address this problem and make recommendations.

Texas A&M University conducted several studies, concluding that the Ike Dike was the way to offer the best protection.

Rice University SSPEED Center was also conducted studies and produced separate recommendations involving more environmentally-friendly considerations.

Governor Perry issued an Executive Order creating the Governor's Commission for Disaster Recovery and Renewal. After their studies, the Gulf Coast Community Protection and Recovery District (GCCPD) was formed to help Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jefferson, and Orange counties develop plans and conduct studies to alleviate damage from events like Hurricane Ike.<sup>1</sup>

The Texas General Land Office (GLO) funded Phases 1, 2 and 3 studies.

Members of the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area have followed these developments, carefully evaluating all three phases, and prepared comments on the Phase 3 Report in August 2016.



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The GCCPRD work was primarily done through Dannenbaum Engineering, a civil engineering company that has established an outstanding reputation in the City of Houston.

These studies were consolidated in the Phase 3 Report. When asked what environmental studies would be done, the GCCPRD web site states:

An expert team of technical, environmental and engineering experts will investigate possible alternatives throughout the study process using the following criteria:

- People
- Infrastructure
- Environment
- Regional and National Economy

At the conclusion of Phase 3, the following recommendations are made with regard to “The Way Ahead”:

1. The evaluation of the environmental impacts that the proposed gate and barrier system at Bolivar Roads will have on Galveston Bay and the estuary system.
2. Optimization of each recommended alternative to reduce cost and maximize benefits. Specific optimization measures include:
  - Continue to work with TAMUG
  - Continue to work with SSPEED to define the feasibility of a second line of defense in Galveston Bay and to enhance protection of the west side communities and Houston Ship Channel industries
  - Continue to work with SSPEED to develop depth-damage curves for industrial tanks and capture these benefit protection of the west side communities and Houston Ship Channel industries
  - Continue to work with the Port Freeport and Velasco Drainage District on the alignment of the recommended extension and upgrades to the Freeport Hurricane Protection System.

Further studies have been ongoing. For example, the SSPEED Center of Rice University is undertaking 3D modeling of salinity and they are assembling a team of estuarine ecologists to help them to understand the results of the models as well as to generally discuss impacts. These studies are funded by a grant from Houston Endowment.

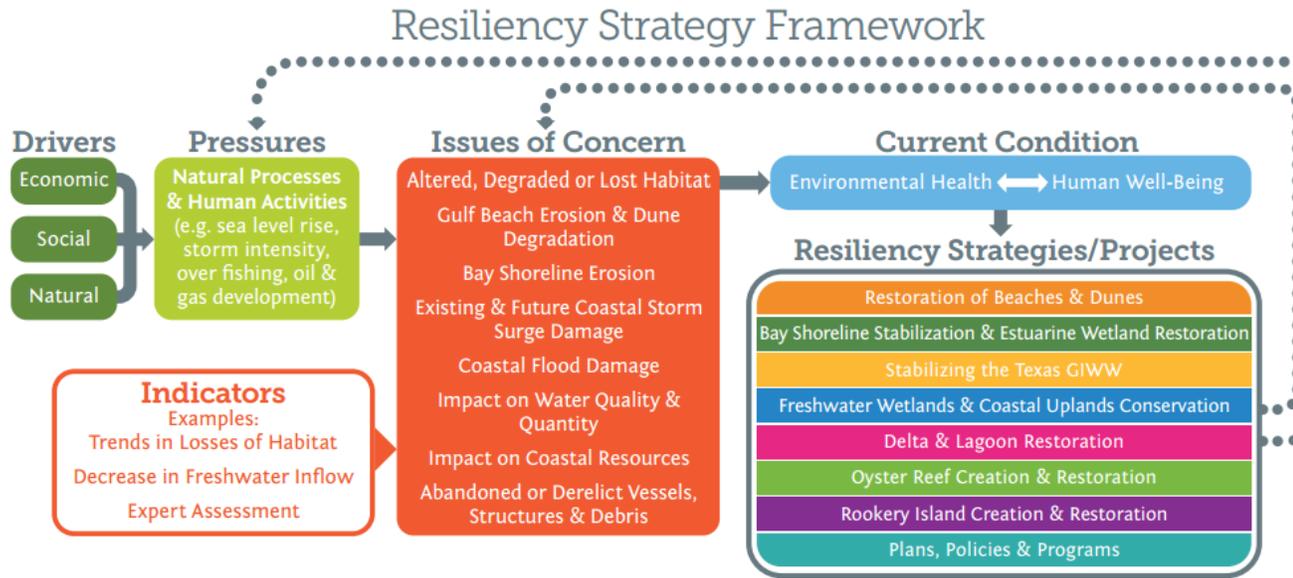
Additionally, both the Corps of Engineers and GCCPRD are doing environmental impact analysis but conclusions are not expected until fall at the earliest.

The GLO has partnered with the US Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the Texas coastal zone for Flood Risk Management, Coastal Storm Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration, with specific feasibility-level focus to recommend projects for individual Congressional authorizations. This involves 18 coastal counties along 400 miles of the Gulf Coast. <sup>2</sup>



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Part of this study includes Coastal Resiliency Issues of Concern, which are shown below:



The conclusions of LWV-TX with regard to the studies above and therefore to HCR 106 are:

- While areas that need environmental restoration are identified, none of the studies have actually done any serious plans for restoration. This must be done before any plan is submitted to Congress as it affects the cost of any coastal plan.
- The cost/benefit analyses always include the cost of environmental mitigation, however, it is based on acres impacted and construction costs. The construction costs are **based on no knowledge of the construction costs as no plan for mitigation has been developed!**

Therefore, LWV-TX recommends:

1. That the plans for environmental restoration be completed before the environmental costs are determined.
2. HCR 106 only speaks of the coastal spine, which usually means the Ike Dike. We realize that the Coastal Spine has been considered part of the plan to prepare Texas for further hurricanes. However, LWV-TX considers it only a part of the plan, and we recommend that the recommendations of the SSPEED Center be included in any total plan to send to the Congress to be funded.

Below is an example of the current estimation of costs:



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Storm Surge Suppression Study

Table 8 provides a summary and a side-by-side comparison for each alternative.

Table 8: Comparison of Alternatives SR#1 and SR#2

South Region Alternative Summary and Comparison	SR#1 - Freeport Hurricane Flood Protection System Modernization and Extension North toward Angleton	SR#2- Freeport Hurricane Flood Protection System Modernization and Extension North toward Angleton- Jones Creek Levee, Jones Creek Terminal Ring Levee, and Chocolate Bayou Ring Levee
Total length of the system (miles)	49.1 miles	74.2 miles
Right of way required	73 acres	383 acres
Pump stations required / total capacity (CFS)	2 / 2,500 CFS	5 / 11,460 CFS
Environmental mitigation required	49 acres	129.89 acres
Construction cost	\$1,897,635,000	\$2,571,551,000
Annual operations and maintenance cost	\$9,488,000	\$12,858,000
Total Annual Costs (TAC)	103,981,000	140,907,000
Total Annual Benefits (TAB)	\$186,583,000	\$206,654,000
Benefit - Cost Ratio (TAB/TAC) (3.125% Interest Rate)	<b>1.79</b>	<b>1.47</b>

References: <sup>1</sup> <http://www.gccprd.com/>  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.glo.texas.gov/coastal-grants/projects/texas-coastal-resiliency-master-plan.html>  
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.glo.texas.gov/coastal-grants/projects/files/Executive-Summary.pdf>

**For additional information contact Laura Blackburn, [laura2blackburn@gmail.com](mailto:laura2blackburn@gmail.com) 281-923-5326**

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan citizen’s organization that has fought since 1919 to improve government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. It represents more than 5000 members and supporters throughout Texas.

The League of Women Voters never support or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The member-driven organization of women and men encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy of positions based on extensive issue study and consensus.