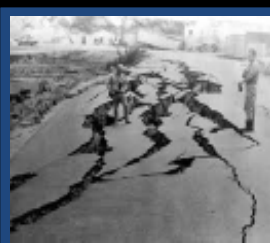


# HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

## Wharton County

October 2016



Prepared For:  
Wharton County  
Office of Emergency Management  
315 E Elm Street  
Wharton, TX 77488

**Wharton County**  
**HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE**

OCTOBER 2016

*Prepared for:*

Wharton County Office of Emergency Management  
315 E. Elm Street  
Wharton, TX 77488

and

Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition  
P.O. Box 2533  
1511 Main Street  
Cedar Park, TX 78613-9998

# Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Executive Summary .....ES-1**

**PART 1 PLAN ELEMENTS AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES**

**Chapter 1. Introduction.....1-1**

1.1 Why Prepare This Plan?..... 1-1

    1.1.1 The Big Picture ..... 1-1

    1.1.2 Local Concerns ..... 1-1

    1.1.3 Purposes for Planning ..... 1-1

1.2 Who Will Benefit From This Plan? ..... 1-2

1.3 Elements of This Plan ..... 1-2

**Chapter 2. Plan Update—What Has Changed .....2-1**

2.1 The Previous Plan ..... 2-1

2.2 Why Update? ..... 2-12

2.3 The Plan—What Is Different? ..... 2-12

2.4 Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool ..... 2-12

**Chapter 3. Plan Methodology ..... 3-1**

3.1 Grant Funding ..... 3-1

3.2 Establishment of the Planning Partnership ..... 3-1

3.3 Defining the Planning Area..... 3-2

3.4 The Steering Committee ..... 3-4

3.5 Coordination with Other Agencies ..... 3-5

3.6 Review of Existing Programs ..... 3-6

3.7 Public Involvement ..... 3-7

    3.7.1 Stakeholders and the Steering Committee ..... 3-7

    3.7.2 Survey/Questionnaire ..... 3-7

    3.7.3 Meetings ..... 3-8

    3.7.4 Press Releases/News Articles ..... 3-9

    3.7.5 Internet ..... 3-9

3.8 Plan Development, Chronology, Milestones ..... 3-10

**Chapter 4. Guiding Principle, Goals, and Objectives .....4-1**

4.1 Guiding Principle ..... 4-1

4.2 Goals ..... 4-1

4.3 Objectives ..... 4-1

**Chapter 5. Identified Hazards of Concern and Risk Assessment Methodology .....5-1**

5.1 Identified Hazards of Concern ..... 5-1

5.2 Climate Change..... 5-1

5.3 Methodology ..... 5-2

5.4 Risk Assessment Tools ..... 5-3

    5.4.1 Dam Failure, Earthquake, Flood, and Hurricane - HAZUS-MH ..... 5-3

    5.4.2 Other Hazards of Concern..... 5-4

    5.4.3 Limitations ..... 5-4

**Chapter 6. Wharton County Profile.....6-1**

6.1 Historical Overview .....	6-1
6.2 Major Past Hazard Events.....	6-2
6.3 Climate.....	6-3
6.4 Geology and Soils .....	6-9
6.5 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure .....	6-11
6.6 Demographics .....	6-21
6.6.1 Population .....	6-21
6.6.2 Age Distribution.....	6-23
6.6.3 Disabled Populations.....	6-24
6.6.4 Ethnic Populations .....	6-24
6.7 Economy .....	6-24
6.7.1 Income.....	6-25
6.7.2 Employment Trends.....	6-25
6.7.3 Occupations and Industries .....	6-26
6.8 Future Trends in Development .....	6-27
6.8.1 Wharton County .....	6-27
6.8.2 City of East Bernard.....	6-29
6.8.3 City of El Campo .....	6-29
6.8.4 City of Wharton .....	6-30
6.9 Laws and Ordinances .....	6-31
6.9.1 Federal.....	6-32
6.9.2 State and Regional.....	6-33
6.9.3 Wharton County .....	6-36
6.9.4 City of East Bernard.....	6-38
6.9.5 City of El Campo .....	6-39
6.9.6 City of Wharton .....	6-43

**Chapter 7. Hazard Mitigation Capabilities Assessment ..... 7-1**

7.1 Wharton County.....	7-1
7.1.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities .....	7-1
7.1.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities .....	7-2
7.1.3 Financial Capabilities.....	7-3
7.2 City of East Bernard.....	7-3
7.2.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities .....	7-3
7.2.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities .....	7-4
7.2.3 Financial Capabilities.....	7-5
7.3 City of El Campo .....	7-6
7.3.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities .....	7-6
7.3.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities .....	7-7
7.3.3 Financial Capabilities.....	7-8
7.4 City of Wharton .....	7-8
7.4.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities .....	7-8
7.4.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities .....	7-9
7.4.3 Financial Capabilities.....	7-10

**PART 2 RISK ASSESSMENT**

**Chapter 8. Expansive Soils ..... 8-1**

8.1 General Background .....	8-1
8.2 Hazard Profile .....	8-1
8.2.1 Past Events .....	8-1
8.2.2 Location .....	8-1

8.2.3	Frequency .....	8-1
8.2.4	Severity .....	8-1
8.2.5	Warning Time .....	8-2
8.3	Secondary Hazards.....	8-2
8.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	8-2
8.5	Exposure .....	8-2
8.5.1	Population .....	8-3
8.5.2	Property.....	8-3
8.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	8-3
8.5.4	Environment.....	8-3
8.6	Vulnerability .....	8-4
8.6.1	Population .....	8-4
8.6.2	Property.....	8-4
8.6.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	8-6
8.6.4	Environment.....	8-6
8.7	Future Trends in Development .....	8-6
8.8	Scenario.....	8-6
8.9	Issues.....	8-6
<b>Chapter 9.</b>	<b>Dam/Levee Failure .....</b>	<b>9-1</b>
9.1	General Background .....	9-1
9.1.1	Dams .....	9-1
9.1.2	Levees .....	9-5
9.1.3	Causes of Dam Failure .....	9-8
9.1.4	Causes of Levee Failure .....	9-8
9.1.5	Regulatory Oversight .....	9-9
9.2	Hazard Profile .....	9-12
9.2.1	Past Events .....	9-12
9.2.2	Location .....	9-13
9.2.3	Frequency.....	9-16
9.2.4	Severity .....	9-16
9.2.5	Warning Time .....	9-17
9.3	Secondary Hazards.....	9-17
9.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	9-17
9.5	Exposure and Vulnerability .....	9-17
9.5.1	Population .....	9-19
9.5.2	Property.....	9-19
9.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	9-20
9.5.4	Environment.....	9-20
9.6	Exposure .....	9-20
9.6.1	Population .....	9-21
9.6.2	Property.....	9-21
9.7	Future Trends in Development .....	9-22
9.8	Scenario.....	9-23
9.9	Issues.....	9-23
<b>Chapter 10.</b>	<b>Drought and Extreme Heat.....</b>	<b>10-1</b>
10.1	General Background .....	10-1
10.1.1	Drought .....	10-1
10.1.2	Extreme Heat.....	10-2
10.2	Hazard Profile .....	10-3
10.2.1	Past Events .....	10-3

10.2.2	Location .....	10-10
10.2.3	Frequency .....	10-18
10.2.4	Severity .....	10-18
10.2.5	Warning Time .....	10-19
10.3	Secondary Hazards.....	10-20
10.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	10-20
10.5	Exposure .....	10-21
10.6	Vulnerability .....	10-23
10.6.1	Population .....	10-23
10.6.2	Property .....	10-24
10.6.3	Critical Facilities .....	10-25
10.6.4	Environment.....	10-25
10.6.5	Economic Impact .....	10-26
10.7	Future Trends in Development .....	10-26
10.8	Scenario.....	10-26
10.9	Issues.....	10-26
<b>Chapter 11. Earthquake</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>11-1</b>
11.1	General Background .....	11-1
11.1.1	How Earthquakes Happen.....	11-1
11.1.2	Earthquake Classifications .....	11-2
11.1.3	Ground Motion.....	11-3
11.1.4	Effect of Soil Types .....	11-3
11.2	Hazard Profile .....	11-4
11.2.1	Past Events .....	11-4
11.2.2	Location .....	11-4
11.2.3	Frequency .....	11-8
11.2.4	Severity .....	11-8
11.2.5	Warning Time .....	11-12
11.3	Secondary Hazards.....	11-12
11.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	11-12
11.5	Exposure .....	11-12
11.5.1	Population .....	11-13
11.5.2	Property .....	11-13
11.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	11-13
11.5.4	Environment.....	11-13
11.6	Vulnerability .....	11-13
11.7	Future Trends in Development .....	11-14
11.8	Scenario.....	11-14
11.9	Issues.....	11-15
<b>Chapter 12. Flood.....</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>12-1</b>
12.1	General Background .....	12-1
12.1.1	Flood .....	12-1
12.1.2	Floodplain .....	12-5
12.1.3	Measuring Floods and Floodplains .....	12-5
12.1.4	Floodplain Ecosystems.....	12-5
12.1.5	Effects of Human Activities .....	12-5
12.1.6	Community Rating System .....	12-6
12.2	Hazard Profile .....	12-9
12.2.1	Past Events .....	12-9
12.2.2	Location .....	12-14

12.2.3	Frequency .....	12-19
12.2.4	Severity .....	12-19
12.2.5	Warning Time .....	12-24
12.3	Secondary Hazards.....	12-24
12.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	12-24
12.5	Exposure .....	12-24
12.5.1	Population .....	12-25
12.5.2	Property .....	12-25
12.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	12-29
12.5.4	Environment.....	12-31
12.6	Vulnerability .....	12-31
12.6.1	Population .....	12-31
12.6.2	Property .....	12-31
12.6.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	12-36
12.6.4	Environment.....	12-36
12.7	Future Trends in Development .....	12-36
12.8	Scenario.....	12-36
12.9	Issues.....	12-37
<b>Chapter 13.</b>	<b>Hurricanes and Tropical Storms.....</b>	<b>13-1</b>
13.1	General Background .....	13-1
13.1.1	Hurricanes and Tropical Storms.....	13-1
13.1.2	Hurricane and Tropical Storm Classifications .....	13-3
13.2	Hazard Profile .....	13-3
13.2.1	Past Events .....	13-3
13.2.2	Location .....	13-4
13.2.3	Frequency.....	13-6
13.2.4	Severity .....	13-6
13.2.5	Warning Time .....	13-7
13.3	Secondary Events.....	13-7
13.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	13-7
13.5	Exposure .....	13-7
13.6	Vulnerability .....	13-8
13.7	Future Trends in Development .....	13-12
13.8	Scenario.....	13-12
13.9	Issues.....	13-12
<b>Chapter 14.</b>	<b>Lightning, Hail, and Wind .....</b>	<b>14-1</b>
14.1	General Background .....	14-1
14.1.1	Lightning.....	14-3
14.1.2	Hail.....	14-5
14.1.3	Wind.....	14-9
14.2	Hazard Profile .....	14-13
14.2.1	Past Events .....	14-13
14.2.2	Location .....	14-22
14.2.3	Frequency.....	14-27
14.2.4	Severity .....	14-27
14.2.5	Warning Time .....	14-28
14.3	Secondary Hazards.....	14-28
14.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	14-28
14.5	Exposure .....	14-29
14.5.1	Population .....	14-29

14.5.2	Property .....	14-29
14.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	14-30
14.5.4	Environment.....	14-30
14.6	Vulnerability .....	14-30
14.6.1	Population .....	14-30
14.6.2	Property.....	14-31
14.6.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	14-35
14.6.4	Environment.....	14-35
14.7	Future Trends in Development .....	14-35
14.8	Scenario.....	14-35
14.9	Issues.....	14-35
<b>Chapter 15.</b>	<b>Tornado .....</b>	<b>15-1</b>
15.1	General Background .....	15-1
15.2	Hazard Profile .....	15-5
15.2.1	Past Events .....	15-5
15.2.2	Location .....	15-8
15.2.3	Frequency.....	15-12
15.2.4	Severity .....	15-12
15.2.5	Warning Time .....	15-12
15.3	Secondary Hazards.....	15-12
15.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	15-12
15.5	Exposure .....	15-12
15.5.1	Population .....	15-13
15.5.2	Property.....	15-13
15.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	15-13
15.5.4	Environment.....	15-13
15.6	Vulnerability .....	15-14
15.6.1	Population .....	15-14
15.6.2	Property.....	15-14
15.6.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	15-16
15.6.4	Environment.....	15-16
15.7	Future Trends in Development .....	15-16
15.8	Scenario.....	15-16
15.9	Issues.....	15-16
<b>Chapter 16.</b>	<b>Wildfire .....</b>	<b>16-1</b>
16.1	General Background .....	16-1
16.2	Hazard Profile .....	16-4
16.2.1	Past Events .....	16-4
16.2.2	Location .....	16-9
16.2.3	Frequency.....	16-19
16.2.4	Severity .....	16-19
16.2.5	Warning Time .....	16-19
16.3	Secondary Hazards.....	16-19
16.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	16-19
16.5	Exposure .....	16-20
16.5.1	Population .....	16-20
16.5.2	Property.....	16-20
16.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	16-23
16.5.4	Environment.....	16-24
16.6	Vulnerability .....	16-25



16.6.1	Population .....	16-25
16.6.2	Property .....	16-25
16.6.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	16-26
16.6.4	Environment.....	16-26
16.7	Future Trends in Development .....	16-26
16.8	Scenario.....	16-26
16.9	Issues.....	16-27
<b>Chapter 17. Winter Weather .....</b>		<b>17-1</b>
17.1	General Background .....	17-1
17.1.1	Extreme Cold .....	17-1
17.2	Hazard Profile .....	17-3
17.2.1	Past Events .....	17-3
17.2.2	Location .....	17-3
17.2.3	Frequency.....	17-4
17.2.4	Severity .....	17-4
17.2.5	Warning Time .....	17-4
17.3	Secondary Hazards.....	17-4
17.4	Climate Change Impacts .....	17-4
17.5	Exposure .....	17-4
17.5.1	Population .....	17-4
17.5.2	Property .....	17-5
17.5.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	17-5
17.5.4	Environment.....	17-5
17.6	Vulnerability .....	17-5
17.6.1	Population .....	17-6
17.6.2	Property.....	17-6
17.6.3	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.....	17-8
17.6.4	Environment.....	17-8
17.7	Future Trends in Development .....	17-8
17.8	Scenario.....	17-8
17.9	Issues.....	17-8
<b>Chapter 18. Planning Area Risk Ranking .....</b>		<b>18-1</b>
18.1	Probability of Occurrence .....	18-1
18.2	Impact .....	18-2
18.3	Risk Rating and Ranking .....	18-5
<b>PART 3 MITIGATION AND PLAN MAINTENANCE STRATEGY</b>		
<b>Chapter 19. Area-Wide Mitigation Actions and Implementation .....</b>		<b>19-1</b>
19.1	Recommended Mitigation Actions .....	19-1
19.2	Benefit/Cost Review and Prioritization .....	19-3
<b>Chapter 20. Plan Adoption and Maintenance.....</b>		<b>20-1</b>
20.1	Plan Adoption .....	20-1
20.2	Plan Maintenance Strategy.....	20-1
20.2.1	Plan Implementation .....	20-1
20.2.2	Steering Committee.....	20-2
20.2.3	Plan Maintenance Schedule .....	20-3
20.2.4	Annual Progress Report .....	20-3
20.2.5	Plan Update .....	20-4
20.2.6	Continuing Public Involvement .....	20-4

20.2.7 Incorporation into Other Planning Mechanisms .....20-4

---

**LIST OF TABLES**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page No.</i>
	Table ES-1. Recommended Mitigation Actions .....	ES-5
	Table 2-1. Hazards Evaluated in the 2011-2016 TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.....	2-1
	Table 2-2. Wharton County Project Implementation Worksheet (Update of 2011-2016 TCRFC Plan Projects) .....	2-3
	Table 3-1. County and City Planning Partners .....	3-1
	Table 3-2. Steering Committee Members .....	3-4
	Table 3-3. Plan Development Milestones .....	3-11
	Table 6-1. Federal Disaster Declarations in Wharton County .....	6-3
	Table 6-2. Wharton County Temperature Summaries Columbus Station .....	6-4
	Table 6-3. Critical Facilities in the Planning Area.....	6-12
	Table 6-4. Critical Infrastructure in the Planning Area.....	6-12
	Table 6-5. Wharton County Demographic and Social Characteristics (2013).....	6-21
	Table 6-6. Wharton County Population .....	6-22
	Table 6-7. Wharton County Economic Characteristics.....	6-25
	Table 6-8. Present Land Use in Planning Area.....	6-28
	Table 7-1. Wharton County Regulatory Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-1
	Table 7-2. Wharton County Administrative/Technical Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-2
	Table 7-3. Wharton County Financial Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-3
	Table 7-4. City of East Bernard Regulatory Mitigation Capabilities Matrix.....	7-4
	Table 7-5. City of East Bernard Administrative/Technical Mitigation Capabilities Matrix.....	7-5
	Table 7-6. City of East Bernard Financial Mitigation Capabilities Matrix.....	7-5
	Table 7-7. City of El Campo Regulatory Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-6
	Table 7-8. City of El Campo Administrative/Technical Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-7
	Table 7-9. City of El Campo Financial Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-8
	Table 7-10. City of Wharton Regulatory Mitigation Capabilities Matrix.....	7-8
	Table 7-11. City of Wharton Administrative/Technical Mitigation Capabilities Matrix.....	7-9
	Table 7-12. City of Wharton Financial Mitigation Capabilities Matrix .....	7-10
	Table 8-1 Exposed Structures and Population .....	8-3
	Table 8-2 Most Vulnerable Population.....	8-4
	Table 8-3. Loss Estimates for Expansive Soils.....	8-5
	Table 9-1. Dam Counts and Exemptions .....	9-10
	Table 9-2. USACE Hazard Potential Classification .....	9-16
	Table 9-3. TCEQ Hazard Potential Classification .....	9-16
	Table 9-4. Wharton County and Participating Communities Dam Extents .....	9-18
	Table 9-5. Exposed Structures and Population .....	9-20
	Table 9-6. Vulnerable Population .....	9-21
	Table 9-7. Loss Estimates for Dam Event .....	9-21
	Table 10-1. Temperature Data from Pierce 1 E Weather Station .....	10-10
	Table 10-2. Historic Drought Events in Wharton County (1996-2014) .....	10-17
	Table 10-3 Exposed Structures and Population .....	10-21
	Table 10-4 Most Vulnerable Population.....	10-23
	Table 10-5. Loss Estimates for Drought Events .....	10-24
	Table 11-1. Mercalli Scale and Peak Ground Acceleration Comparison .....	11-3
	Table 11-2. NEHRP Soil Classification System.....	11-4
	Table 12-1. Historic Flood Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1996-2015)....	12-9
	Table 12-2. Acreage in the 100-Year and 500-Year Floodplain by Jurisdiction .....	12-14
	Table 12-3. Extent Scale – Water Depth.....	12-19

---

Table 12-4. Present Land Use in the 100-Year Floodplain.....	12-25
Table 12-5. Present Land Use in the 500-Year Floodplain.....	12-26
Table 12-6. Structures and Population in the 100-Year Floodplain.....	12-27
Table 12-7. Structures and Population in the 500-Year Floodplain.....	12-27
Table 12-8. Value of Structures in 100-Year Floodplain.....	12-28
Table 12-9. Value of Structures in 500-Year Floodplain.....	12-28
Table 12-10. Critical Facilities and Infrastructure in the 100-Year Floodplain.....	12-29
Table 12-11. Critical Facilities and Infrastructure in the 500-Year Floodplain.....	12-30
Table 12-12. Loss Estimates for the 100-Year Flood Event.....	12-32
Table 12-13. Loss Estimates for the 500-Year Flood Event.....	12-32
Table 12-14. National Flood Insurance Program Statistics .....	12-33
Table 13-1. Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale .....	13-3
Table 13-2 Exposed Structures and Population .....	13-8
Table 13-3 Most Vulnerable Population.....	13-8
Table 13-4. Loss Estimates for Hurricane Event .....	13-9
Table 14-1. National Weather Service Hail Severity.....	14-7
Table 14-2. Historic Lightning Events in Wharton County (1996-2014).....	14-13
Table 14-3. Historic Hail Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1960-2014) ....	14-16
Table 14-4. Wind Power Class and Speed.....	14-18
Table 14-5. Historic Wind-Related Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1950-2014) .....	14-21
Table 14-6 Exposed Structures and Population .....	14-30
Table 14-7 Most Vulnerable Population.....	14-31
Table 14-8. Loss Estimates for Hail Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities .....	14-31
Table 14-9. Loss Estimates for Lightning Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities	14-32
Table 14-10. Loss Estimates for Wind Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities ....	14-32
Table 15-1. Enhanced Fujita Scale Damage Indicators .....	15-2
Table 15-2. The Fujita Scale and Enhanced Fujita Scale.....	15-2
Table 15-3. Historic Tornado Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1950-2014)	15-5
Table 15-4 Exposed Structures and Population .....	15-13
Table 15-5 Most Vulnerable Population.....	15-14
Table 15-6. Loss Estimates for Tornado Events .....	15-15
Table 16-1. Fire Protection Services in Wharton County and Participating Communities .....	16-2
Table 16-2. Vegetation Classes in Wharton County and Participating Communities .....	16-2
Table 16-3. Historic Wildfire Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities (50+ Acres) (1980-2014).....	16-4
Table 16-4. Population within Wildfire Risk Areas.....	16-20
Table 16-5. Exposure and Value of Structures in Very Low Wildfire Risk Areas.....	16-21
Table 16-6. Exposure and Value of Structures in Low Wildfire Risk Areas.....	16-21
Table 16-7. Exposure and Value of Structures in Moderate Wildfire Risk Areas.....	16-22
Table 16-8. Exposure and Value of Structures in High Wildfire Risk Areas .....	16-22
Table 16-9. Exposure and Value of Structures in Very High Wildfire Risk Areas .....	16-23
Table 16-10. Wildfire Risk Areas in Present Land Coverage for Wharton County .....	16-23
Table 16-11. Critical Facilities and Infrastructure per Wildfire Risk Class.....	16-24
Table 16-12. Loss Estimates for Wildfire Events .....	16-25
Table 17-1. Temperature Data from the Pierce 1E Station .....	17-2
Table 17-2. Historic Winter Weather Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1996-2014).....	17-3
Table 17-3 Exposed Structures and Population .....	17-5
Table 17-4 Most Vulnerable Population.....	17-6
Table 17-5. Loss Estimates for Winter Storm Events.....	17-7

Table 18-1. Hazard Probability of Occurrence .....18-1  
Table 18-2. Impact on People from Hazards .....18-3  
Table 18-3. Impact on Property from Hazards .....18-3  
Table 18-4. Impact on Economy from Hazards .....18-4  
Table 18-5. Hazard Risk Ranking Calculations.....18-5  
Table 18-6. Hazard Risk Summary.....18-6  
Table 19-1. Mitigation Actions Developed to Address Hazards .....19-5  
Table 19-2. Recommended Mitigation Actions .....19-9  
Table 20-1. Incorporation of Mitigation Activities.....20-6

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page No.</i>
Figure 3-1.	Wharton County Planning Area and Participating Communities.....	3-3
Figure 3-2.	Sample Page from Questionnaire Distributed to the Public.....	3-8
Figure 3-3.	Steering Committee Meeting August 11, 2015.....	3-9
Figure 6-1.	Location of the Wharton County Planning Area within the State of Texas.....	6-1
Figure 6-2.	Wharton Station Monthly Temperature Data (5/1/1902 – 3/30/2013).....	6-4
Figure 6-3.	Annual Average Maximum Temperature (1981-2010).....	6-5
Figure 6-4.	Annual Average Minimum Temperature (1981-2010).....	6-6
Figure 6-5.	Average Monthly Precipitation (1968-1995).....	6-7
Figure 6-6.	Geographic Distribution of Annual Average Precipitation (1981-2010).....	6-8
Figure 6-7.	Natural Regions of Texas and Wharton County.....	6-10
Figure 6-8.	Critical Facilities in Wharton County.....	6-13
Figure 6-9.	Critical Infrastructure in Wharton County.....	6-14
Figure 6-10.	Critical Facilities in the City of East Bernard.....	6-15
Figure 6-11.	Critical Infrastructure in the City of East Bernard.....	6-16
Figure 6-12.	Critical Facilities in the City of El Campo.....	6-17
Figure 6-13.	Critical Infrastructure in the City of El Campo.....	6-18
Figure 6-14.	Critical Facilities in the City of Wharton.....	6-19
Figure 6-15.	Critical Infrastructure in the City of Wharton.....	6-20
Figure 6-16.	State of Texas and Wharton County Population Growth.....	6-22
Figure 6-17.	Wharton County Age Distribution.....	6-23
Figure 6-18.	Wharton County Ethnic Distribution.....	6-24
Figure 6-19.	Wharton County Unemployment Rate (1990-2015).....	6-26
Figure 6-20.	Percent of Total Employment by Industry in Wharton County.....	6-27
Figure 6-21.	Residential Building Permits in Unincorporated Wharton County.....	6-29
Figure 6-22.	Population of City of East Bernard.....	6-29
Figure 6-23.	Population of City of El Campo.....	6-30
Figure 6-24.	Residential Building Permits in the City of El Campo.....	6-30
Figure 6-25.	Population of City of Wharton.....	6-31
Figure 6-26.	Residential Building Permits in the City of Wharton.....	6-31
Figure 8-1.	Expansive Soil Regions.....	8-2
Figure 9-1.	TCEQ Dam Definition.....	9-2
Figure 9-2.	Primary Purpose/Benefit of U.S. Dams.....	9-3
Figure 9-3.	Locations of Dams in Wharton County and Participating Communities.....	9-4
Figure 9-4.	U.S. Levee Systems.....	9-6
Figure 9-5.	Counties in Texas with Levees.....	9-7
Figure 9-6.	Texas County Population Exemptions for Dams.....	9-11
Figure 9-7.	Lake Travis Water Surface Elevation During the May 2015 Precipitation Event.....	9-12
Figure 9-8.	Wharton County and Participating Communities Dam Potential Inundation Areas and Population.....	9-14
Figure 9-9.	Levees in Wharton County.....	9-15
Figure 10-1.	Heat Index Table.....	10-2
Figure 10-2.	U.S. Drought Monitor, March 27, 2012.....	10-5
Figure 10-3.	U.S. Drought Monitor, March 17, 2015.....	10-6
Figure 10-4.	U.S. Drought Monitor, June 16, 2015.....	10-7
Figure 10-5.	Crop Moisture Index (Week Ending March 28, 2015).....	10-11
Figure 10-6.	Palmer Z Index Short-Term Drought Conditions (March 2015).....	10-12
Figure 10-7.	Palmer Drought Severity Index (March 2015).....	10-13

Figure 10-8. Palmer Drought Severity Index (May 2015).....10-14

Figure 10-9. Palmer Hydrological Drought Index Long-Term Hydrologic Conditions (March 2015). 10-15

Figure 10-10. 24-Month Standardized Precipitation Index (through February 2015) ..... 10-16

Figure 10-11. USDA Census of Agriculture Wharton County Profile 2012 ..... 10-22

Figure 1-1. Texas Earthquakes (1847-2015)..... 11-6

Figure 1-2. Probabilistic Earthquake Hazard Map for the U.S. .... 11-7

Figure 1-3. Peak Ground Acceleration (10% Probability of Exceedance in 50-Year Map of Peak Ground Acceleration)..... 11-10

Figure 1-4. 500-Year Probability Event in Wharton County ..... 11-11

Figure 12-1. Number of Flash Floods in Texas per County (1986-1999)..... 12-3

Figure 12-2. Number of Storm Centers by County..... 12-4

Figure 12-3. CRS Communities by Class Nationwide as of May 2014..... 12-6

Figure 12-4. CRS Communities by Class as of May 2014 ..... 12-8

Figure 12-5. Colorado River Flow Near the City of Wharton During the May 2015 Flood Event ..... 12-12

Figure 12-6. Colorado River Flood Stage Near the City of Wharton During the May 2015 Flood Event 12-12

Figure 12-7. Flash Flood Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities..... 12-13

Figure 12-8. Special Flood Hazard Areas in Wharton County and Participating Communities..... 12-15

Figure 12-9. Special Flood Hazard Areas in the City of East Bernard ..... 12-16

Figure 12-10. Special Flood Hazard Areas in the City of El Campo ..... 12-17

Figure 12-11. Special Flood Hazard Areas in the City of Wharton ..... 12-18

Figure 12-12. Flood Depths in Wharton County and Participating Communities..... 12-20

Figure 12-13. Flood Depths in the City of East Bernard ..... 12-21

Figure 12-14. Flood Depths in the City of El Campo ..... 12-22

Figure 12-15. Flood Depths in the City of Wharton ..... 12-23

Figure 12-16. Repetitive Loss Properties in Wharton County ..... 12-35

Figure 13-1. Historical Hurricane Paths Affecting Wharton County ..... 13-2

Figure 13-2. Historical Tropical Storms and Hurricanes Affecting Wharton County ..... 13-5

Figure 13-3. Probability of Named Tropical Storm Event..... 13-6

Figure 13-4. 100-Year Probabilistic Peak Wind Gusts for Wharton County..... 13-11

Figure 14-1. Thunderstorm Life Cycle ..... 14-2

Figure 14-2. Average Annual National Lightning Density ..... 14-4

Figure 14-3. National Hail Paths..... 14-6

Figure 14-4. National Hail Days per Year ..... 14-8

Figure 14-5. National Wind Zones ..... 14-10

Figure 14-6. National High Wind Paths..... 14-11

Figure 14-7. National Annual High Wind Days ..... 14-12

Figure 14-8. Lightning Fatalities in the U.S. (1959-2013) ..... 14-14

Figure 14-9. Texas Wind Power ..... 14-20

Figure 14-10. Lightning Events in Wharton County (1993-2014) ..... 14-24

Figure 14-11. Hail Events in Wharton County (1955-2014) ..... 14-25

Figure 14-12. Damaging Wind Events in Wharton County (1955-2014)..... 14-26

Figure 14-13. Severe Weather Probabilities in Warmer Climates ..... 14-29

Figure 15-1. Annual Average Number of Tornadoes in the U.S. (1991-2010) ..... 15-3

Figure 15-2. Total Annual Threat of Tornado Events in the U.S. (1980-1999)..... 15-4

Figure 15-3. Tornado Paths in the U.S. (1950-2014)..... 15-9

Figure 15-4. Tornado Activity in the U.S. (1950-2014) ..... 15-10

Figure 15-5. Tornado Events in Wharton County (1950-2014)..... 15-11

Figure 16-1. Vegetation Types in Wharton County..... 16-3

Figure 16-2. Wildfires in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1980-2014) ..... 16-5

Figure 16-3. Wildfires in the City of East Bernard (1980-2014)..... 16-6

Figure 16-4. Wildfires in the City of El Campo (1980-2014)..... 16-7  
Figure 16-5. Wildfires in the City of Wharton (1980-2014)..... 16-8  
Figure 16-6. Wharton County Wildfire Ignitions Distribution and Participating Communities..... 16-10  
Figure 16-7. Wharton County Wildland Urban Interface and Participating Communities..... 16-11  
Figure 16-8. Wharton County Wildland Urban Interface Response Index and Participating Communities  
..... 16-12  
Figure 16-9. Wharton County Wildfire Values Response Index and Participating Communities..... 16-13  
Figure 16-10. Wharton County Wildfire Community Protection Zones and Participating Communities. 16-  
14  
Figure 16-11. Wharton County Wildfire Hazard Potential ..... 16-15  
Figure 16-12. City of East Bernard Wildfire Hazard Potential ..... 16-16  
Figure 16-13. City of El Campo Wildfire Hazard Potential ..... 16-17  
Figure 16-14. City of Wharton Wildfire Hazard Potential ..... 16-18  
Figure 17-1. National Weather Service Wind Chill Chart ..... 17-2  
Figure 19-1. Blank Mitigation Action Worksheet ..... 19-2  
Figure 19-2. Example Benefit/Cost Review and Prioritization Worksheet ..... 19-4

## LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix A. Acronyms and Definitions
- Appendix B. Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool
- Appendix C. Public Outreach
- Appendix D. Plan Adoption Resolutions from Planning Partners
- Appendix E. Example Progress Report



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CONTACTS

## ***Wharton County***

Mr. Andy Kirkland  
Emergency Management Coordinator  
Phone: (979) 532-4612  
Email: andy.kirkland@co.wharton.tx.us

## ***Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition***

Mr. Mickey Reynolds  
Executive Director  
Phone: (979) 533-8683  
Email: TCRFC@att.net

## ***Consultants***

JSW & Associates, Jeff S. Ward  
Halff Associates, Cindy J. Engelhardt  
Tetra Tech, Inc., Laura D. Johnston

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) is federal legislation that requires proactive, pre-disaster planning as a prerequisite for some funding available under the Robert T. Stafford Act. The DMA encourages state and local authorities to work together on pre-disaster planning. The planning network called for by the DMA helps local governments articulate accurate needs for mitigation, resulting in faster allocation of funding and more cost-effective risk reduction projects.

Hazard mitigation is the use of long- and short-term strategies to reduce or alleviate the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage that can result from a disaster. It involves strategies such as planning, policy changes, programs, projects, and other activities that can mitigate the impacts of hazards. It is impossible to predict exactly when and where disasters will occur or the extent to which they will impact an area. However, with careful planning and collaboration among public agencies, stakeholders, and citizens, it is possible to minimize losses that disasters can cause. The responsibility for hazard mitigation lies with many, including private property owners; business and industry; and local, state, and federal government.

Wharton County and a partnership of local governments within the county have developed and maintained a hazard mitigation plan to reduce risks from natural disasters and to comply with the DMA.

### PLAN UPDATE

Federal regulations require monitoring, evaluation, and updating of hazard mitigation plans. An update provides an opportunity to reevaluate recommendations, monitor the impacts of implemented actions, and evaluate whether there is a need to change the focus of mitigation strategies. A jurisdiction covered by a hazard mitigation plan that has expired is no longer in compliance with the DMA.

Wharton County and its communities participated in previous hazard mitigation plans as part of the Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition (TCRFC). The TCRFC is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization formed in June 2001 by the cities and counties of the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) in response to flood devastation requiring more coordinated damage prevention efforts. In 2004, the TCRFC developed a Hazard Mitigation Action Plan entitled *Creating a Disaster Resistant Lower Colorado River Basin*, which was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2004. In 2011, TCRFC completed the *TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016* as a regional partnership of 15 counties (including Wharton County) and 63 jurisdictions. The 2011-2016 update was completed with technical support from the LCRA and the outside consultant team of H2O Partners, Inc., and PBS&J.

In accordance with recent FEMA guidance that requires individual hazard mitigation plans for each county and Texas Division of Emergency Management's 2010 "two-county maximum" policy, this update to the *TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016* was developed to be specific to Wharton County and its participating communities: the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton.

The development of this hazard mitigation plan update consisted of the following phases:

- **Phase 1: Organize and Review**—A planning team was assembled to provide technical support for the plan update, consisting of TCRFC representatives, key county and city staff, and a team of technical consultants. The first step in developing the plan update was to re-establish a planning partnership. Planning partners participating in the update were the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton. A Steering Committee was assembled to oversee the plan update, consisting of planning partner staff and community representatives from the planning area. Coordination with other county, state, and federal agencies involved in hazard mitigation occurred throughout the plan update process. This phase included a comprehensive review of the previous *TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016*, and existing programs that may support or enhance hazard mitigation actions.

- **Phase 2: Update the Risk Assessment**—Risk assessment is the process of measuring the potential loss of life, personal injury, economic impact, and property damage resulting from natural hazards. This process assesses the vulnerability of people, buildings, and infrastructure to natural hazards. All facets of the risk assessment of the plan were re-visited by the planning team and updated with the best available data and technology. The work included the following:
  - Hazard identification and profiling
  - Assessment of the impact of hazards on physical, social, and economic assets
  - Vulnerability identification
  - Estimation of the cost of potential damage
- **Phase 3: Engage the Public**—A public involvement strategy agreed upon by the Steering Committee was implemented by the planning team. All meetings were open to the public. Meetings were held to present the risk assessment as well as the draft plan. The public was encourage to participate through a county-specific hazard mitigation survey and the county website that included information on the plan.
- **Phase 4: Assemble the Updated Plan**—The planning team and Steering Committee assembled key information into a document to meet the DMA requirements for all planning partners.
- **Phase 5: Adopt/Implement the Plan**—Once pre-adoption approval has been granted by the Texas Division of Emergency Management and FEMA Region VI, the final adoption phase will begin. Each planning partner will individually adopt the updated plan. The plan maintenance process includes a schedule for monitoring and evaluating the plan’s progress annually and producing a plan revision every 5 years. Throughout the life of this plan, a representative of the original Steering Committee will be available to provide consistent guidance and oversight.

## MITIGATION GUIDING PRINCIPLE, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The guiding principle for the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update is as follows:

- To reduce or eliminate the long-term risks to loss of life and property damage in Wharton County from the full range of natural disasters.

The following plan goals and objectives were determined by the Steering Committee:

- **Goal 1:** Protect public health and safety.
  - **Objective 1.1:** Advise the public about health and safety precautions to guard against injury and loss of life from hazards.
  - **Objective 1.2:** Maximize the utilization of the latest technology to provide adequate warning, communication, and mitigation of hazard events.
  - **Objective 1.3:** Reduce the damage to, and enhance protection of, dangerous areas during hazard events.
  - **Objective 1.4:** Protect critical facilities and services.
- **Goal 2:** Protect existing and new properties.
  - **Objective 2.1:** Reduce repetitive losses to the National Flood Insurance Program.
  - **Objective 2.2:** Use the most cost-effective approaches to protect existing buildings and public infrastructure from hazards.
  - **Objective 2.3:** Enact and enforce regulatory measures to ensure that development will not put people in harm’s way or increase threats to existing properties.

- **Goal 3:** Increase public understanding, support, and demand for hazard mitigation.
  - **Objective 3.1:** Heighten public awareness of the full range of natural hazards they face.
  - **Objective 3.2:** Educate the public on actions they can take to prevent or reduce the loss of life or property from natural hazards.
  - **Objective 3.3:** Publicize and encourage the adoption of appropriate hazard mitigation measures.
- **Goal 4:** Build and support local capacity and commitment to continuously become less vulnerable to hazards.
  - **Objective 4.1:** Build and support local partnerships to continuously become less vulnerable to hazards.
  - **Objective 4.2:** Build a cadre of committed volunteers to safeguard the community before, during, and after a disaster.
  - **Objective 4.3:** Build hazard mitigation concerns into planning and budgeting processes.
- **Goal 5:** Promote growth in a sustainable manner.
  - **Objective 5.1:** Incorporate hazard mitigation into the long-range planning and development activities.
  - **Objective 5.2:** Promote beneficial uses of hazardous areas while expanding open space and recreational opportunities.
  - **Objective 5.3:** Utilize regulatory approaches to prevent creation of future hazards to life and property.
- **Goal 6:** Maximize the resources for investment in hazard mitigation.
  - **Objective 6.1:** Maximize the use of outside sources of funding.
  - **Objective 6.2:** Maximize participation of property owners in protecting their properties.
  - **Objective 6.3:** Maximize insurance coverage to provide financial protection against hazard events.
  - **Objective 6.4:** Prioritize mitigation projects, based on cost-effectiveness and starting with those sites facing the greatest threat to life, health and property.

## IDENTIFIED HAZARDS OF CONCERN

For this plan, the Steering Committee considered the full range of natural hazards that could impact the planning area and then listed hazards that present the greatest concern to the county and participating cities. The process incorporated review of state and local hazard planning documents, as well as information on the frequency, magnitude, and costs associated with hazards that have impacted or could impact the planning area. Anecdotal information regarding natural hazards and the perceived vulnerability of the planning area's assets to hazards was also included. Based on the review, this plan addresses the following natural hazards of concern:

- |                     |                                |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Dam/Levee Failure | • Flood                        |
| • Drought           | • Hail                         |
| • Expansive Soils   | • Hurricane and Tropical Storm |
| • Extreme Heat      | • Lightning                    |
| • Earthquake        | • Tornado                      |

- Wildfire
- Wind
- Winter Weather

## **MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Mitigation actions presented in this plan update are activities designed to reduce or eliminate losses resulting from natural hazards. The update process resulted in the identification of 51 mitigation actions targeted for implementation by individual planning partners as listed in Table ES-1. The Steering Committee ranked the mitigation actions in order of priority, with 1 being the highest priority. The highest priority mitigation actions are shown in red on the table, medium priority actions are shown in yellow and low priority actions are shown in green.

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
<b>WHARTON COUNTY</b>										
1	Install bridge and culvert drainage improvements throughout the County	Install larger drain improvements throughout the county. During flood and hurricane events the streams overflow. There are areas that do not pass the required 25-year flow required for emergency access during flood events.	1	SIP	G2, G6	Emergency Management	>\$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	60	High
2	Update and adopt a new Wharton County Flood Insurance Study and FIRM	Update and adopt a new Flood Insurance Study and FIRM. This would prevent new properties from developing on the floodway.	2	LPR EAP	G2	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	24	High
3	Adopt "Higher Standard" Riverine Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and Standards	This would result in a discount on insurance for new and existing properties; and mitigation damages for both new/existing buildings.	9	LPR	G2	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	High

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
4	Create and Implement Drought and Expansive Soils Plan	Create and implement a Water Conservation/Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan to address and mitigate the different degrees of drought, water shortages, and extreme heat as well as expansive soils issues on county roads with the use of calcium soil stabilizers techniques for example, and foundations with the management of surface drainage and the planting of vegetation measures. This will make a durable permanent roadway layer and minimize damage from expansive soil issues.	12	LPR	G3	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds State/Federal grants	24	Medium
5	Establish Countywide Bench Mark Network	Subdivision ordinance requires developers to establish a permanent survey monument in each new subdivision.	10	LPR	G2	Floodplain Management	< \$10,000	County funds	48	Medium
6	Provide support to the TCRFC and San Bernard River in flood reduction projects	Flood reduction projects should be identified in advance to prevent flood damage and loss of lives.	5	SIP	G2	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds	12	High
7	Join FEMA's CRS program	Complete the initial steps to join FEMA's CRS and reduce cost of insurance for new and existing buildings. It is better to protect existing properties through the development of CRS activities.	11	LPR EAP	G2, G3	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	12	Medium



**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
8	Create a Wharton Disaster Response Team	Having a disaster response team in place that can respond quickly to a natural or man-caused event would prevent damage to existing buildings.	6	EAP	G4, G6	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	Medium
9	Implement a Wharton County Flood Warning System	Wharton County experience flooding at low-water crossings which can lead to injuries and even fatalities.	8	SIP	G2, G6	Floodplain Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	36	Medium
10	Become a NWS Storm Ready community	Complete the steps to become a NWS Storm Ready community. Storm Ready communities are better prepared to protect life and property from natural hazard events.	7	LPR	G1, G2, G3, G4, G6	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	Medium
11	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities to provide back-up power from hazard events of extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricane/tropical storms, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	3	SIP	G1, G2	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	36	High
12	Map expansive soils in unincorporated county	Identify and map areas that are at high levels of expansive soils in Wharton County. Create a manual for emergency officials and building contractors.	15	LPR	G4	County Agriculture Agent	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds	48	Low

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
13	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	The County will purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios and distribute to citizens to be aware of the weather. County offices and schools already have them.	13	SIP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	12	Medium
14	Provide training for CFM and CEM	Better trained personnel result in better informed residents in protection structures from flooding and other severe weather events.	4	EAP	G4, G5	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	Medium
15	Educate homeowners on hazards	Educate homeowners of how to mitigation their homes from these hazards on county website and public forums.	14	EAP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	36	Medium
<b>CITY OF EAST BERNARD</b>										
1	Create water conservation education materials	Work with W.C.I.D. #2 to create water conservation materials to mail with utility bills and to post on our website. Water conservation would also include measures to reduce contracting soil problems around foundations.	5	EAP	G3	City Secretary	< \$10,000	City funds	36	Medium
2	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	The City will purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios and distribute to citizens to be aware of the weather.	10	SIP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City funds	12	Medium
3	Organize outreach program for vulnerable populations	We will use several media outlets to promote accessible heating and cooling centers and education of flood and hurricane hazards to vulnerable populations.	4	EAP	G3, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	I.T.	12	Medium

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
4	Prepare and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance	Prepare and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance	8	LPR	G2, G4	City Secretary	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds	24	Medium
5	Update emergency response plan	Form a committee to update the emergency response plan for emergency officials and personnel to use.	3	LPR	G1, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City and County funds	24	Medium
6	Educate homeowners on mitigating hazards around their home	Work with local chamber to set up a seminar for homeowners to attend concerning natural hazard mitigation techniques for their homes.	6	EAP	G3	City Secretary	< \$10,000	City funds	60	Medium
7	Improve drainage throughout city	Use a Strategic Plan to prioritize drainage areas and then begin construction with the most sever areas. Complete east and west sections of the drainage plan for East Bernard is in progress as identified in the 2011 plan.	7	SIP	G2	Public Works	>\$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants		High
8	Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan	Create and implement a Water Conservation/Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan to address and mitigate the different degrees of drought, water shortages, and extreme heat as well as expansive soils issues on county roads with the use of calcium soil stabilizers techniques for example, and foundations with the management of surface drainage and the planting of vegetation measures.	1	LPR	G3	Administration	< \$10,000	City funds, State/Federal grants		Medium

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
9	Install emergency generators at critical facilities	Install emergency generators at key critical facilities to provide back-up power from hazard events of extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricane/tropical storms, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	2	LPR	G1	Administration	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants		Medium
10	Identify and map areas that are at high risk of expansive soils	Identify and map expansive soil hazard areas to educate residents and the city about unexpected risks.	9	LPR	G4	City Secretary	< \$10,000	State/Federal grants		Low
<b>CITY OF EL CAMPO</b>										
1	Drought and expansive soils contingency plan	Develop and implement a drought and expansive soils contingency plan that addresses mitigation measures for drought, extreme heat, and expansive soils.	3	LPR EAP	G1, G3, G4, G6	Utility Department	< \$10,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	36	High
2	Provide education on water conservation techniques	Provide water conservation measures low-flow plumbing, etc., as mail inserts with utility bills and discuss with local media outlets.	6	EAP	G3, G4, G6	Utility Department	< \$10,000	Utility Revenue	36	High
3	Construct regional detention ponds	Construct regional detention ponds and channel widening improvements for Tres Palacios, Blue Creek, East Mustang Creek.	4	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	>\$100,000	State/Federal grants	24	High
4	Adopt freeboard ordinance	Adopt free board ordinance to reduce flood risk of structures.	1	LPR	G2, G4	Building Department	< \$10,000	N/A	12	High

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
5	Adopt IBC and IRC	Adopt 2015 IBC and IRC that go to mitigate identified hazards, such as tornado, high wind, and impact resistant materials (windows, doors, roof bracings); dry-proofing public buildings for flooding; upgrading to higher standard insulation for extreme heat and winter storms; installing lighting rods and grounding systems on public buildings; retrofitting to low-flow plumbing and replacing landscaping with drought and fire resistant plants; stricter codes for hail and fire resistant roofing and siding; implementing higher standards for foundations, and upgrading requirements for construction beams, brackets and foundations to mitigation impacts of earthquake and expansive soils.	5	LPR	G1, G2, G4	Building Department	< \$10,000	City funds	12	High
6	Install Blackboard Connect City-to-Resident Notification System	Install Blackboard emergency notification system. Residents will be able sign-up for the notification service from the city's website. This notification system will communicate specific information about hazard events including drought stage conservation measures.	8	LPR EAP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	Information Technology	12	High

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
7	GIS mapping	Use GIS mapping to overlay properties with known hazards of expansive soils, flood, and wildland interface areas. Then notify residents of at-risk structures to help residence mitigate the hazards around their property.	2	LPR	G2	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	Information Technology	36	High
8	Outreach to vulnerable populations and cooling centers	City employees providing outreach to residents on functional and access needs lists concerning hazards and availability to cooling centers during extreme heat periods.	7	EAP	G1, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	Salary	12	High
9	Install larger storm drainage on Pecan Street	Install larger storm drainage on Pecan street to prevent localized flooding.	10	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
10	Install larger storm drainage at Town and Country Drive	Install larger storm drainage at Town and Country Drive area to mitigate the repetitive flooding in the area.	9	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
11	Implement Master Drainage Plan (7 projects)	Seven areas of the city are known to be subject to flood damages because of inadequate storm drainage. Install larger storm drainage and reduce flood damage.	11	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	>\$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	36	Medium
12	Educate homeowners on the hazards	Conduct homeowner awareness programs on how to mitigation their homes from hazards on city website and public forums.	12	EAP	G3, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City Funds	36	Medium

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
<b>CITY OF WHARTON</b>										
1	Clean and repair storm drains routinely	Citywide cleaning and repairing of storm drains.	4	SIP	G1	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	Public Works Funds	24	High
2	Increase freeboard requirements for permitting structures in the floodplain	Adopt ordinance to increase freeboard requirement in 100-year floodplain. This action will result in safer structures and, thus, fewer flood damages.	12	SIP	G2	Floodplain Management	< \$10,000	City Funds	12	High
3	Implement a comprehensive watershed ordinance for new development	The city has experienced natural hazards such as floods and hurricanes.	11	LPR	G2, G6	Floodplain Management	< \$10,000	Watershed Funds	24	High
4	Acquire, reuse and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood-prone areas	Acquire, reuse and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood prone areas.	7	LPR	G2, G4, G5, G6	City Public Works	>\$100,000	FMA, PDM, HMGP	36	High
5	Zero Discharge Policy	Implement a zero discharge policy for stormwater in subdivision platting.	10	LPR	G5, G6	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	12	Medium
6	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios for critical facilities.	14	SIP	G1	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	24	Medium
7	Educate homeowners on the hazards	Conduct homeowner awareness programs on how to mitigation their homes from hazards on city website and public forums.	13	EAP	G3, G4	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	36	Medium

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
8	Minimize the impact of flooding by installing berms and levees where appropriate	Install berms and levees where appropriate. This action will protect existing properties from flooding and also help to reduce the cost of flood insurance. In addition the action will increase development and prevent damage to new buildings.	1	SIP	G2, G4, G6	Floodplain Administrator	>\$100,000	City Funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
9	Design flood-use stream restoration/channelization projects to ensure adequate drainage/diversion of stormwater	Design and construct flood-use stream restoration/ channelization projects. Flood protection for existing structures and also encouragement for the development of new structures.	2	SIP	G2, G6	Planning Dept.	>\$100,000	City Funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
10	Establish a reserve fund for emergency and public mitigation measures	This reserve fund could be used to match federal funds on mitigation projects addressing the hazards of drought, expansive soils, extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricanes, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	6	LPR EAP	G2, G3, G4, G5	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	60	High
11	Strengthen and harden at-risk critical facilities	Strengthen and harden current critical facilities and also set policy standards for mitigation against damage for new critical facilities.	5	LPR	G1, G6	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City Funds	48	High



**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
12	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures	Mitigate the repetitive loss properties in the city by acquisition and elevation projects. The acquisition projects land would then be deed restricted as open space for perpetuity.	8	SIP NSP	G5, G6	Emergency Management	>\$100,000	FMA, PDM, HMGP	36	High
13	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities	The city experiences blackouts or power outages during storm events such as Hurricane Ike. Installing emergency back-up generators at critical facilities would provide back-up power from hazard events of extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricane/tropical storms, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	3	SIP NSP	G1, G2, G6	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	HMGP, City Funds	24	High
14	Use impact fees to help fund public hazard mitigation projects related to land development	Flood protection for existing structures and helps increase new development as runoff will be mitigated.	9	LPR	G2, G3, G4, G5	Floodplain Administrator	< \$10,000	City Funds	24	Medium

**TABLE ES-1.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
Notes:										
CEM	Community Emergency Manager		IRC	International Residential Code						
CFM	Community Floodplain Manager		LPR	Local Plans and Regulations						
CRS	Community Rating System		N/A	Not Applicable						
EAP	Education and Awareness Programs		NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program						
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency		NSP	Natural Systems Protection						
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map		NWS	National Weather Service						
FMA	Flood Mitigation Assistance		PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation						
GIS	Geographic Information System		SIP	Structure and Infrastructure Project						
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program		TCRFC	Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition						
IBC	International Building Code									

**PART 1**  
**PLAN ELEMENTS AND PARTICIPATING**  
**COMMUNITIES**

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 WHY PREPARE THIS PLAN?

### 1.1.1 The Big Picture

Hazard mitigation is defined as a way to alleviate the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage that can result from a disaster through long- and short-term strategies. Hazard mitigation involves strategies such as planning, policy changes, programs, projects, and other activities that can mitigate the impacts of hazards. The responsibility for hazard mitigation lies with many, including private property owners; business and industry; and local, state, and federal government.

The federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) (Public Law 106-390) required state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans as a condition for federal disaster grant assistance. Prior to 2000, federal disaster funding focused on disaster relief and recovery, with limited funding for hazard mitigation planning. The DMA increased the emphasis on planning for disasters before they occur.

The DMA encourages state and local authorities to work together on pre-disaster planning. It promotes “sustainable hazard mitigation,” which includes the sound management of natural resources and the recognition that hazards and mitigation must be understood in the largest possible social and economic context. The planning network called for by the DMA helps local governments articulate accurate needs for mitigation, resulting in faster allocation of funding and more cost-effective risk reduction projects.

### 1.1.2 Local Concerns

This hazard mitigation plan considers local concerns when evaluating natural hazards and developing mitigation actions. Several factors specific to Wharton County initiated this planning effort:

- Wharton County is exposed to hazards that have caused past damage.
- Limited local resources make it difficult to be pre-emptive in reducing risk. Eligibility for federal financial assistance is paramount to promote successful hazard mitigation in the area.
- Wharton County and its partners participating in this plan want to be proactive in preparing for the probable impacts from natural hazards.
- Wharton County and its communities participated in previous hazard mitigation plans as part of the Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition (TCRFC), which included 15 counties (including Wharton) and 63 jurisdictions. In accordance with recent Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidance individual hazard mitigation plans must be prepared for each county. In addition, the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) implemented a “two-county maximum” policy in 2010 on submittals of local plans. Therefore, this plan update was developed specifically for Wharton County and its participating communities: the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton.
- FEMA approval of the previous hazard mitigation plan will expire in July 2016. If this plan is not updated, Wharton County would not have a FEMA-approved mitigation plan in place, limiting county access to emergency funds after a disaster declaration.

### 1.1.3 Purposes for Planning

This hazard mitigation plan update identifies resources, information, and strategies for reducing risk from natural hazards. Elements and strategies in the plan were selected because they meet a program requirement and because they best meet the needs of the planning partners and their citizens. One of the benefits of

multi-jurisdictional planning is the ability to pool resources and eliminate redundant activities within a planning area that has uniform risk exposure and vulnerabilities. FEMA encourages multi-jurisdictional planning under its guidance for the DMA. This plan will help guide and coordinate mitigation activities throughout the planning area.

This plan update was developed to meet the following objectives:

- Meet or exceed requirements of the DMA.
- Enable all planning partners to continue using federal grant funding to reduce risk through mitigation.
- Meet the needs of each planning partner as well as state and federal requirements.
- Create a risk assessment that focuses on Wharton County hazards of concern.
- Create a single planning document that integrates all planning partners into a framework that supports partnerships within the county, and puts all partners on the same planning cycle for future updates.
- Coordinate existing plans and programs so that high-priority actions and projects to mitigate possible disaster impacts are funded and implemented.

## **1.2 WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS PLAN?**

All citizens and businesses of Wharton County are the ultimate beneficiaries of this hazard mitigation plan update. The plan reduces risk for those who live in, work in, and visit the county and participating cities. It provides a viable planning framework for all foreseeable natural hazards that may impact the county and participating cities. Participation in development of the plan by key stakeholders helped ensure that outcomes will be mutually beneficial. The resources and background information in the plan are applicable countywide. The plan's goals and recommendations can lay groundwork for the development and implementation of local mitigation activities and partnerships.

## **1.3 ELEMENTS OF THIS PLAN**

This plan includes all federally required elements of a disaster mitigation plan:

- Countywide elements:
  - A description of the planning process
  - The public involvement strategy
  - A list of goals and objectives
  - A countywide hazard risk assessment
  - Countywide mitigation actions
  - A plan maintenance strategy
- Jurisdiction-specific elements for each participating jurisdiction:
  - A description of the participation requirements established by the Steering Committee
  - Jurisdiction-specific mitigation actions

The following appendices include information or explanations to support the main content of the plan:

- Appendix A: A glossary of acronyms and definitions.
- Appendix B: The FEMA Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool.
- Appendix C: Public outreach information, including the hazard mitigation survey and summary, and documentation of public meetings.
- Appendix D: Plan adoption resolutions from planning partners.

- Appendix E: A template for progress reports to be completed as this plan is implemented.

All planning partners will adopt this Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update in its entirety.

# CHAPTER 2. PLAN UPDATE—WHAT HAS CHANGED

## 2.1 THE PREVIOUS PLAN

Wharton County and its communities participated in previous hazard mitigation plans as part of the TCRFC. The TCRFC is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization formed in June 2001 by the cities and counties of the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) in response to flood devastation requiring more coordinated damage prevention efforts. In 2004, the TCRFC developed a Hazard Mitigation Action Plan entitled *Creating a Disaster Resistant Lower Colorado River Basin*, which was approved by FEMA in 2004. In 2011, TCRFC completed the *Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016* as a regional partnership of 15 counties (including Wharton) and 63 jurisdictions. The 2011-2016 update was completed with technical support from the LCRA and the outside consultant team of H2O Partners, Inc., and PBS&J.

The 2011-2016 update ranked 13 hazards from high (H) to very low (VL), or not applicable (N/A) for Wharton County and the participating Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton. Table 2-1 lists the hazards and their ranking. These 13 hazards were evaluated in the TCRFC plan. These hazards included 3 human-caused hazards: hazardous materials (HAZMAT), pipeline failure, and terrorism. Although the previous plan profiled human-caused hazards, only natural hazards are evaluated in this plan update. In addition, thunderstorms were not profiled separately in this plan update; rather the hazards associated with thunderstorms (hail, wind, lightning, and flooding) were profiled separately.

<b>TABLE 2-1. HAZARDS EVALUATED IN THE 2011-2016 TCRFC MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE</b>													
Jurisdiction	Dam Failure	Drought	Extreme Heat	Flood	Hail	HAZMAT	Hurricane / Tropical Storm	Pipeline Failure	Terrorism	Thunderstorm	Tornado	Wildfire	Winter Storm
<b>Wharton County</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>
City of East Bernard	VL	L	M	H	M	M	H	M	H	H	H	L	M
City of El Campo	N/A	L	M	M	L	M	M	L	VL	M	M	VL	VL
City of Wharton	H	H	VL	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M

The *TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016* identified goals, objectives, and mitigation actions for these hazards. The overall goal of the 2011-2016 TCRFC plan was:

- To reduce or eliminate the long-term risks to loss of life and property damage in the Lower Colorado River Basin from the full range of disasters.

Six goals were identified for mitigating the hazards, with one or more objectives defined for each goal. These goals and their associated objectives are as follows:

- **Goal 1:** Protect public health and safety.
  - **Objective 1.1:** Advise the public about health and safety precautions to guard against injury and loss of life from hazards.
  - **Objective 1.2:** Maximize the utilization of the latest technology to provide adequate warning, communication, and mitigation of hazard events.

- **Objective 1.3:** Reduce the damage to, and enhance protection of, dangerous areas during hazard events.
- **Objective 1.4:** Protect critical facilities and services.
- **Goal 2:** Protect existing and new properties.
  - **Objective 2.1:** Reduce repetitive losses to the National Flood Insurance Program.
  - **Objective 2.2:** Use the most cost-effective approaches to protect existing buildings and public infrastructure from hazards.
  - **Objective 2.3:** Enact and enforce regulatory measures to ensure that development will not put people in harm’s way or increase threats to existing properties.
- **Goal 3:** Increase public understanding, support and demand for hazard mitigation.
  - **Objective 3.1:** Heighten public awareness of the full range of natural and man-made hazards they face.
  - **Objective 3.2:** Educate the public on actions they can take to prevent or reduce the loss of life or property from all hazards.
  - **Objective 3.3:** Publicize and encourage the adoption of appropriate hazard mitigation measures.
- **Goal 4:** Build and support local capacity and commitment to continuously become less vulnerable to hazards.
  - **Objective 4.1:** Build and support local partnerships to continuously become less vulnerable to hazards.
  - **Objective 4.2:** Build a cadre of committed volunteers to safeguard the community before, during, and after a disaster.
  - **Objective 4.3:** Build hazard mitigation concerns into planning and budgeting processes.
- **Goal 5:** Promote growth in a sustainable manner.
  - **Objective 5.1:** Incorporate hazard mitigation into the long-range planning and development activities.
  - **Objective 5.2:** Promote beneficial uses of hazardous areas while expanding open space and recreational opportunities.
  - **Objective 5.3:** Utilize regulatory approaches to prevent creation of future hazards to life and property.
- **Goal 6:** Maximize the resources for investment in hazard mitigation.
  - **Objective 6.1:** Maximize the use of outside sources of funding.
  - **Objective 6.2:** Maximize participation of property owners in protecting their properties.
  - **Objective 6.3:** Maximize insurance coverage to provide financial protection against hazard events.
  - **Objective 6.4:** Prioritize mitigation projects, based on cost-effectiveness and starting with those sites facing the greatest threat to life, health and property.

The *TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016* then identified one or more mitigation action to accomplish each objective. The current status of each of these actions identified in the plan is shown in Table 2-2. Actions designated as “(Past)” were carried forward from the 2004 TCRFC Plan.



**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
<b>WHARTON COUNTY</b>										
1 (Past)	Review the county’s floodplain management ordinance.			X						
1	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at Gobbler Stream on FM 1160.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
2	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at Porters Creek.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
3	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at Middle Bernard.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
4	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at FM 442.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1
5	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at Blue Tributary, 2.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
6	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at East Mustang.			X						
7	Undertake drainage improvements in Lower Caney Creek.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
8	Undertake drainage improvements along Gardner Slough.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
9	Clean up creek and improve drainage at East Fork Jones.			X						
10	Increase drainage capacity at Jones Creek.			X						
11	Undertake drainage improvements at Lower Middle Bernard Clearing.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
12	Clear debris and improve drainage at Santa Fe Ditch and Jarvis Creek.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
13	Allow for adequate drainage under FM 442 through improvements at Lower Caney.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
14	Conduct regional drainage improvements at East Mustang Creek.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
15	Conduct drainage improvements at San Bernard near East Bernard.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
16	Conduct regional drainage improvements at Blue Creek.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
17	Conduct bridge and culvert improvements at Lower Caney.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
18	Undertake bridge and culvert improvements at East Mustang.			X						
19	Undertake drainage improvements (culvert and bridge cleanup) – Chitland.			X						
20	Conduct drainage improvement and bridge and culvert cleanup at FM 640.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
21	Undertake cleanup for bridges and culverts at Lower Caney Creek.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
22	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at Stavena Road.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
23	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 361.			X						
24	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 254.			X						

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
25	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 376 and 372.	X								CR 372 will be completed by 12/31/15. Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
26	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 459.			X						
27	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 391.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
28	Clean culverts and repair bridges at Sandy Branch.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
29	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 235, CR 247 and CR 239.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1
30	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 463 and CR 461.			X						
31	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at West Bernard.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
32	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 248.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
33	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 307.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
34	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at Old Caney Road.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
35	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 250.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
36	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at FM 647.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
37	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at FM 2919.		X						X	When TXDOT budgets new bridge. Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
38	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 116.				X					Portion of road abandoned to LCRA.
39	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 389.			X						
40	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 126.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
41	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 409.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
42	Undertake bridge and culvert drainage improvements at CR 378.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
43	Begin a rainfall observer program within the county for CoCoRaHS through the NWS.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Actions 9 and 10.
44	Install stream and rain gauge on San Bernard River upstream from East Bernard.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Actions 6 and 9.
45	Implement emergency notification system and Reverse 911 for Wharton County residents.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 9.
46	Reduce flood losses and increase NFIP coverage throughout Wharton County.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Actions 1, 2, 3, and 7.
47	Design, construct and maintain drainage improvement projects to minimize the risk of loss of life and future flood damages by utilizing funding from federal, state, Capital Improvement Program (CIP), development or stormwater utility fee, and other funding sources.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
48	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures.				X					

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
49	Update the Wharton County Flood Insurance Study and FIRMs to include detail floodplain information for all streams in Wharton County.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 2.
50	Adopt “Higher Standard” Riverine Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and Standards.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 3.
51	Provide training for CFMs and CEMs.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 13.
52	Establish Countywide Bench Mark Network.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 5.
53	Provide support to the TCRFC and San Bernard River in flood reduction projects.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 6.
54	Participate in FEMA’s CRS program.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 7.
55	Create a Wharton Disaster Response Team.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 8.
56	Implement a Wharton County Flood Warning System.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 9.
57	Become a NWS Storm Ready community.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 10.
58	Install emergency generators at critical facilities.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 11.
<b>CITY OF EAST BERNARD</b>										
1	Remove and replace culverts on Highway 60.			X						
2	Complete east and west sections of the drainage plan for East Bernard.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 7.

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
3	Increase public awareness of the CoCoRaHS program.				X					
4	Develop shelter for emergency responders.				X					
5	Develop a drought contingency plan.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 8.
6	Work with fire departments countywide through Level 4 Radio Network.			X						
7	Clean debris out of the San Bernard River and work with EPA/USACE and wetlands to expedite process.				X					
8	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures.				X					
9	Participate in FEMA’s CRS program.				X					
10	Install emergency generators at critical facilities.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 9.
<b>CITY OF EL CAMPO</b>										
1 (Past)	Complete (Norris Street to South Street) and begin (Vasa Ditch improvements) construction of concrete ditches.			X						
2 (Past)	Modify storm drainage on Pecan Street.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 9.
3 (Past)	Modify Town and Country Drive and improve storm drainage.	X								Project is under design. Incorporated into Mitigation Action 10.
4 (Past)	Upgrade storm drainage (TXDOT downtown upgrade).			X						

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
5 (Past)	Implement Master Drainage Plan (7 projects).		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 11.
1	Purchase backup generator for WWTP.			X						
2	Implement area-wide Emergency Notification System through the use of telephones to notify residents, emergency personnel, and strategic departments of pending emergencies.			X						
3	Purchase backup generator for WWTP.			X						
4	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures.				X					
5	Participate in FEMA’s CRS program.				X					
<b>CITY OF WHARTON</b>										
1 (Past)	Clean and repair storm drains routinely.	X				X				Incorporated into Mitigation Action 1.
2 (Past)	Encourage floodplain and CRS coordinators to earn CFM certification.				X	X				
3 (Past)	Increase freeboard requirements for permitting structures in the floodplain.	X				X				Incorporated into Mitigation Action 2.
1	Implement a comprehensive watershed ordinance for new development.		X			X				Incorporated into Mitigation Action 3.
2	Acquire, reuse, and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood-prone areas.	X								Incorporated into Mitigation Action 4.
3	Adopt a “no rise” in the BFE in the 100-year floodplain.				X	X				

**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion	
4	Utilize erosion and sedimentation controls during construction.				X					
5	Implement a zero discharge policy for stormwater in subdivision platting.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 5.
6	Include onsite sediment retention as a development requirement.				X					
7	Use impact fees to help fund public hazard mitigation projects related to land development (e.g. increase runoff).		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 14.
8	Raise electrical components of sewage lift stations above BFE.				X					
9	Increase capacity/add stormwater detention/retention basins.				X					
10	Increase dimensions of drainage culverts in troublesome areas.				X					
11	Minimize the impact of flooding by installing berms and levees when appropriate.	X				X				Incorporated into Mitigation Action 8.
12	Raise manhole opening using alternative methods.				X					
13	Develop a flood-use stream restoration/channelization to ensure adequate drainage/diversion of stormwater.	X					X			Incorporated into Mitigation Action 8.
14	Install structural retrofits (reinforcement, flood proofing, storm shutters, bracing, etc.) for critical facilities.				X					
15	Identify and assess the most at-risk critical facilities and evaluate possible mitigation techniques.	X				X				Incorporated into Mitigation Action 11.
16	Establish a reserve fund for emergency and public mitigation measures.		X							Incorporated into Mitigation Action 10.



**TABLE 2-2.  
WHARTON COUNTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET  
(UPDATE OF 2011-2016 TCRFC PLAN PROJECTS)**

Action No.	Action	Project Status				Funding				Comments																																				
		Ongoing	Delayed	Completed	Deleted	Budgeted	Apply for Grant	Grant Received	Target Completion																																					
17	Install quick-connect emergency generator hook-ups for critical facilities.				X	X																																								
18	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures.	X					X			Incorporated into Mitigation Action 12.																																				
19	Participate in FEMA’s CRS program.			X		X																																								
20	Install emergency generators at critical facilities.	X						X		Incorporated into Mitigation Action 13.																																				
<p>“(Past)” in the action number column indicates that the action was first identified in the 2004 TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan and was carried forward into the 2011-2016 TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>BFE</td> <td>Base Flood Elevation</td> <td>FEMA</td> <td>Federal Emergency Management Agency</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CEM</td> <td>Community Emergency Manager</td> <td>FIRM</td> <td>Flood Insurance Rate Map</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CFM</td> <td>Community Floodplain Manager</td> <td>LCRA</td> <td>Lower Colorado River Authority</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CIP</td> <td>Capital Improvement Program</td> <td>NFIP</td> <td>National Flood Insurance Program</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CoCoRaHS</td> <td>Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network</td> <td>NWS</td> <td>National Weather Service</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CR</td> <td>County Road</td> <td>TCRFC</td> <td>Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRS</td> <td>Community Rating System</td> <td>TXDOT</td> <td>State of Texas Department of Transportation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EPA</td> <td>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency</td> <td>USACE</td> <td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FM</td> <td>Farm to Market</td> <td>WWTP</td> <td>Wastewater Treatment Plant</td> </tr> </table>											BFE	Base Flood Elevation	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	CEM	Community Emergency Manager	FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map	CFM	Community Floodplain Manager	LCRA	Lower Colorado River Authority	CIP	Capital Improvement Program	NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program	CoCoRaHS	Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network	NWS	National Weather Service	CR	County Road	TCRFC	Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition	CRS	Community Rating System	TXDOT	State of Texas Department of Transportation	EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	FM	Farm to Market	WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant
BFE	Base Flood Elevation	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency																																											
CEM	Community Emergency Manager	FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map																																											
CFM	Community Floodplain Manager	LCRA	Lower Colorado River Authority																																											
CIP	Capital Improvement Program	NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program																																											
CoCoRaHS	Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network	NWS	National Weather Service																																											
CR	County Road	TCRFC	Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition																																											
CRS	Community Rating System	TXDOT	State of Texas Department of Transportation																																											
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers																																											
FM	Farm to Market	WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant																																											

## 2.2 WHY UPDATE?

Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR) stipulates that hazard mitigation plans must present a schedule for monitoring, evaluating, and updating the plan. As mentioned previously, Wharton County participated in a mitigation planning process in 2011 as part of the TCRFC. This plan included 15 counties and will expire in 2016. Regional plans are no longer acceptable by FEMA. This update process provides an opportunity to reevaluate recommendations, monitor the impacts of actions that have been accomplished, and evaluate whether there is a need to change the focus of mitigation strategies. A jurisdiction covered by a plan that has expired is not able to pursue elements of federal funding under the Robert T. Stafford Act for which a current hazard mitigation plan is a prerequisite.

## 2.3 THE PLAN—WHAT IS DIFFERENT?

The previous regional TCRFC plan has been improved to focus on Wharton County and its participating communities using the best and most current data and technology available. All participating municipalities were fully involved in the preparation of this plan update. The updated plan includes a more robust hazard analysis. Mitigation actions were reviewed and amended to include only those that would move the community towards a higher degree of resiliency while being feasible, practical, and implementable given current finances. Federal and state funds for projects have become difficult to obtain. The update recommends 51 mitigation actions:

- 15 countywide actions
- 10 actions specifically for the City of East Bernard
- 12 actions specifically for the City of El Campo
- 14 actions specifically for the City of Wharton

Actions from the previous plan were carried forward into the mitigation actions if they were identified as delayed or in progress. These actions are indicated on Table 2-2.

## 2.4 LOCAL MITIGATION PLAN REVIEW TOOL

The Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool demonstrates how the Local Mitigation Plan meets the regulation in 44 CFR §201.6 and offers states and FEMA Mitigation Planners an opportunity to provide feedback to the community.

- The Regulation Checklist provides a summary of FEMA's evaluation of whether the plan has addressed all requirements.
- The Plan Assessment identifies the plan's strengths as well as documents areas for future improvement.
- The Multi-Jurisdiction Summary Sheet is an optional worksheet that can be used to document how each jurisdiction met the requirements of each element of the plan (Planning Process; Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment; Mitigation Strategy; Plan Review, Evaluation, and Implementation; and Plan Adoption).

The FEMA Mitigation Planner must reference the *Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide* when completing the Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool. The Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool is included in this hazard mitigation plan as Appendix B.

# CHAPTER 3. PLAN METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 GRANT FUNDING

The current TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2016. Therefore, TCRFC initiated steps to begin the next update in 2013. The TCRFC Board selected the JSWA Team to assist with development and implementation of the plan update. The JSWA Team consists of JSW & Associates, Tetra Tech, Inc., and Halff Associates. TCRFC worked with the JSWA Team to apply for hazard mitigation funding through FEMA’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program. The JSWA Team was successful in obtaining grants for Wharton County and the participating communities of the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton. Each participating member contributed both monetarily and through in-kind contributions.

## 3.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Wharton County opened this planning effort to all eligible local governments in the county. The planning partners covered under this plan are shown in Table 3-1.

<b>TABLE 3-1. COUNTY AND CITY PLANNING PARTNERS</b>		
Jurisdiction	Point of Contact	Title
Wharton County	Andy Kirkland	Emergency Management Coordinator
City of East Bernard	Audrey Wessels	City Secretary
City of El Campo	Gary Williamson	Emergency Management Coordinator
City of Wharton	Stephen Johnson	Emergency Management Coordinator

Each jurisdiction wishing to join the planning partnership was asked to commit to the process and have a clear understanding of expectations. These include:

- Each partner will support and participate in the Steering Committee meetings overseeing the development of the plan update. Support includes making decisions regarding plan development and scope on behalf of the partnership.
- Each partner will provide support as needed for the public involvement strategy developed by the Steering Committee in the form of mailing lists, possible meeting space, and media outreach such as newsletters, newspapers, or direct-mailed brochures.
- Each partner will participate in plan update development activities such as:
  - Steering Committee meetings
  - Public meetings or open houses
  - Workshops and planning partner training sessions
  - Public review and comment periods prior to adoption

Attendance will be tracked at these activities, and attendance records will document participation for each planning partner. All participating communities are expected to attend and actively participate in all meetings and activities.

- Each partner will be expected to review the risk assessment and identify hazards and vulnerabilities specific to its jurisdiction. Contract resources will provide jurisdiction-specific

mapping and technical consultation to aid in this task, but the determination of risk and vulnerability ranking will be up to each partner.

- Each partner will be expected to review the mitigation recommendations chosen for the overall county and evaluate whether they will meet the needs of its jurisdiction. Projects within each jurisdiction consistent with the overall plan recommendations will need to be identified, prioritized, and reviewed to identify their benefits and costs.
- Each partner will be required to sponsor at least one public meeting to present the draft plan at least two weeks prior to adoption.
- Each partner will be required to formally adopt the plan.
- Each partner will agree to the plan implementation and maintenance protocol.

Failure to meet these criteria may result in a partner being dropped from the partnership by the Steering Committee, and thus losing eligibility under the scope of this plan.

### **3.3 DEFINING THE PLANNING AREA**

The planning area was defined to consist of all of Wharton County. All partners to this plan have jurisdictional authority within this planning area. Planning partners include the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton (Figure 3-1).

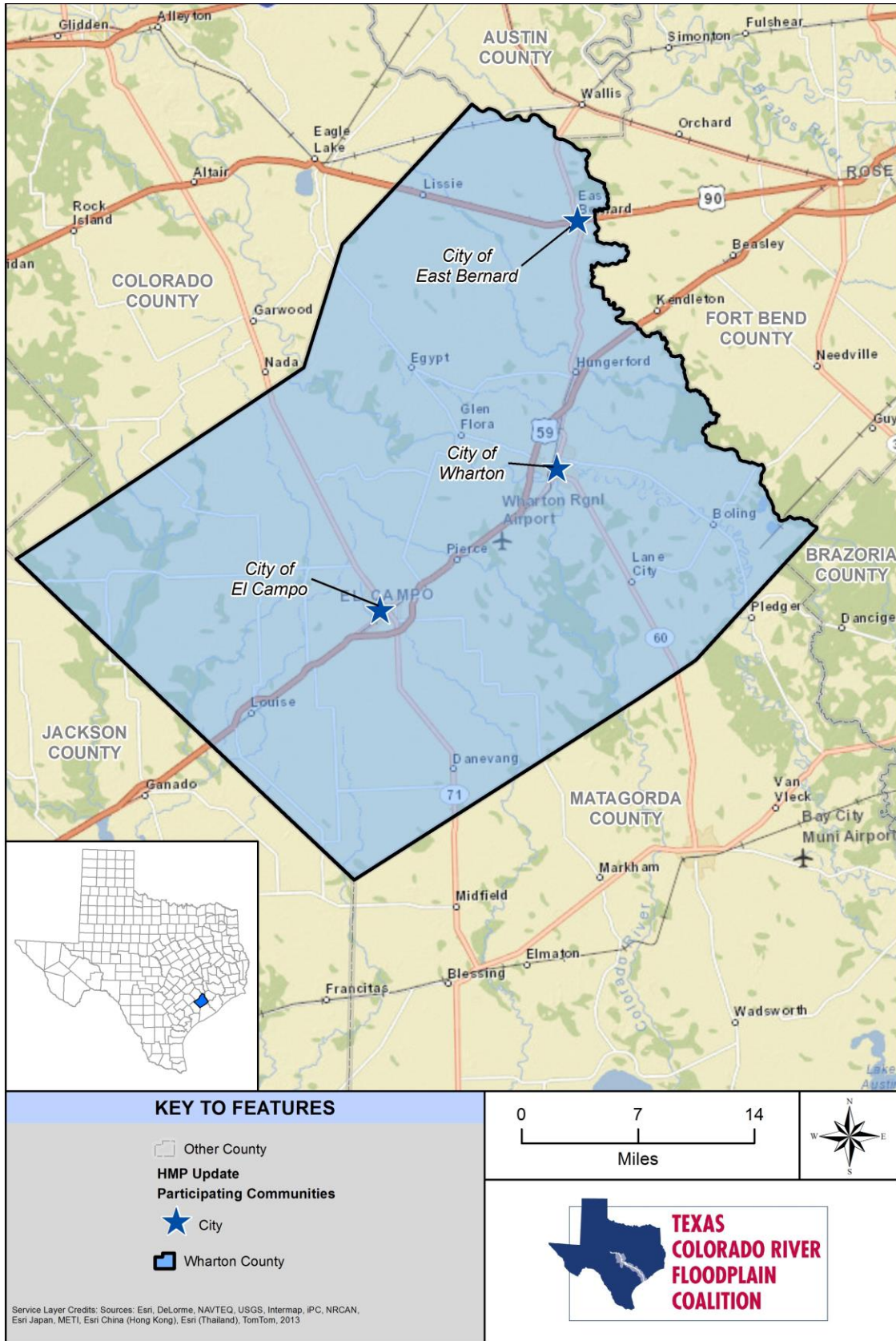


Figure 3-1. Wharton County Planning Area and Participating Communities

### 3.4 THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Hazard mitigation planning enhances collaboration and support among diverse parties whose interests can be affected by hazard losses. A Steering Committee was formed to oversee all phases of the plan update. The members of this committee included key planning partner staff, citizens, and other stakeholders from the planning area. Table 3-2 lists the committee members.

TABLE 3-2. STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Name	Title	Jurisdiction
Andy Kirkland	Emergency Management Coordinator	Wharton County
Monica Martin	Floodplain Administrator	Wharton County
Leroy Dettling	County Commissioner	Wharton County
Debbie Cenko	DEMC	Wharton County/City of East Bernard
Audrey Wessels	City Secretary	City of East Bernard
Gary Williamson	Assistant Police Chief/ Emergency Management Coordinator	City of El Campo
Mindi Snyder	City Manager	City of El Campo
Liz Staff	Building Official	City of El Campo
Clay Harris	Director of Public Works	City of El Campo
Stephen Johnson	Emergency Management Coordinator	City of Wharton
Brandi Jimenez	Assistant to City Manager	City of Wharton
Joan Anadel	Finance Director	City of Wharton
Ronnie Bollom	CFM, Building Official	City of Wharton
Amy Bergstrom	Communications Supervisor	City of Wharton
Richard Coleman	Assistant Police Chief	City of Wharton
Terry Lynch	Chief of Police	City of Wharton
Kyle Marchant	Director of Public Works	City of Wharton
John Kowalik	EMS Director	City of Wharton
Cheryl Urbanovsky	Assistant City Manager	City of Wharton

The Steering Committee agreed to meet a minimum of three times or as needed throughout the course of the plan’s development. The JSWA Team and the TCRFC Executive Director facilitated each Steering Committee meeting, which addressed a set of objectives based on the work plan established for the plan update. The Steering Committee met three times from March 2015 through August 2015. Meeting agendas, notes, and attendance logs can be found in Appendix C of this document.

The planning team made a presentation at a Steering Committee meeting on March 10, 2015, to introduce the mitigation planning process. The Steering Committee, planning partners, and the public were encouraged to participate in the plan update process. Key meeting objectives at the March meeting were as follows:

- Steering Committee purposes and responsibilities

- Plan partners and signators responsibilities
- Purpose and goals of the update process
- Review and amend mitigation goals and objectives
- Review previous mitigation actions from 2011 plan
- Critical facilities discussion
- Next steps (including the capabilities assessment, hazard analysis review, and community participation)

### 3.5 COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Opportunities for involvement in the planning process must be provided to neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation, agencies with authority to regulate development, businesses, academia, and other private and non-profit interests (44 CFR, Section 201.6(b)(2)). This task was accomplished by the planning team as follows:

- **Steering Committee Involvement**—Agency representatives were invited to participate on the Steering Committee. The Wharton County Emergency Management Coordinator, Mr. J Andy Kirkland, was the primary lead / point of contact for stakeholder and community outreach. Wharton County took a proactive approach in inviting and seating the Steering Committee for the development of this hazard mitigation plan. The County invited and requested the active participation of a variety of stakeholder interests to form the Wharton County HMP Steering Committee. The Steering Committee Members that were invited by the County and participated as stakeholders in the Wharton County mitigation plan are listed on Table 3-2.

The County utilized personal communication including telephone and email outreach, attendance at various public meetings and forums as well as the County website to inform and invite participation of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee Members were encouraged to attend and actively participate in meetings as well as to review the draft plan and provide questions and comments. Public notices were posted in and around the County offices and the community notifying them of the planning process, upcoming meeting dates and inviting community participation.

In addition, TCRFC also undertook stakeholder/community outreach activities in support of Wharton County. An informational email was sent in the early weeks of the planning process advising various stakeholders and special interest groups about the planning process and inviting interested members to attend the committee meetings. TCRFC drafted and sent newsletters to various interest groups and also made the newsletters available to the County for their outreach efforts. Informational items and project updates were also posted on the TCRFC Web Site.

The County coordinated the response to all questions and comments. Any changes to the plan as part of this stakeholder outreach were coordinated thru the County.

The Wharton County meetings were held in tandem with neighboring counties and communities. Announcements were made in all meetings regarding the outreach and meeting schedules in the other communities. Attendance and participation was encouraged.

- **Agency Notification**—The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) was invited to participate in the plan development process from the beginning and was kept apprised of plan development milestones. TDEM received meeting announcements, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes by e-mail throughout the plan development process. TDEM supported the effort by attending meetings or providing feedback on issues.

- **Pre-Adoption Review**—Agency representatives on the Steering Committee and TDEM were provided an opportunity to review and comment on this plan, primarily through the hazard mitigation plan website (see Section 3.7). Each agency was sent an e-mail message informing them that draft portions of the plan were available for review. In addition, the complete draft plan was sent to TDEM for a pre-adoption review to ensure program compliance.

This update process was initiated by TCRFC, a regional partnership of cities and counties in the Colorado River basin and the surrounding areas. The process was initiated by and was under the direction of Mr. Mickey Reynolds, Executive Director of TCRFC. Although separate plans were prepared for each county, 15 counties and 46 cities and towns in TCRFC updated their hazard mitigation plans simultaneously. Steering Committee meetings were held with adjacent counties so neighboring communities were aware of the planning process and could share ideas and information throughout the region. Steering Committee meetings for Wharton County were held along with Colorado, Jackson, and Matagorda Counties and the Cities of Columbus and Eagle Lake in Colorado County, the Cities of Edna and Ganado in Jackson County, and the Cities of Bay City and Palacios in Matagorda County. The full list of attendees from other neighboring communities at each Steering Committee meeting is included in Appendix C. In addition, the planning team presented the plan update process at the TCRFC annual meeting on July 31, 2015.

### 3.6 REVIEW OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

Hazard mitigation planning must include review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports and technical information (44 CFR, Section 201.6(b)(3)). Chapter 6 of this plan provides a review of laws and ordinances in effect within the planning area that can affect hazard mitigation actions. In addition, the following programs can affect mitigation within the planning area:

- Wharton County
  - Master Subdivision Policy
  - Flood Damage Prevention Order
  - Drainage Fee Ordinance
  - Floodplain Map
  - Basic Emergency Operations Plan
  - Economic Development Corporation
- City of East Bernard
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Code of Ordinances
- City of El Campo
  - 2020 Plan
  - Code of Ordinances
  - Code Enforcement
- City of Wharton
  - Code of Ordinances
  - Planning Commission
  - Economic Development Corporation



– Code Enforcement/Floodplain Management

An assessment of all planning partners' regulatory, technical, and financial capabilities to implement hazard mitigation actions is presented in Chapter 7. Many of these relevant plans, studies, and regulations are cited in the capability assessment.

The review of existing programs and the assessment of capabilities identify the plans, regulations, personnel, and funding mechanisms available to the county and planning partners to impact and mitigate the effects of natural hazards. The review also helps identify opportunities for the planning partners to strengthen their abilities to proactively mitigate natural hazards in the community through the expansion of existing departments and programs; completion of applicable plans; adoption of necessary regulations or ordinances; creation and hiring of new departments and staff; or mutual aid agreements and memorandums of understanding with neighboring communities. The planning partners reviewed the findings of the capabilities assessment during the second Steering Committee meeting and used this information to identify mitigation actions.

### **3.7 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Broad public participation in the planning process helps ensure that diverse points of view about the planning area's needs are considered and addressed. The public must have opportunities to comment on disaster mitigation plans during the drafting stages and prior to plan approval (44 CFR, Section 201.6(b)(1)). The strategy for involving the public in this plan emphasized the following elements:

- Include members of the public on the Steering Committee
- Use a community survey/questionnaire to evaluate whether the public's perception of risk and support of hazard mitigation has changed since the initial planning process
- Attempt to reach as many planning area citizens as possible using multiple media
- Identify and involve planning area stakeholders
- Solicit public feedback at each stage of plan implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

#### **3.7.1 Stakeholders and the Steering Committee**

Stakeholders are the individuals, agencies, and jurisdictions that have a vested interest in the recommendations of the hazard mitigation plan, including planning partners. The effort to include stakeholders in this process included stakeholder participation on the Steering Committee. Stakeholders were encouraged to attend and participate in all committee meetings.

#### **3.7.2 Survey/Questionnaire**

A hazard mitigation plan questionnaire (see Figure 3-2) was developed to gauge household preparedness for natural hazards; the level of knowledge of tools and techniques that assist in reducing risk and loss from natural hazards; and the perceived impact of natural hazards on Wharton County residents and businesses. This on-line questionnaire was designed to help identify areas vulnerable to one or more natural hazards. The answers to these 35 questions helped guide the Steering Committee in prioritizing hazards of impact and in selecting goals, objectives, and mitigation strategies. A total of 57 questionnaires were completed during the course of this planning process.

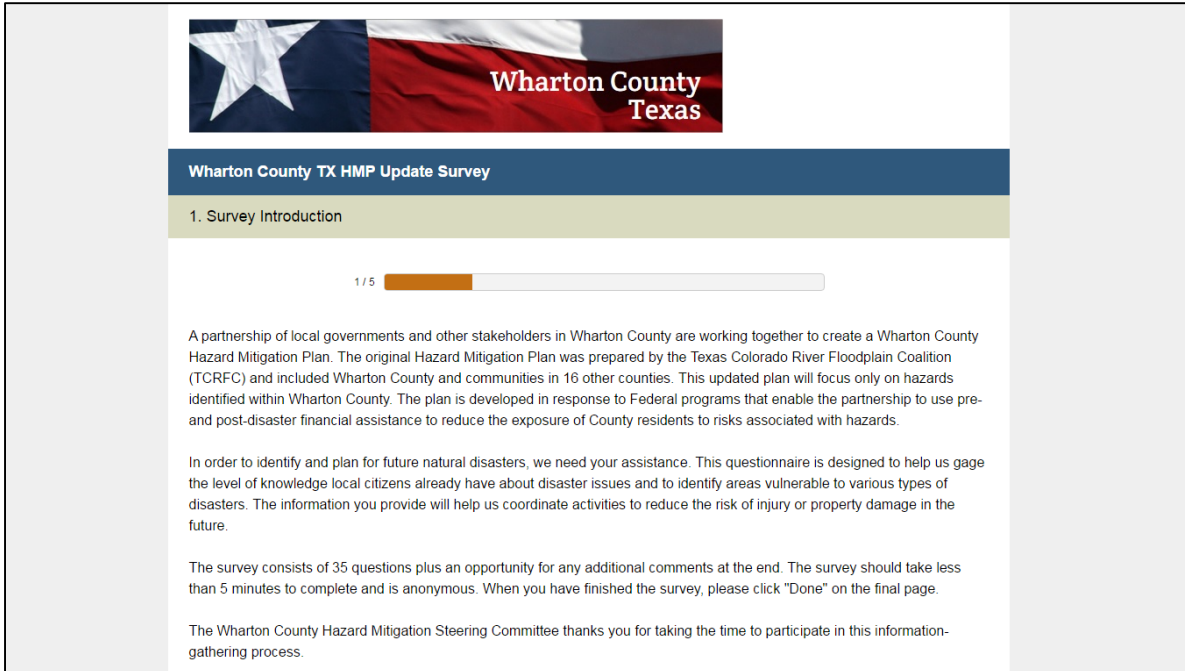


Figure 3-2. Sample Page from Questionnaire Distributed to the Public

### 3.7.3 Meetings

Three Steering Committee meetings, as well as one meeting before the Wharton County Commissioners' Court were held during the planning process. These meetings were held along with the adjacent counties of Jackson, Colorado, and Matagorda. Meetings were held in the City of Wharton on March 10, 2015, June 2, 2015, and August 11, 2015 (see Figure 3-3).

The meeting format allowed attendees to access handouts, maps, and other resources and ask questions during the meetings. Additionally, project staff and county personnel remained after the meeting to have direct conversations with interested attendees. Details regarding the planning and information generated for the risk assessment were shared with attendees via a PowerPoint presentation. Wharton County and the planning partners held public meetings to present the draft plan, discuss the benefits of the plan, and solicit public comments. Unless otherwise noted below, the public meetings were held as part of a regularly scheduled public meeting and the plan was discussed as an item on the meeting agenda. Notice of the public meeting was provided in compliance with the communities' individual requirements. A member of the planning team was available during all meetings to answer questions from the public on the development of the hazard mitigation plan.

Wharton County held a public meeting on January 25, 2016 to present the draft plan and solicit public comments. No comments that resulted in changes to the plan were received from the public electronically or in person at the county building or during the public meeting. The draft plan was made available in hard copy on January 11, 2016 at the county offices as well as at the El Campo City Hall, 315 E. Jackson St. El Campo, Tx 77437 for review by interested parties. In addition, the draft was posted on the Wharton County website on February 23, 2016.

The City of East Bernard held a public meeting on February 15, 2016 to present the draft plan and solicit public comments. No comments that resulted in changes to the plan were received from the public electronically or in person at the county building or during the public meeting. The draft plan was available in hard copy at the East Bernard City Hall on February 1, 2016 for review by interested parties. In addition, the draft was posted on the City of East Bernard website on January 18, 2016.

The City of El Campo held a public meeting on January 25, 2016 to present the draft plan and solicit public comments. No comments that resulted in changes to the plan were received from the public electronically or in person at the county building or during the public meeting. The draft plan was available in hard copy at the El Campo City Hall on January 11, 2016 for review by interested parties. In addition, the draft was posted on the City of El Campo website on January 11, 2016.

The City of Wharton held a public meeting on March 14, 2016 to present the draft plan and solicit public comments. No comments that resulted in changes to the plan were received from the public electronically or in person at the county building or during the public meeting. The draft plan was available in hard copy at the Wharton City Hall on March 3, 2016 for review by interested parties. In addition, the draft was posted on the City of Wharton website on February 3, 2016.



Figure 3-3. Steering Committee Meeting August 11, 2015

### 3.7.4 Press Releases/News Articles

Press releases were distributed over the course of the plan's development as key milestones were achieved and prior to each public meeting. TCRFC released an informational brochure to its members.

### 3.7.5 Internet

At the beginning of the plan development process, the TCRFC posted information regarding the update process, a link to the community survey, and a link to the mitigation plan on the TCRFC website (<http://www.tcrfc.org/>). The TCRFC website keeps the public informed on plan development milestones and to solicit relevant input. Information on the plan development process, the Steering Committee, the questionnaire, and phased drafts of the plan were available to the public on the site throughout the process. After the plan's completion, the TCRFC website will keep the public informed about successful mitigation

projects and future plan updates. A link to the community survey was also posted on the City of El Campo's website.

The draft plan was posted on the Wharton County website on February 23, 2016, the City of East Bernard website on January 18, 2016, the City of El Campo website on January 11, and the City of Wharton website on February 3, 2016 to allow the public to review the plan. to allow the public to review the plan as described in Chapter 3.7.5.

### **3.8 PLAN DEVELOPMENT, CHRONOLOGY, MILESTONES**

Table 3-3 summarizes important milestones in the development of the plan update.

**TABLE 3-3.  
PLAN DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES**

Date	Event	Description	Attendance
<b>2013</b>			
9/16	Submit grant application	Seek funding for plan development process	N/A
8/5	Initiate consultant procurement	Seek a planning expert to facilitate the process	N/A
10/1	Select JSWA Team to facilitate plan development	Facilitation contractor secured	N/A
<b>2015</b>			
2/25	Notified grant funding secured	Funding secured	N/A
2/25	Contract signed	Notice to proceed given to Tetra Tech, Inc.	N/A
2/26	Identify Steering Committee	Formation of the Steering Committee	N/A
3/10	Steering Committee/ Stakeholder Meeting #1	Presentation on plan process given, participation, review of goals and objectives	Wharton County; Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton
6/2	Steering Committee Meeting #2	Review community survey, review hazard identification and risk assessment, review and update plan goals and objectives	Wharton County; Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton
8/11	Steering Committee Meeting #3	Mitigation actions presentation and project development	Wharton County; Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton
Ongoing	Public Outreach	News articles and website posting	N/A
9/25	Draft Plan	Internal review draft provided to Steering Committee	N/A
9/25	Public Comment Period	Initial public comment period of draft plan opens. Draft plan posted on plan website and in hard copy at the courthouse and at East Bernard City Hall, El Campo City Hall, and Wharton City Hall with press release notifying public of plan availability	N/A
<b>2016</b>			
1/25	Wharton County Public Meeting	Draft plan was presented and reviewed	Wharton County; City of El Campo
1/25	City of El Campo Public Meeting	Draft plan was presented and reviewed	Wharton County; City of El Campo
2/15	City of East Bernard Public Meeting	Draft plan was presented and reviewed	Wharton County; City of East Bernard
3/14	City of Wharton Public Meeting	Draft plan was presented and reviewed	Wharton County; City of Wharton
5/16	Plan Review	Final draft plan submitted to Texas Division of Emergency Management for review	N/A
X/X	Public Outreach	Final public meeting on draft plan	N/A
10/4	Plan Approval Pending Adoption	Plan approval pending adoption by FEMA	N/A
X/X	Adoption	Adoption window of final plan opens	N/A
X/X	Plan Approval	Final plan approved by FEMA	N/A

FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
JSWA Team	JSW & Associates, Tetra Tech, Inc., and Half Associates
N/A	Not Applicable

## **CHAPTER 4.**

# **GUIDING PRINCIPLE, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**

Hazard mitigation plans must identify goals for reducing long-term vulnerabilities to identified hazards (44 CFR Section 201.6(c)(3)(i)). The Steering Committee established a guiding principle, a set of goals, and measurable objectives for this plan, based on data from the preliminary risk assessment and the results of the public involvement strategy. The guiding principle, goals, objectives, and actions in this plan all support each other. Goals were selected to support the guiding principle. Objectives were selected that met multiple goals. Actions were prioritized based on the action meeting multiple objectives.

### **4.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLE**

A guiding principle focuses the range of objectives and actions to be considered. This is not a goal because it does not describe a hazard mitigation outcome, and it is broader than a hazard-specific objective. The guiding principle for the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update is as follows:

- To reduce or eliminate the long-term risks to loss of life and property damage in Wharton County from the full range of natural disasters.

### **4.2 GOALS**

The following are the mitigation goals for this plan:

- **Goal 1:** Protect public health and safety.
- **Goal 2:** Protect existing and new properties.
- **Goal 3:** Increase public understanding, support, and demand for hazard mitigation.
- **Goal 4:** Build and support local capacity and commitment to continuously become less vulnerable to hazards.
- **Goal 5:** Promote growth in a sustainable manner.
- **Goal 6:** Maximize the resources for investment in hazard mitigation.

### **4.3 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives are used to help establish priorities and support the agreed upon goals. The objectives are as follows:

- Objectives in support of Goal 1:
  - **Objective 1.1:** Advise the public about health and safety precautions to guard against injury and loss of life from hazards.
  - **Objective 1.2:** Maximize the utilization of the latest technology to provide adequate warning, communication, and mitigation of hazard events.
  - **Objective 1.3:** Reduce the damage to, and enhance protection of, dangerous areas during hazard events.
  - **Objective 1.4:** Protect critical facilities and services.
- Objectives in support of Goal 2:
  - **Objective 2.1:** Reduce repetitive losses to the National Flood Insurance Program.
  - **Objective 2.2:** Use the most cost-effective approaches to protect existing buildings and public infrastructure from hazards.

- **Objective 2.3:** Enact and enforce regulatory measures to ensure that development will not put people in harm's way or increase threats to existing properties.
- Objectives in support of Goal 3:
  - **Objective 3.1:** Heighten public awareness of the full range of natural hazards they face.
  - **Objective 3.2:** Educate the public on actions they can take to prevent or reduce the loss of life or property from all natural hazards.
  - **Objective 3.3:** Publicize and encourage the adoption of appropriate hazard mitigation measures.
- Objectives in support of Goal 4:
  - **Objective 4.1:** Build and support local partnerships to continuously become less vulnerable to hazards.
  - **Objective 4.2:** Build a cadre of committed volunteers to safeguard the community before, during, and after a disaster.
  - **Objective 4.3:** Build hazard mitigation concerns into planning and budgeting processes.
- Objective in support of Goal 5:
  - **Objective 5.1:** Incorporate hazard mitigation into the long-range planning and development activities.
  - **Objective 5.2:** Promote beneficial uses of hazardous areas while expanding open space and recreational opportunities.
  - **Objective 5.3:** Utilize regulatory approaches to prevent creation of future hazards to life and property.
- Objectives in support of Goal 6:
  - **Objective 6.1:** Maximize the use of outside sources of funding.
  - **Objective 6.2:** Maximize participation of property owners in protecting their properties.
  - **Objective 6.3:** Maximize insurance coverage to provide financial protection against hazard events.
  - **Objective 6.4:** Prioritize mitigation projects, based on cost-effectiveness and starting with those sites facing the greatest threat to life, health and property.



# CHAPTER 5.

## IDENTIFIED HAZARDS OF CONCERN AND RISK ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Risk assessment is the process of measuring the potential loss of life, personal injury, economic injury, and property damage resulting from natural hazards. It allows emergency management personnel to establish early response priorities by identifying potential hazards and vulnerable assets. The process focuses on the following elements:

- **Hazard identification** - Use all available information to determine what types of disasters may affect a jurisdiction, how often they can occur, and their potential severity.
- **Vulnerability identification** - Determine the impact of natural hazard events on the people, property, environment, economy, and lands of the region.
- **Cost evaluation** - Estimate the cost of potential damage or cost that can be avoided by mitigation.

The risk assessment for this hazard mitigation plan update evaluates the risk of natural hazards prevalent in the planning area and meets requirements of the DMA (44 CFR, Section 201.6(c)(2)).

### 5.1 IDENTIFIED HAZARDS OF CONCERN

For this plan, the Steering Committee considered the full range of natural hazards that could impact the planning area and then listed hazards that present the greatest concern. The process incorporated review of state and local hazard planning documents, as well as information on the frequency, magnitude, and costs associated with hazards that have impacted or could impact the planning area. Anecdotal information regarding natural hazards and the perceived vulnerability of the planning area's assets to them was also used. Table 2-1 lists the hazards identified in the previous TCRFC plan and the hazard ranking. Based on the review, this plan addresses the following hazards of concern:

- Dam/Levee Failure
- Drought
- Expansive Soils
- Extreme Heat
- Earthquake
- Flood
- Hail
- Hurricane and Tropical Storm
- Lightning
- Tornado
- Wildfire
- Wind
- Winter Weather

Several of these hazards were profiled together because of their common occurrence or damage assessments, such as drought and extreme heat, lightning, hail, and wind. Thunderstorms were profiled in the 2011-2016 TCRFC plan but were not profiled separately in this plan update; however, the hazards associated with thunderstorms (hail, wind, lightning, and flooding) were profiled. Coastal erosion was profiled in the *State of Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan*; however, coastal erosion was not profiled in this plan because of Wharton County's inland location. Furthermore, the steering committee considered the probability and potential impacts of the land subsidence hazard in the planning area and determined it to be of negligible risk in Wharton County. Therefore, land subsidence is not profiled in this plan update.

### 5.2 CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate includes patterns of temperature, precipitation, humidity, wind, and seasons. Climate plays a fundamental role in shaping natural ecosystems, and the human economies and cultures that depend on them. The term "climate change" refers to changes over a long period of time. It is generally perceived that

climate change will have a measurable impact on the occurrence and severity of natural hazards around the world. Impacts include the following:

- Snow cover losses will continue, and declining snowpack will affect snow-dependent water supplies and stream flow levels around the world.
- The risk of drought and the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves are expected to increase.
- More extreme precipitation is likely, increasing the risk of flooding.
- The world's average temperature is expected to increase.

Climate change will affect communities in a variety of ways. Impacts could include an increased risk for extreme events such as drought, storms, flooding, and wildfires; more heat-related stress; and the spread of existing or new vector-borne disease into a community. In many cases, communities are already facing these problems to some degree. Climate change influences the frequency, intensity, extent, or magnitude of the problems.

This hazard mitigation plan update addresses climate change as a secondary impact for each identified hazard of concern. Each chapter addressing one of the hazards of concern includes a section with a qualitative discussion on the probable impacts of climate change for that hazard. While many models are being developed to assess the potential impacts of climate change, none are currently available to support hazard mitigation planning. As these models are developed in the future, this risk assessment may be enhanced to better measure these impacts.

### 5.3 METHODOLOGY

The risk assessments in Chapter 8 through Chapter 17 describe the risks associated with each identified hazard of concern. Each chapter describes the hazard, the planning area's vulnerabilities, and probable event scenarios. The following steps were used to define the risk of each hazard:

- **Identify and profile each hazard** - The following information is given for each hazard:
  - Geographic areas most affected by the hazard
  - Event frequency estimates
  - Severity estimates
  - Warning time likely to be available for response
- **Determine exposure to each hazard** - Exposure was evaluated by overlaying hazard maps, when available, with an inventory of structures, facilities, and systems to identify which of them would be exposed to each hazard. When hazard mapping was not available, a more qualitative discussion of exposure is presented.
- **Assess the vulnerability of exposed facilities** - Vulnerability of exposed structures and infrastructure was evaluated by interpreting the probability of occurrence of each event and assessing structures, facilities, and systems that are exposed to each hazard. Tools such as geographic information system (GIS) and FEMA's hazard modeling program called Hazards, United States – Multi-Hazard, or HAZUS-MH, were used to perform this assessment for the dam/levee failure, earthquake, flood, and hurricane hazards. Outputs similar to those from HAZUS were generated for other hazards, using maps generated by the HAZUS program.

## 5.4 RISK ASSESSMENT TOOLS

### 5.4.1 Dam Failure, Earthquake, Flood, and Hurricane - HAZUS-MH

#### **Overview**

In 1997, FEMA developed the standardized HAZUS model to estimate losses caused by earthquakes and identify areas that face the highest risk and potential for loss. HAZUS was later expanded into a multi-hazard methodology, HAZUS-MH, with new models for estimating potential losses from dam failures, hurricanes, and floods.

HAZUS-MH is a GIS-based software program used to support risk assessments, mitigation planning, and emergency planning and response. It provides a wide range of inventory data, such as demographics, building stock, critical facility, transportation, and utility lifeline, and multiple models to estimate potential losses from natural disasters. The program maps and displays hazard data and the results of damage and economic loss estimates for buildings and infrastructure. Its advantages include the following:

- Provides a consistent methodology for assessing risk across geographic and political entities.
- Provides a way to save data so that it can readily be updated as population, inventory, and other factors change, and as mitigation planning efforts evolve.
- Facilitates the review of mitigation plans because it helps to ensure that FEMA methodologies are incorporated.
- Supports grant applications by calculating benefits using FEMA definitions and terminology.
- Produces hazard data and loss estimates that can be used when communicating with local stakeholders.
- Is administered by the local government and can be used to manage and update a hazard mitigation plan throughout its implementation.

#### **Levels of Detail for Evaluation**

HAZUS-MH provides default data for inventory, vulnerability, and hazards; this default data can be supplemented with local data to provide a more refined analysis. The model can carry out three levels of analysis, depending on the format and level of detail of information about the planning area:

- **Level 1** – All of the information needed to produce an estimate of losses is included in the software’s default data. These data are derived from national databases and describe in general terms the characteristic parameters of the planning area.
- **Level 2** – More accurate estimates of losses require more detailed information about the planning area. To produce Level 2 estimates of losses, detailed information is required about local geology, hydrology, hydraulics, and building inventory, as well as data about utilities and critical facilities. This information is needed in a GIS format.
- **Level 3** – This level of analysis generates the most accurate estimate of losses. It requires detailed engineering and geotechnical information to customize it for the planning area.

#### **Application for This Plan**

This risk assessment was conducted using HAZUS and GIS-based analysis methodology. The default HAZUS inventory database for Wharton County was updated with the updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs. This enabled a HAZUS Level 2 analysis to be performed on some of the profiled hazards.

The following methods were used to assess specific hazards for this plan:

- **Dam/Levee Failure** - Dam failure inundation mapping for the planning area was not available in a format usable with HAZUS. Therefore, dam failure inundation maps were not used for performing HAZUS risk analysis.
- **Earthquake** - A Level 2 analysis is typically performed to assess earthquake risk and exposure for counties with a peak ground acceleration (PGA) greater than 3%g (percentage of gravity) (*FEMA How-To Guidance, Understanding Your Risks*, FEMA 386-2, p. 1-7). No earthquake scenarios were selected for this plan since an earthquake event for the planning area is rare according to the *2013 State of Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan*. Only a minimum Level 1 HAZUS analysis was profiled using the 500-Year Probability Event scenario.
- **Flood** - A Level 2 flood analysis was performed using HAZUS.
- **Hurricane** - A HAZUS Level 2 analysis was performed to assess hurricane and tropical storm risk and exposure for coastal and near coastal communities. The probabilistic option in the HAZUS hurricane module was used for analysis of this hazard.

### 5.4.2 Other Hazards of Concern

For hazards of concern that are not directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical knowledge of the region was used for this assessment. The primary data source was the updated HAZUS inventory data updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs and augmented with state and federal data sets. Additional data sources for specific hazards were as follows:

- **Drought** - National Drought Mitigation Center, Census of Agriculture
- **Extreme Heat** - Western Regional Climate Center
- **Hail, Lightning, Tornado, Wind, and Winter Weather** - Data provided by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database.
- **Wildfire** - Information on wildfire hazards areas was provided by the Texas A&M Forest Service Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (TxWRAP), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Federal Wildfire History, Fire Program Analysis Fire-Occurrence Database (FPA-FOD), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildfire Hazard Potential data.

### 5.4.3 Limitations

Loss estimates, exposure assessments, and hazard-specific vulnerability evaluations rely on the best available data and methodologies. Uncertainties are inherent in any loss estimation methodology and arise in part from incomplete scientific knowledge concerning natural hazards and their effects on the built environment. Uncertainties also result from the following:

- Approximations and simplifications necessary to conduct a study
- Incomplete or outdated inventory, demographic, or economic parameter data
- The unique nature, geographic extent, and severity of each hazard
- Mitigation measures already employed
- The amount of advance notice residents have to prepare for a specific hazard event

These factors can affect loss estimates by a factor of two or more. Therefore, potential exposure and loss estimates are approximate and not deterministic. The results do not predict precise results and should be

*IDENTIFIED HAZARDS OF CONCERN AND RISK ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY*

---

used only to understand relative risk for planning purposes and not engineering. Over the long term, Wharton County and its planning partners will collect additional data to assist in estimating potential losses associated with other hazards.

## CHAPTER 6. WHARTON COUNTY PROFILE

Wharton County covers 1,094 square miles, of which 8 square miles is water and the rest is land. It is located in southeast Central Texas (Figure 6-1). The San Bernard River forms the northeastern border and the Colorado River bisects the county from northwest to southeast. The creeks in the county are Mustang Creek, West Bernard Creek, Blue Creek, Jones Creek, Peach Creek, and Caney Creek. The City of El Campo is the largest city and the City of Wharton is the county seat. As of the 2010 U.S. Census, Wharton County had a population of 41,280. The county has two hospitals, Gulf Coast Medical Center in the City of Wharton, and El Campo Memorial Hospital in the City of El Campo.



*Figure 6-1. Location of the Wharton County Planning Area within the State of Texas*

The main land uses in Wharton County are cattle ranching, and cotton and rice production. Wharton County is only 35 miles from the Gulf of Mexico and minutes away from Houston.

### 6.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Wharton County, named for brothers William and John Wharton, was established in 1846. It was created from parts of Matagorda, Jackson, and Colorado Counties. The majority of this section was summarized from the *Handbook of Texas Online* (Hudgins 2010).

The Anglo-American colonization began when 31 of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred" families received titles to land in present Wharton County. They located along the Colorado and San Bernard Rivers for access to building materials and stream transportation, but most built their homes along the Peach and Caney Creeks, as the Colorado River was prone to flooding. The settlers were mostly from southern states and their homesteads were copies of those they had left. Later settlement was located on the open prairies in the county's western areas, where European immigrants operated small family farms. Many individuals from the future Wharton County participated in the Texas Revolution.

Dispersed settlement in the county continued during the Republic of Texas period from 1836 to 1846. Aside from occasional farm settlements, the area was a near wilderness. Wharton County was established after

Texas statehood and the Mexican War in 1846. The act that formed Wharton County established the county seat to be named Wharton, located on the northeast bank of the Colorado River.

The first county courthouse was built in 1848 but was so poorly constructed that it was replaced in 1852. Wharton County resembled parts of the Deep South; one plantation was over 4,500 acres and the county had 16,784 acres of land under cultivation. Prior to the Civil War, the largest plantation and sugar mill in Texas were located in Wharton County. Completion of the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos, and Colorado Railway extensions across the northwest corner of the county by 1860 improved commodity prices, though roads to the railroad line remained poor. Residents joined the Confederate War effort as part of Terry's Texas Rangers, the Home Guards, or the Wharton Rifles. No fighting occurred in Wharton County, but the Civil War destroyed the county's plantation economy. Plantations were converted into cattle ranges and many residents left for Mexico. The resulting commercial and agricultural depression was heightened by a national depression in 1873.

Cattle raising replaced the plantation system as Wharton County's major industry after the Civil War. Abel Head Pierce acquired vast acreage on the west side of the Colorado, with a cattle empire that stretched over three counties, encompassing 500,000 acres, of which 30,000 were in Wharton County. After his death in 1900, his nephew, A. P. Borden, facilitated the first major importation of Brahmans to the United States (specifically Wharton County) in 1906. Wharton County became the second largest cattle producing area in the state. Japanese families came to the area and began rice farming on land just opposite the Town of Wharton on the west bank of the Colorado River. Irrigation from three canal systems built from the Colorado River around 1900 helped farmers diversify and turn to rice as a dependable cash crop. By 1930, Wharton County was a leader in Texas for rice production. During World War I, Wharton County contributed men to the armed forces and organized home guards.

One of the world's largest sulfur deposits, the Boling Dome, was discovered in 1923. Drilling for oil began in 1904 southwest of the Town of El Campo, but the first productive oil well was drilled east of the Colorado River in the Boling Field in 1925. Between 1925 and 1973 over 230 million barrels of crude oil were produced in the county. Several natural gas transmission plants were built around 1944 boosting pressure and sending natural gas north from the area fields.

Farm tenancy in the county peaked in 1930, when a majority of the farms were operated by tenant families. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, public works projects upgraded county and federal facilities. During World War II, federal funds were used to establish community centers for servicemen at Wharton and El Campo; the 47th Battalion of the Texas State Guard had its headquarters in Wharton County.

From 1960 to 1970 Wharton County's population declined, but between 1970 and 1982 it increased in the urban areas. In 1970, the county was the leading Texas rice producer and third among Texas counties in beef cattle production. In the 1980s, 94% of the county land was in farms and ranches, and 64% of farmland was under cultivation. County-wide ranching continued, and the county was second in the state in sorghum production. Scientifically managed farms and ranches replaced the county's earlier plantation system.

## **6.2 MAJOR PAST HAZARD EVENTS**

Federal disaster declarations are typically issued for hazard events that cause more damage than state and local governments can handle without assistance from the federal government. However, no specific dollar loss threshold has been established for these declarations. A federal disaster declaration puts federal recovery programs into motion to help disaster victims, businesses, and public entities. Some of the programs are matched by state programs. The planning area has experienced 17 events between 1990 and 2015 for which federal disaster declarations were issued. These events are listed in Table 6-1.

Review of these events helps identify targets for risk reduction and ways to increase a community's capability to avoid large-scale events in the future. Still, many natural hazard events do not trigger federal disaster declaration protocol but have significant impacts on their communities. These events are also

important to consider in establishing recurrence intervals for hazards of concern. More detailed event tables can be found in the individual hazard profile sections.

**TABLE 6-1.  
FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATIONS IN WHARTON COUNTY**

Disaster Declaration <sup>a</sup>	Description	Incident Date
DR-4223	Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, and Flooding	5/4/2015 - 6/22/2015
DR-1791	Hurricane Ike	9/7/2008 - 10/2/2008
EM-3294	Hurricane Ike	9/7/2008 - 9/26/2008
EM-3290	Hurricane Gustav	8/27/2008 - 9/7/2008
EM-3277	Hurricane Dean	8/17/2007 - 9/5/2007
DR-1624	Extreme Wildfire Threat	11/27/2005 - 5/14/2006
DR-1606	Hurricane Rita	9/23/2005 - 10/14/2005
EM-3261	Hurricane Rita	9/20/2005 - 10/14/2005
EM-3216	Hurricane Katrina Evacuation	8/29/2005 - 10/1/2005
DR-1434	Tropical Storm Fay	9/6/2002 - 9/30/2002
EM-3142	Extreme Fire Hazards	8/1/1999 - 12/10/1999
DR-1257	Flooding	10/17/1998 - 11/15/1998
DR-1239	Tropical Storm Charley	8/22/1998 - 8/31/1998
DR-1041	Severe Thunderstorms and Flooding	10/14/1994 - 11/8/1994
EM-3113	Extreme Fire Hazard	8/30/1993 - 11/15/1993
DR-930	Severe Thunderstorms	12/20/1991 - 1/14/1992
DR-863	Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding	4/15/1990 - 5/29/1990

a. Federal disaster declarations are coded as follows: DR = Major Disaster Declaration; EM = Emergency Declaration

Source: FEMA Disaster Declarations Summary - Open Government Dataset  
(<http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/28318?id=6292>)

## 6.3 CLIMATE

Wharton County is hot and humid in the summer and cool in winter. Average temperatures range from 92.7°F in the summer to 43.8°F in the winter. The Western Regional Climate Center reports data from the Columbus weather station in Wharton County. Table 6-2 contains temperature summaries for the station. Figure 6-2 graphs the daily temperature averages and extremes from May 1, 1902, through March 30, 2013. Figure 6-4 and Figure 6-5 show the geographic distribution of annual average minimum and annual average maximum temperatures in Wharton County compared to the State of Texas from 1981 to 2010.



<b>TABLE 6-2. WHARTON COUNTY TEMPERATURE SUMMARIES COLUMBUS STATION</b>	
Period of record	1902 - 2012
Winter <sup>a</sup> Average Minimum Temperature	43.8°F
Winter <sup>a</sup> Mean Temperature	54.7°F
Summer <sup>a</sup> Average Maximum Temperature	92.7°F
Summer <sup>a</sup> Mean Temperature	82.2°F
Maximum Temperature (and Date)	105°F, August 12, 1911
Minimum Temperature (and Date)	20°F, February 17, 1903
Average Annual Number of Days >90°F	113.6
Average Annual Number of Days <32°F	12.3
a. Winter: December, January, February; Summer: June, July, August b. Temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit Source: Western Regional Climate Center, <a href="http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?tx6750">http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?tx6750</a>	

Source: Western Regional Climate Center, <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?tx2768>

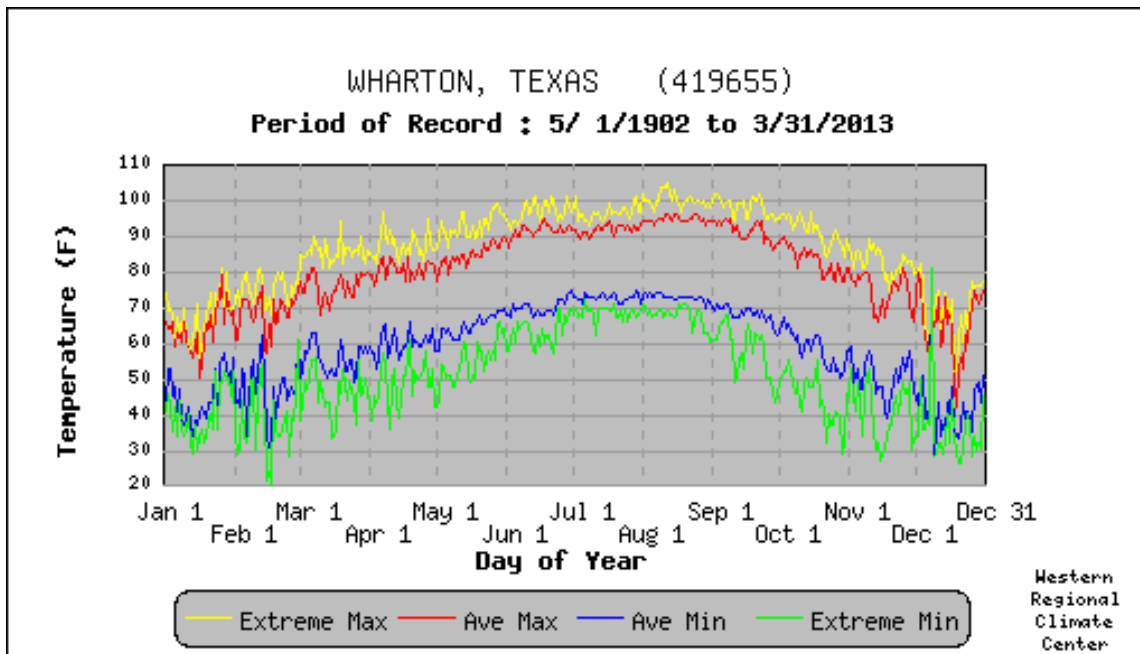


Figure 6-2. Wharton Station Monthly Temperature Data (5/1/1902 – 3/30/2013)

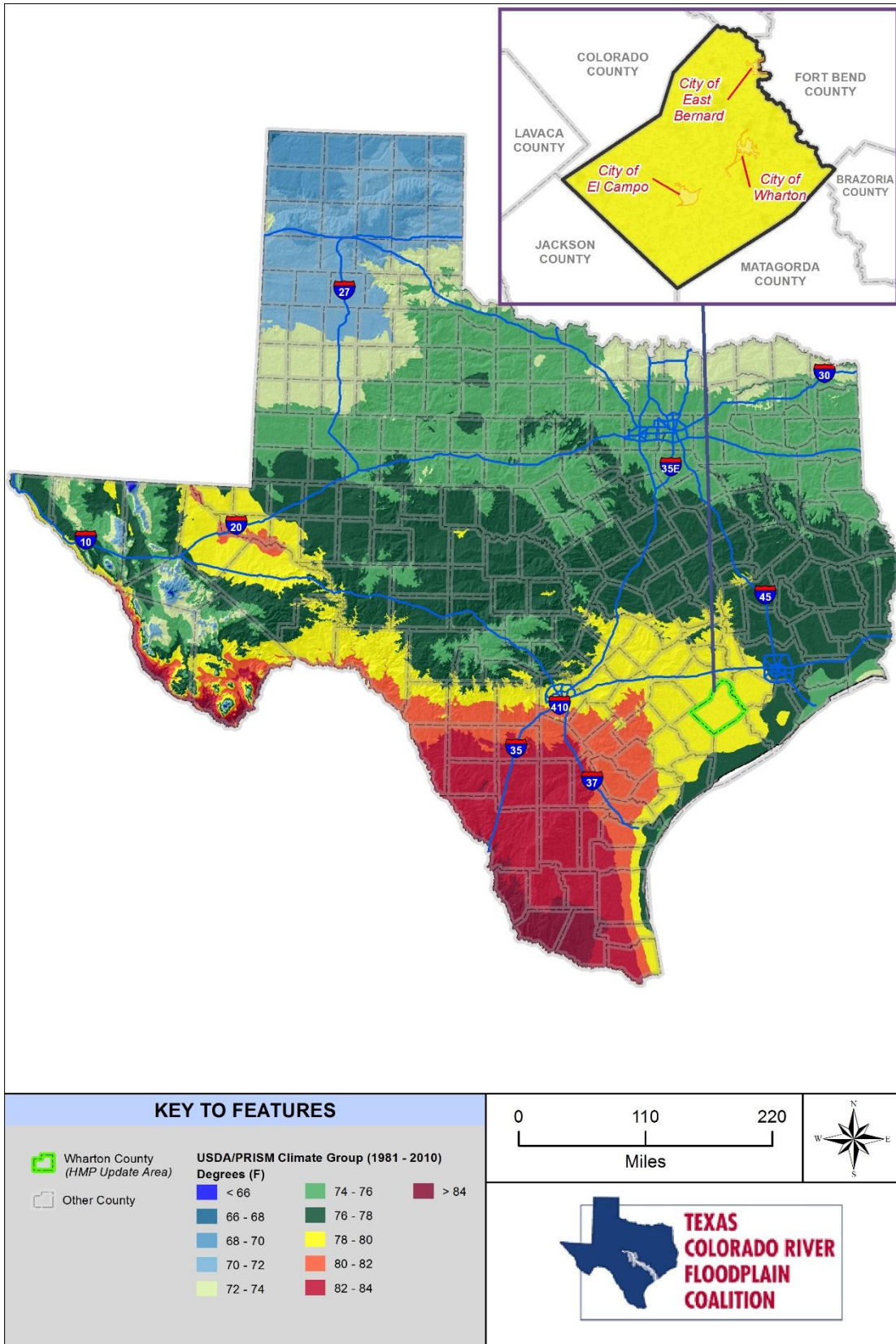


Figure 6-3. Annual Average Maximum Temperature (1981-2010)

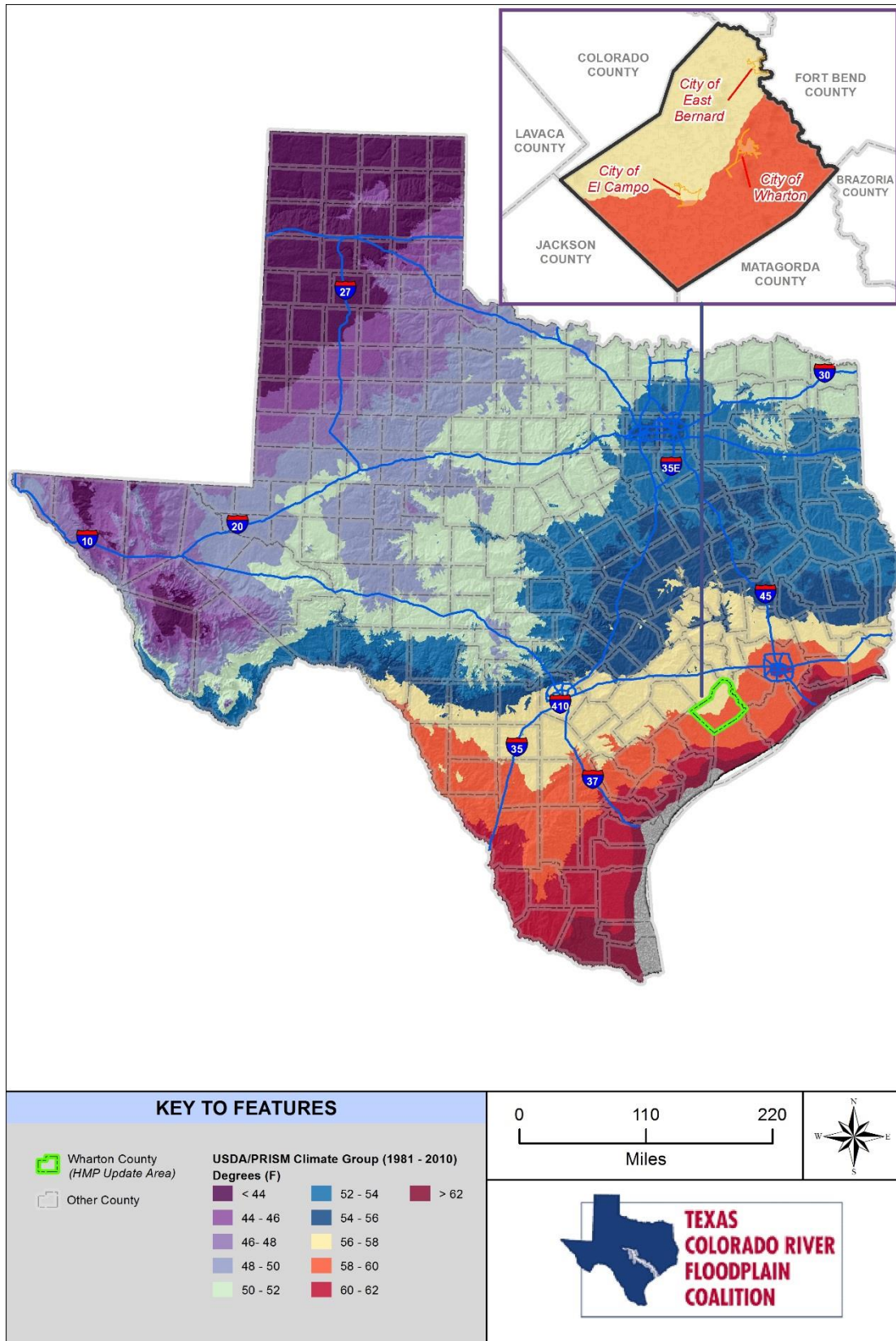


Figure 6-4. Annual Average Minimum Temperature (1981-2010)

Rainfall is uniformly distributed throughout the year, reaching a slight peak in spring. Snowfalls are infrequent. Precipitation is highest in September. The average annual precipitation is 42.73 inches. Severe thunderstorm occur mostly in the spring. Based on information measured by the National Lightning Detection Network, the State of Texas is ranked 17th in the nation for cloud-to-ground lightning flashes per square mile from 1997 to 2010. The average flashes during this timeframe was 11.3 per square mile.

Figure 6-5 shows the average monthly precipitation in Wharton County. Figure 6-6 shows geographic distribution of annual average precipitation in Wharton County compared to the State of Texas.

Source: <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?tx2768>

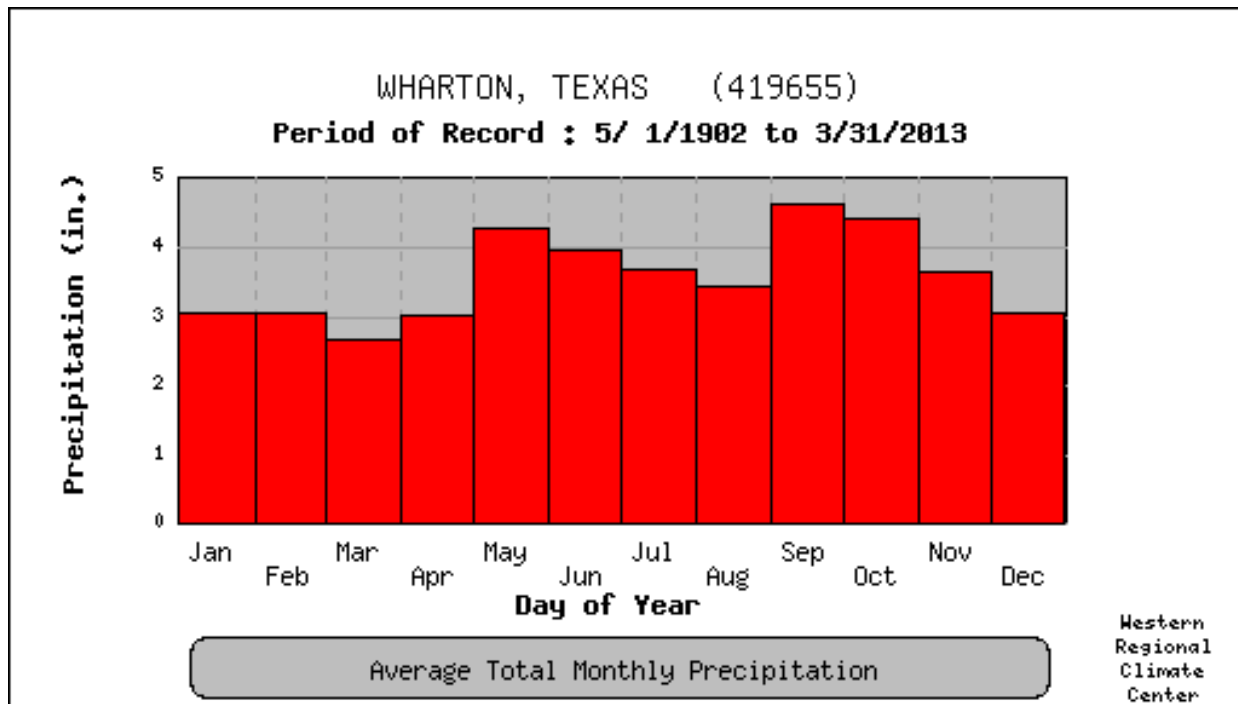


Figure 6-5. Average Monthly Precipitation (1968-1995)

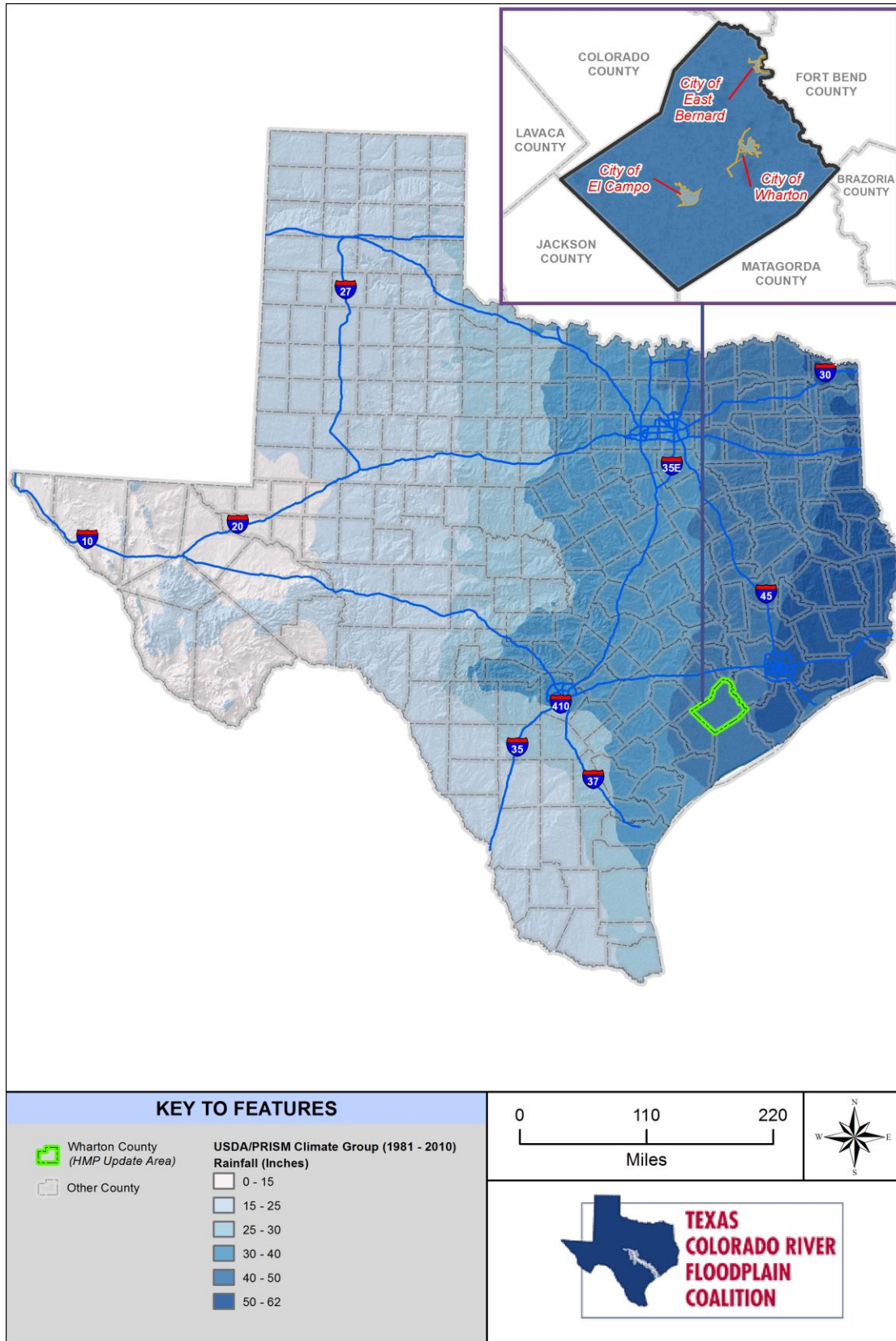


Figure 6-6. Geographic Distribution of Annual Average Precipitation (1981-2010)

## 6.4 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Texas is broadly divided into four regions by physical geography features such as landforms, climate, and vegetation. Wharton County is in southeast Central Texas. It lies in the Gulf Coastal Plain Land Resource Area of the Coastal Plains Natural Region. Figure 6-7 shows the Texas natural regions with Wharton County highlighted.

The major natural drainage ways in the county are the San Bernard River and the Colorado River, which carry water from the creeks. Most of the county is nearly level to gently sloping. The western part of the county has slopes of a five-foot fall in one mile, and the eastern part of the county has slopes of a two-foot fall in one mile. Thus runoff moves very slowly off the soil and most runoff is carried in constructed ditches to the rivers.

Loam, sand, coastal clay, and alluvial soils are predominate in Wharton County. Natural resources include salt domes, sand and gravel, oil, gas, and sulfur; all have been tapped for commercial and industry use.

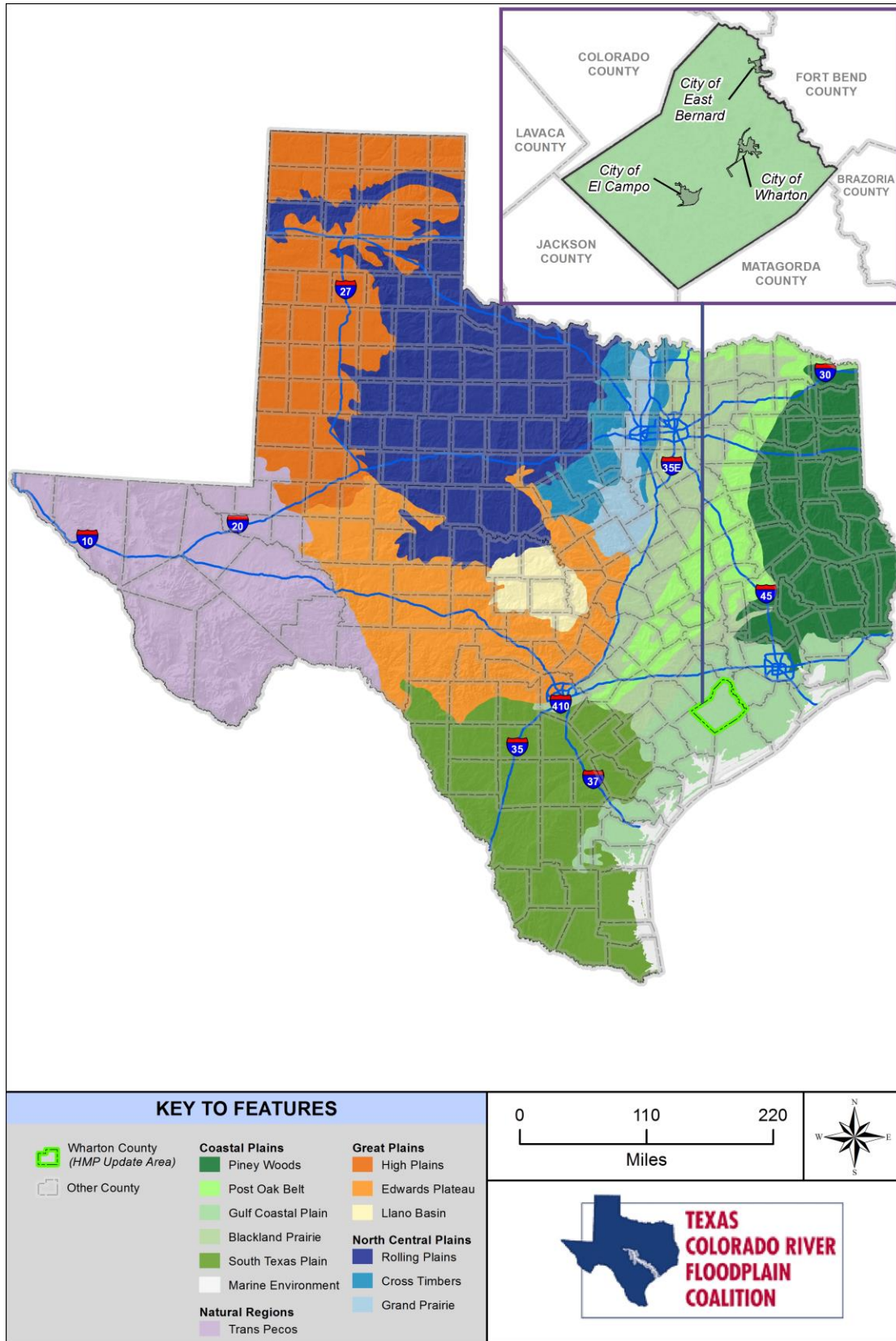


Figure 6-7. Natural Regions of Texas and Wharton County

## 6.5 CRITICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Critical facilities and infrastructure are essential to the health and welfare of the population. These assets become especially important after a hazard event. As defined for this hazard mitigation plan update, critical facilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Essential services facilities:
  - Public safety facilities (police stations, fire and rescue stations, emergency vehicle and equipment storage, and, emergency operation centers)
  - Emergency medical facilities (hospitals, ambulance service centers, urgent care centers having emergency treatment functions, and non-ambulatory surgical structures but excluding clinics, doctors' offices, and non-urgent care medical structures that do not provide these functions)
  - Designated emergency shelters
  - Communications (main hubs for telephone, broadcasting equipment for cable systems, satellite dish systems, cellular systems, television, radio, and other emergency warning systems, but excluding towers, poles, lines, cables, and conduits)
  - Public utility plant facilities for generation and distribution (hubs, treatment plants, substations and pumping stations for water, power and gas, but not including towers, poles, power lines, buried pipelines, transmission lines, distribution lines, and service lines)
  - Air transportation lifelines (airports [municipal and larger], helicopter pads and structures serving emergency functions, and associated infrastructure [aviation control towers, air traffic control centers, and emergency equipment aircraft hangars])
- Hazardous materials facilities:
  - Chemical and pharmaceutical plants
  - Laboratories containing highly volatile, flammable, explosive, toxic, or water-reactive materials
  - Refineries
  - Hazardous waste storage and disposal sites
  - Aboveground gasoline or propane storage or sales centers
- At-risk population facilities:
  - Elder care centers (nursing homes)
  - Congregate care serving 12 or more individuals (day care and assisted living)
  - Public and private schools (pre-schools, K-12 schools, before-school and after-school care serving 12 or more children)
- Facilities vital to restoring normal services:
  - Essential government operations (public records, courts, jails, building permitting and inspection services, community administration and management, maintenance and equipment centers)
  - Essential structures for public colleges and universities (dormitories, offices, and classrooms only)

Table 6-3 and Table 6-4 summarize the critical facilities and infrastructure in each municipality and unincorporated county areas. This information was obtained from HAZUS-MH, county assessor data, or from community personnel.



<b>TABLE 6-3. CRITICAL FACILITIES IN THE PLANNING AREA</b>					
<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>City of East Bernard</b>	<b>City of El Campo</b>	<b>City of Wharton</b>	<b>Unincorporated or Other</b>	<b>Wharton County Total</b>
Fire Stations	0	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
Police Stations	0	2	2	0	<b>4</b>
Medical and Health	0	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
Emergency Operations Center	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
School	3	7	5	0	<b>15</b>
Hazardous Materials	1	2	0	1	<b>4</b>
Government Functions	1	1	2	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>TABLE 6-4. CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE PLANNING AREA</b>					
<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>City of East Bernard</b>	<b>City of El Campo</b>	<b>City of Wharton</b>	<b>Unincorporated or Other</b>	<b>Wharton County Total</b>
Communication	0	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
Power Facility	1	0	1	2	<b>4</b>
Potable Water/ Wastewater Facility	1	1	3	1	<b>6</b>
Dam Location	0	0	0	12	<b>12</b>
Airport Facility	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Airport Runway	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Other Transportation	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Bridge	1	20	17	286	<b>324</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>351</b>

Figure 6-8 through Figure 6-15 show the location of critical facilities and infrastructure in the county and participating cities. Due to the sensitivity of this information, a detailed list of facilities is not provided. The list is on file with each planning partner. Critical facilities and infrastructure were analyzed in HAZUS to help rank risk and identify mitigation actions. The risk assessment for each hazard discusses critical facilities and infrastructure with regard to that hazard.

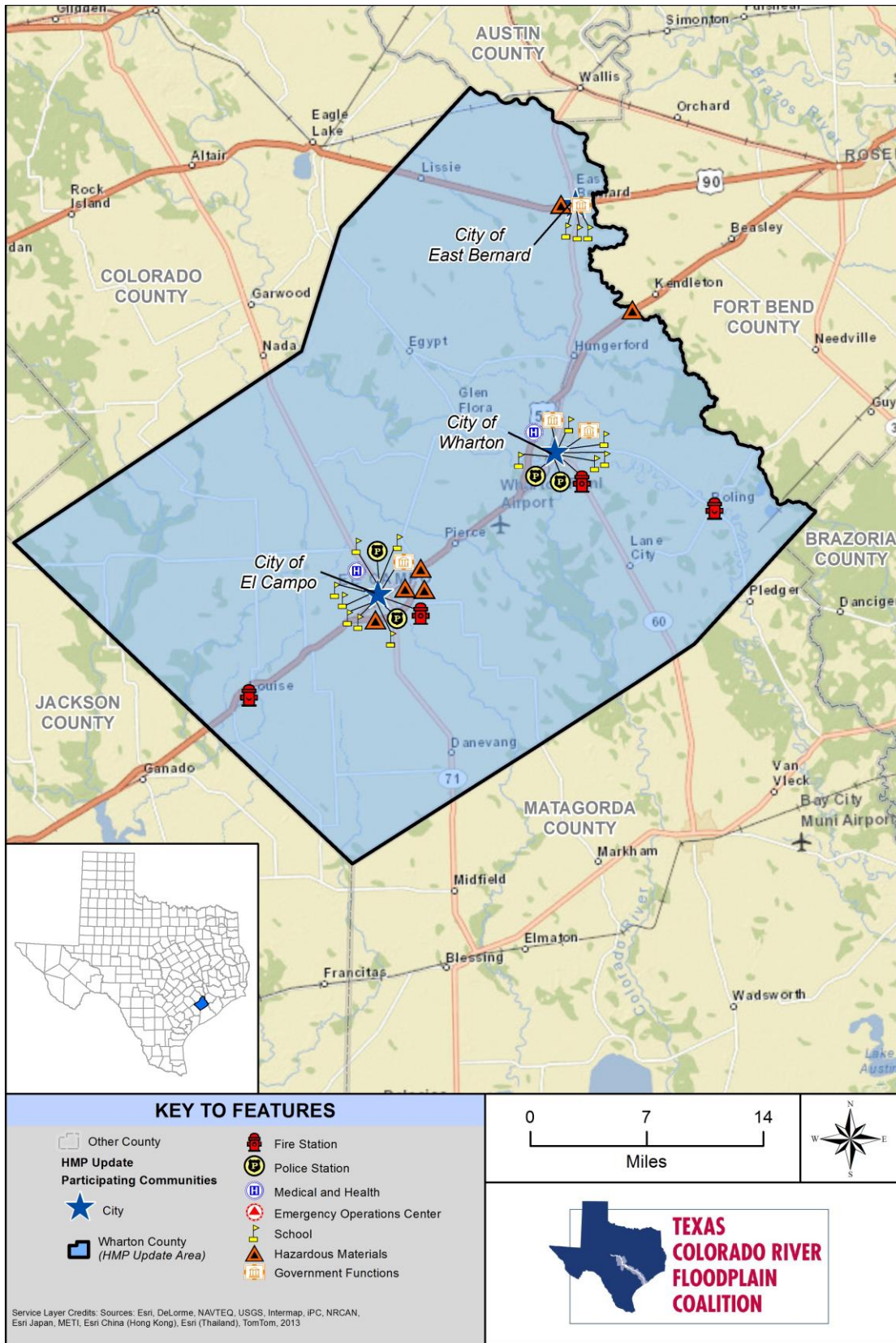


Figure 6-8. Critical Facilities in Wharton County

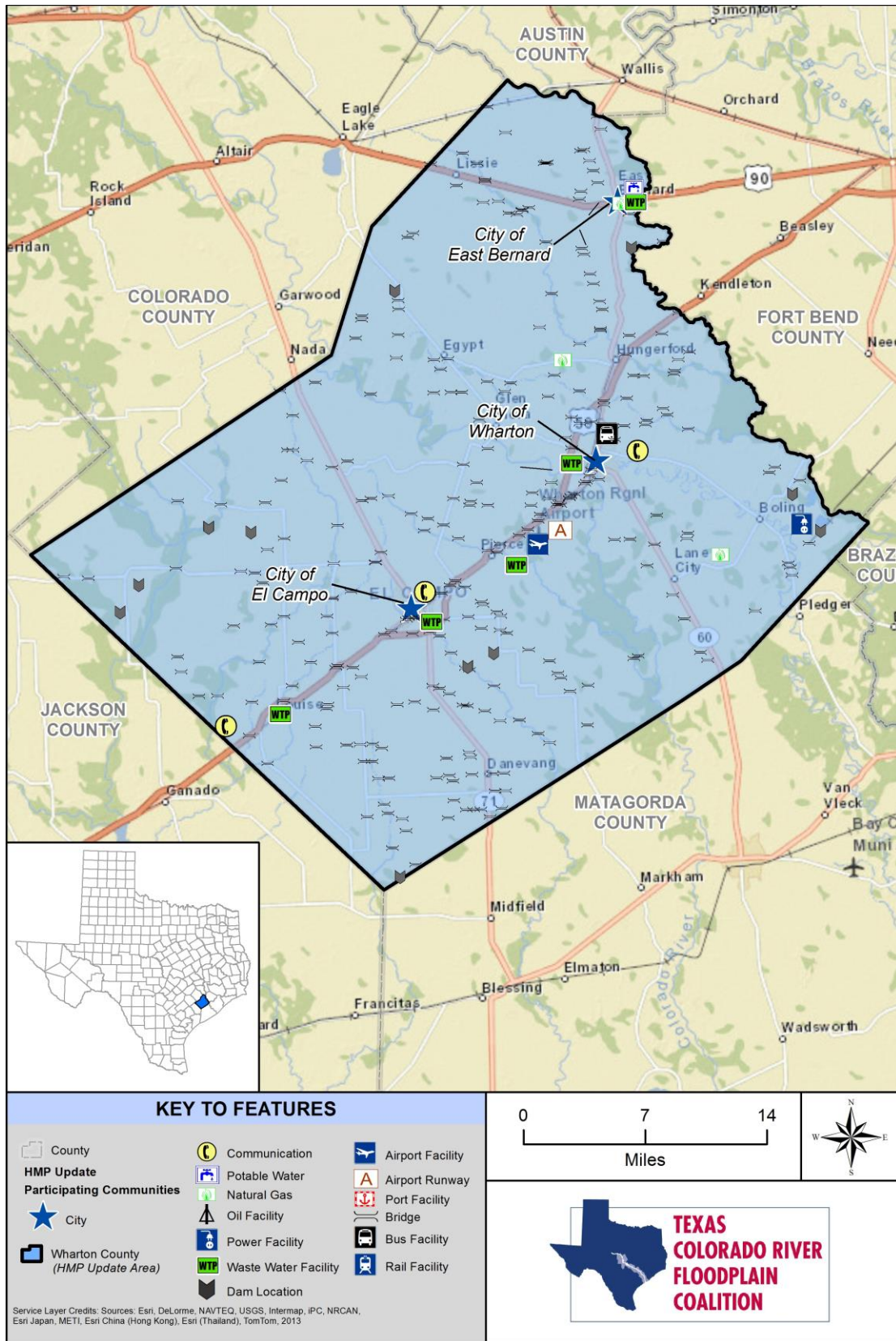


Figure 6-9. Critical Infrastructure in Wharton County

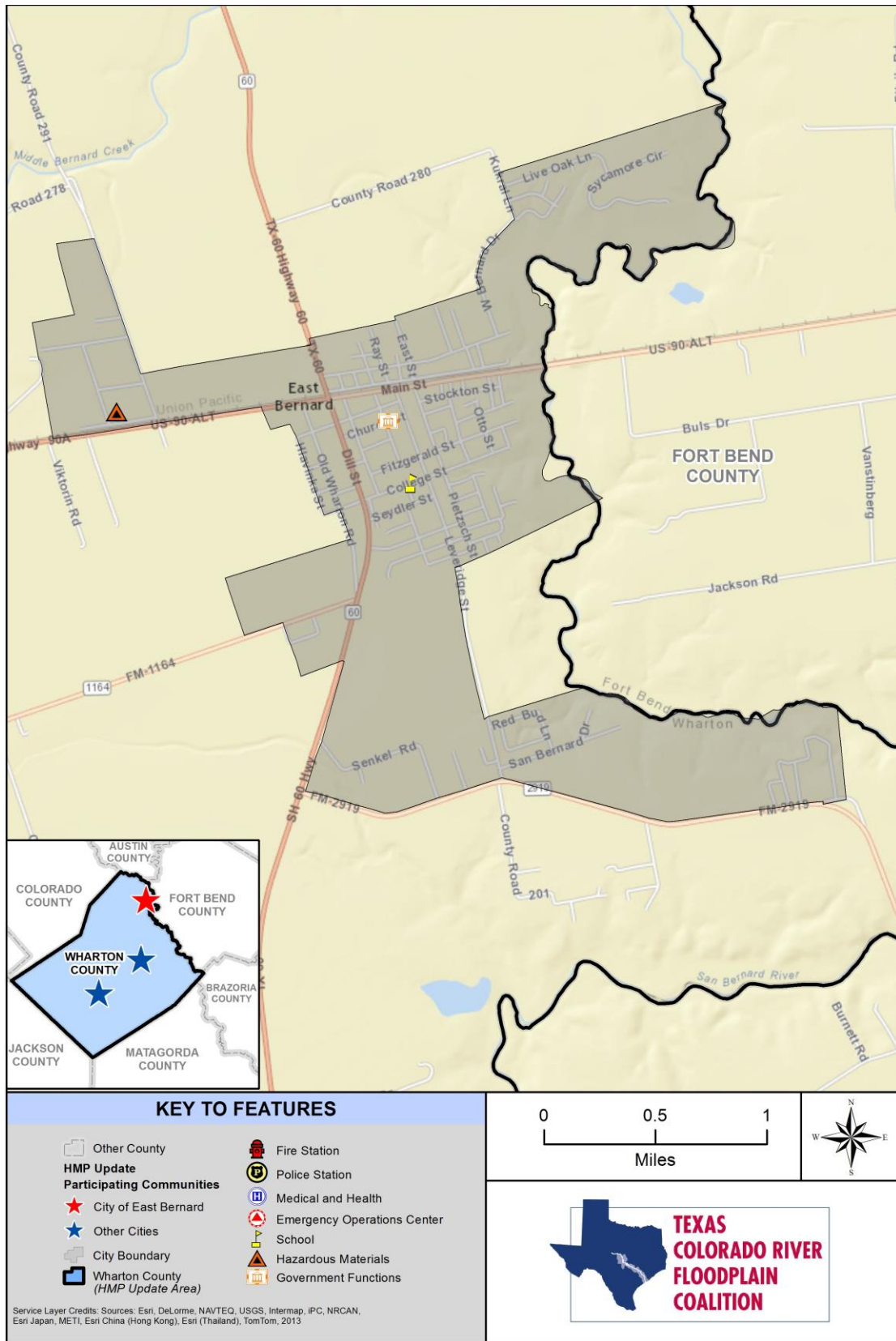


Figure 6-10. Critical Facilities in the City of East Bernard

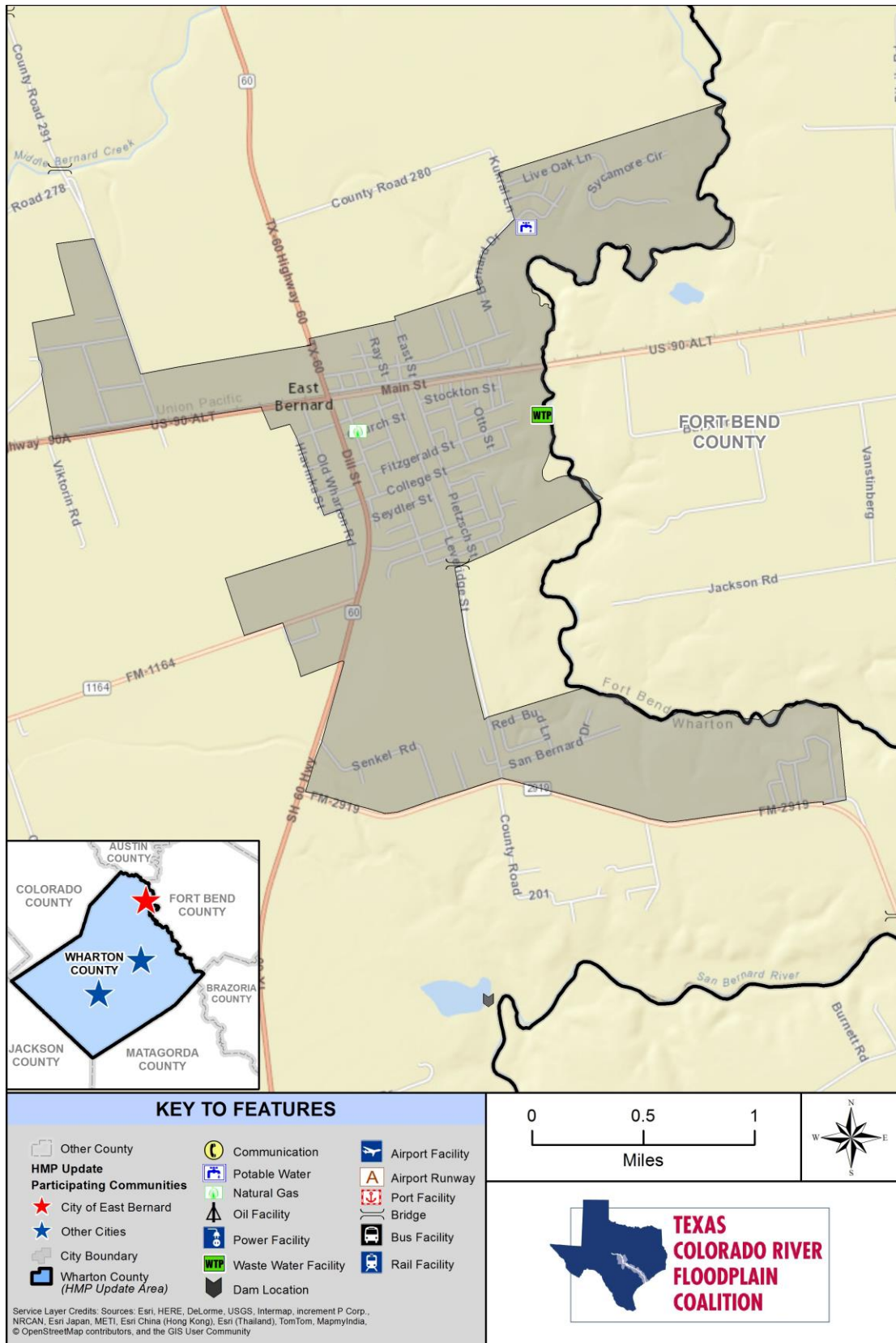


Figure 6-11. Critical Infrastructure in the City of East Bernard

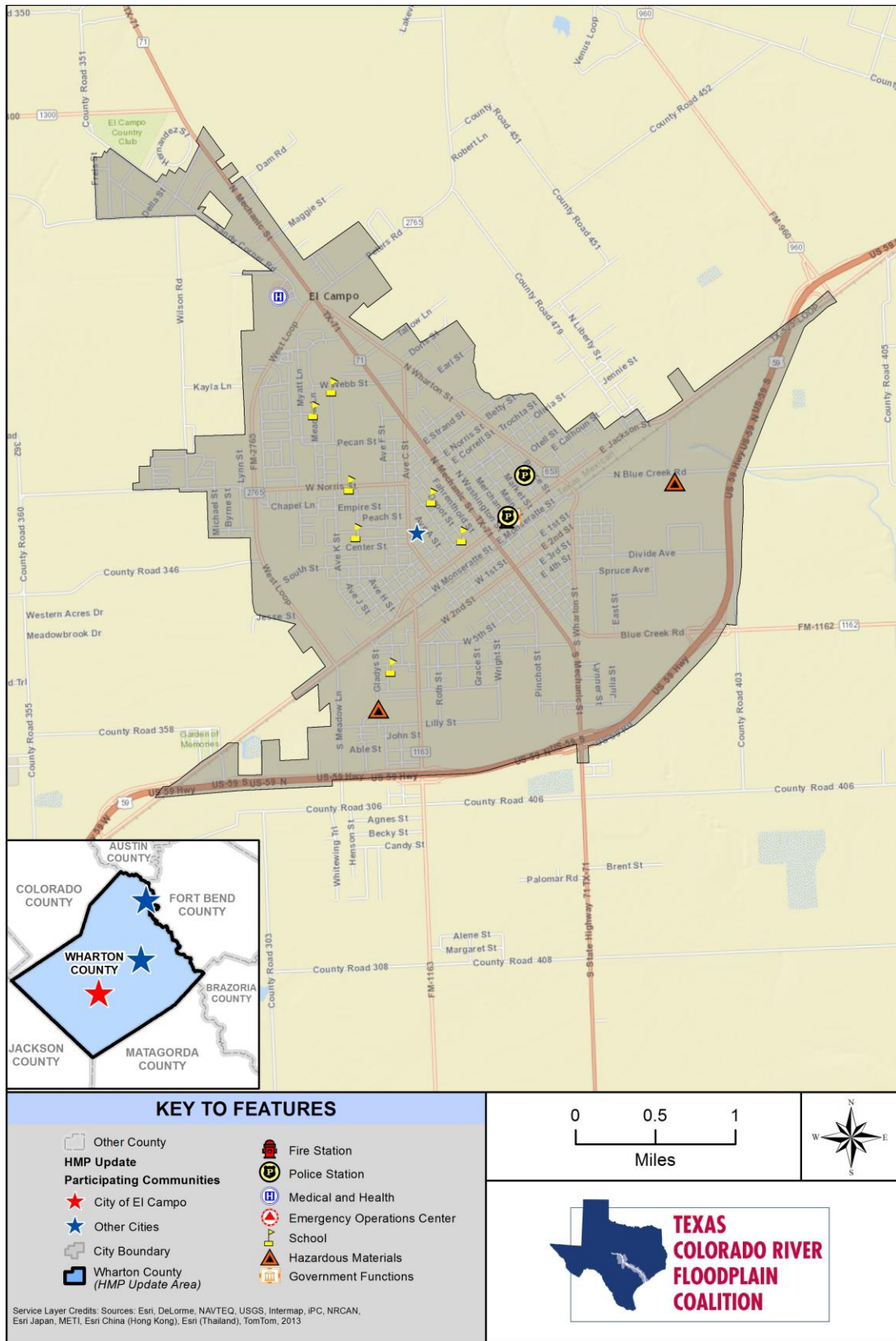


Figure 6-12. Critical Facilities in the City of El Campo

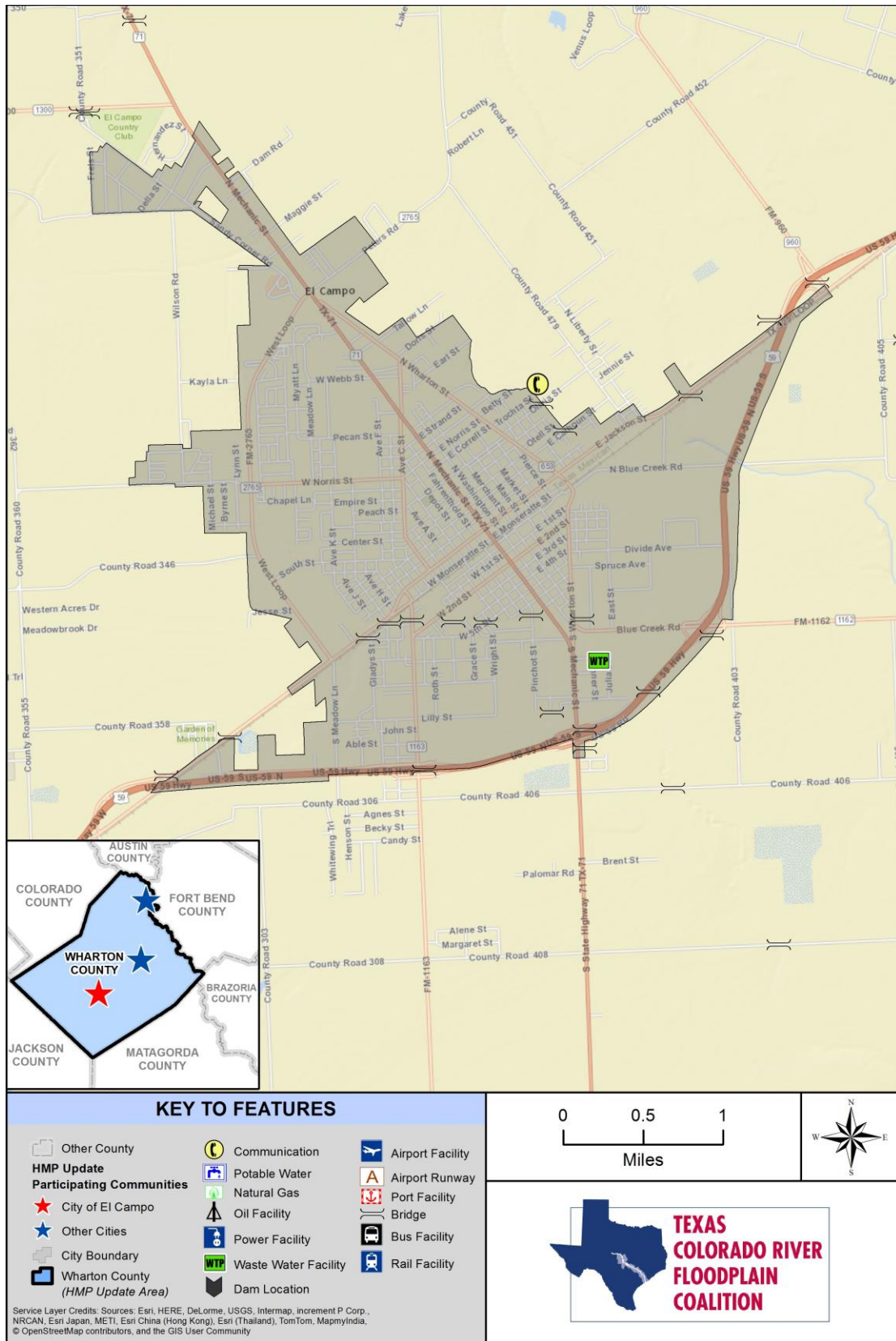


Figure 6-13. Critical Infrastructure in the City of El Campo



Figure 6-14. Critical Facilities in the City of Wharton



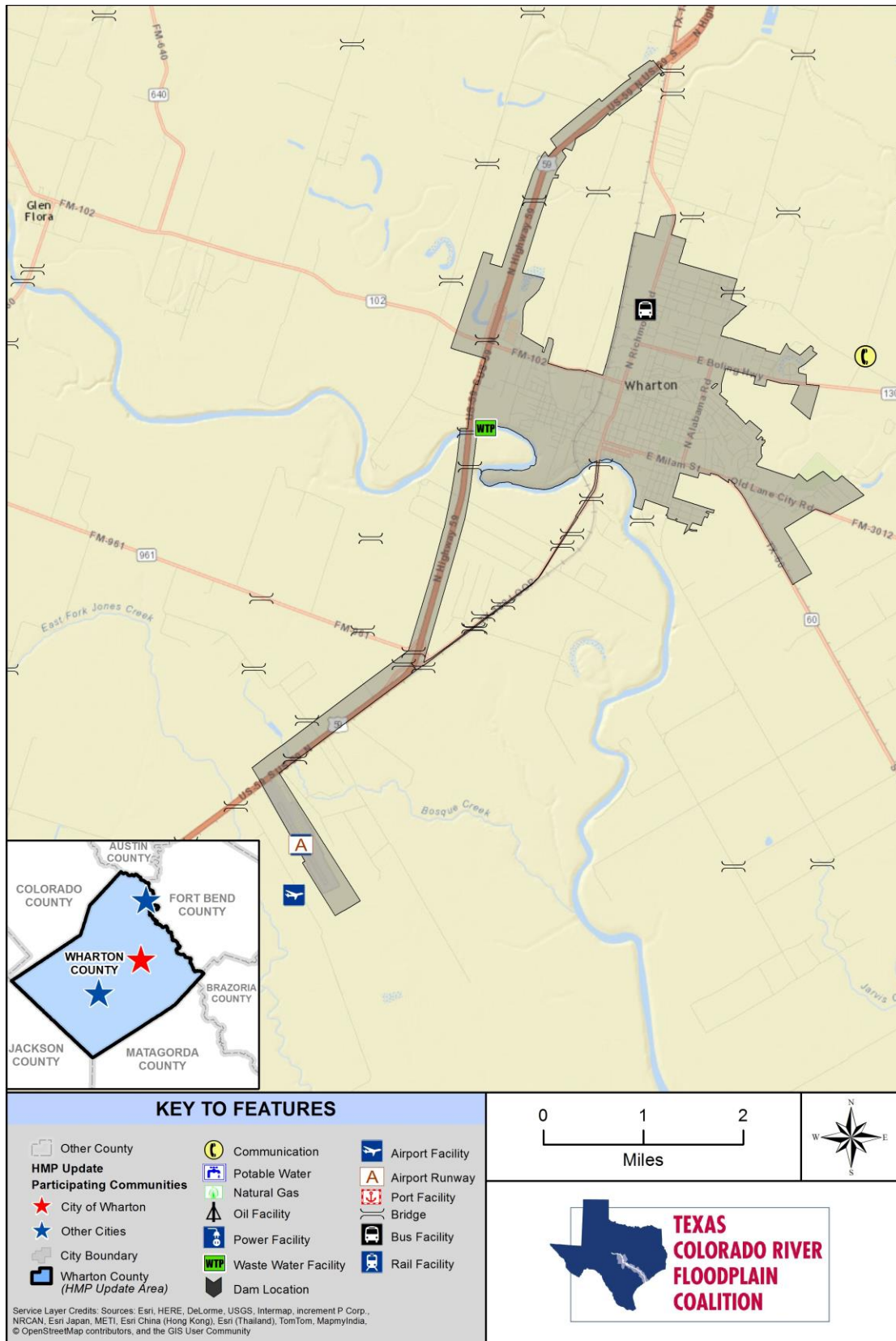


Figure 6-15. Critical Infrastructure in the City of Wharton

## 6.6 DEMOGRAPHICS

Information on current and historic population levels and future population projections is needed for making informed decisions about future planning. Population directly relates to land needs such as housing, industry, stores, public facilities and services, and transportation. Population changes are useful socio-economic indicators, as a growing population generally indicates a growing economy, and a decreasing population signifies economic decline.

Some populations are at greater risk from hazard events because of decreased resources or physical abilities. Elderly people, for example, may be more likely to require additional assistance. Research has shown that people living near or below the poverty line, the elderly (especially older single men), the disabled, women, children, ethnic minorities and renters all experience, to some degree, more severe effects from disasters than the general population. These vulnerable populations may vary from the general population in risk perception; living conditions; access to information before, during and after a hazard event; capabilities during an event; and access to resources for post-disaster recovery. Indicators of vulnerability—such as disability, age, poverty, and minority race and ethnicity—often overlap spatially and often in the geographically most vulnerable locations. Detailed spatial analysis to locate areas where there are higher concentrations of vulnerable community members would assist the county and participating cities in extending focused public outreach and education to these most vulnerable citizens. Select U.S. Census demographic and social characteristics for Wharton County are shown in Table 6-5.

	Wharton County	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton
<b>Gender/Age</b> (% of Total Population)				
Male	49.0	49.4	48.1	47.2
Female	51.0	50.6	51.9	52.8
Under 5 years	7.1	3.4	9.2	6.8
65 years and over	14.9	14.8	15.4	14.7
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b> (% of Total Population)				
White	81.3	91.2	85.8	64.5
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.2
Asian	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
Black or African American	14.8	7.4	11.9	30.1
More Than One Race	1.0	0.7	0.0	2.3
Hispanic or Latino (of any race) <sup>1</sup>	38.0	23.3	50.0	40.0
<b>Education</b>				
High School Graduate or Higher (% of Total Population, 25+ years)	72.2	79.4	68.3	71.2
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, <a href="http://factfinder.census.gov">factfinder.census.gov</a>				
<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau considers the Hispanic/Latino designation an ethnicity, not a race. The population self-identified as “Hispanic/Latino” is also represented within the categories in the “Race” demographic.				

### 6.6.1 Population

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated a population of 41,185 for Wharton County as of July 2013. Table 6-6 shows planning area population data from 1990 through 2013. The total Wharton County population

increased 3.1% from 1990 to 2000 and increased only by a few persons from 2000 to 2013; thus, the population has continued to grow since 1990. The Cities of El Campo and Wharton are the county’s principal population centers.

<b>TABLE 6-6. WHARTON COUNTY POPULATION</b>				
	Total Population			
	1990	2000	2010	2013 <sup>a</sup>
City of East Bernard	1,544	1,729	2,272	2,430
City of El Campo	10,511	10,945	11,602	11,554
City of Wharton	9,011	9,237	8,832	8,782
Unincorporated Areas <sup>b</sup>	18,889	19,277	18,574	18,419
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>39,955</b>	<b>41,188</b>	<b>41,280</b>	<b>41,185</b>

Source: Texas State Library and Archives Commission and Texas Association of Counties  
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/abouttx/population.html>  
<http://www.county.org/about-texas-counties/county-data/Documents/towns.html><sup>1</sup>

a. Data from Texas Association of Counties  
 b. Includes non-participating communities

Figure 6-16 shows 5-year population changes in Wharton County and the State of Texas from 1990 to 2010 and the 3-year change from 2010 to 2013. Between 1990 and 2013, the State of Texas’ population grew by 53% (about 2.3% per year) while Wharton County’s population increased by 3% (0.13% per year).

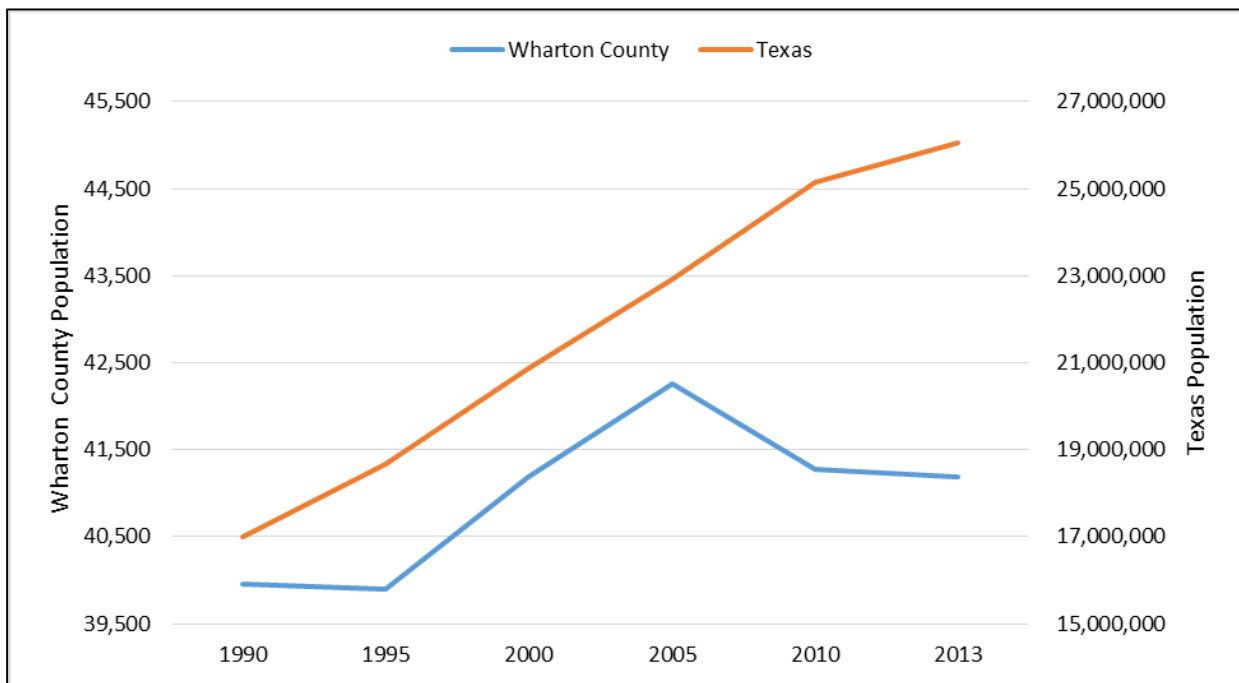


Figure 6-16. State of Texas and Wharton County Population Growth

### 6.6.2 Age Distribution

As a group, the elderly are more apt to lack the physical and economic resources necessary for response to hazard events and are more likely to suffer health-related consequences making recovery slower. They are more likely to be vision, hearing, or mobility impaired, and more likely to experience mental impairment or dementia. Additionally, the elderly are more likely to live in assisted-living facilities where emergency preparedness occurs at the discretion of facility operators. These facilities are typically identified as “critical facilities” by emergency managers because they require extra notice to implement evacuation. Elderly residents living in their own homes may have more difficulty evacuating their homes and could be stranded in dangerous situations. This population group is more likely to need special medical attention, which may not be readily available during natural disasters due to isolation caused by the event. Specific planning attention for the elderly is an important consideration given the current aging of the national population.

Children under 14 are particularly vulnerable to disaster events because of their young age and dependence on others for basic necessities. Very young children may additionally be vulnerable to injury or sickness; this vulnerability can be worsened during a natural disaster because they may not understand the measures that need to be taken to protect themselves from hazards.

The overall age distribution for the planning area is illustrated in Figure 6-17 Based on U.S. Census data estimates, 14.9% of the planning area’s population is 65 or older. U.S. Census data does not provide information regarding disabilities in the planning area’s over-65 population. U.S. Census estimates for 2013 indicate that 24.7% of Wharton County families have children under 18 and are below the poverty line.

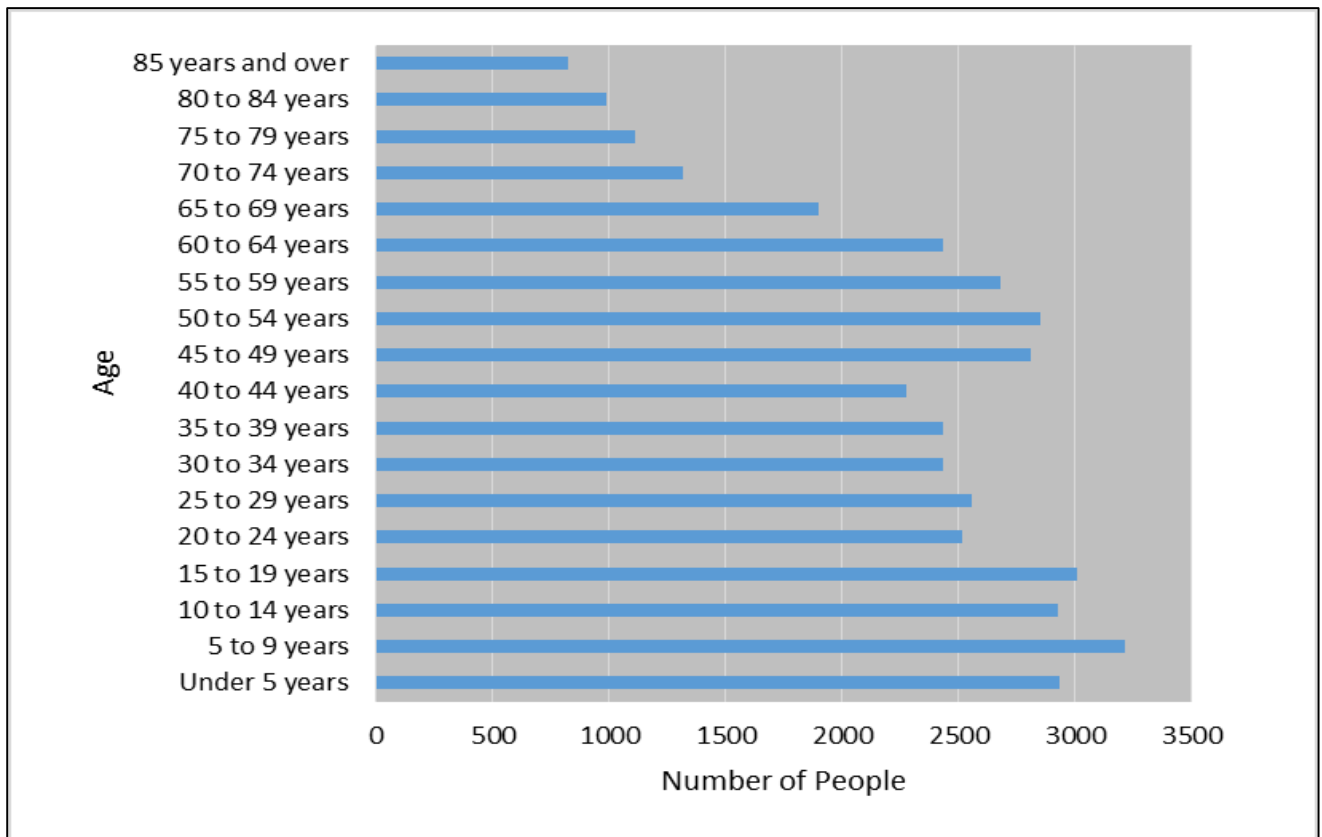


Figure 6-17. Wharton County Age Distribution

### 6.6.3 Disabled Populations

The 2010 U.S. Census estimated that 57 million non-institutionalized Americans with disabilities live in the U.S. This equates to about one-in-five persons. People with disabilities are more likely to have difficulty responding to a hazard event than the general population. Local government is the first level of response to assist these individuals, and coordination of efforts to meet their access and functional needs is paramount to life safety efforts. It is important for emergency managers to distinguish between functional and medical needs in order to plan for incidents that require evacuation and sheltering. Knowing the percentage of population with a disability will allow emergency management personnel and first responders to have personnel available who can provide services needed by those with access and functional needs. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 43.5% of the population in the planning area lives with some form of disability.

### 6.6.4 Ethnic Populations

Research shows that minorities are less likely to be involved in pre-disaster planning and experience higher mortality rates during a disaster event. Post-disaster recovery can be less effective for ethnic populations and is often characterized by cultural insensitivity. Since higher proportions of ethnic minorities live below the poverty line than the majority white population, poverty can compound vulnerability. According to the 2013 U.S. Census, the ethnic composition of Wharton County is predominantly white, at about 81.3%. The largest minority population is Hispanic or Latino at 38.0%. Figure 6-18 shows the population distribution by race and ethnicity in Wharton County. The values shown on Figure 6-18 exceed 100% because according to the U.S. Census, Hispanic or Latino is listed as an ethnicity, not a race. Therefore, the Hispanic or Latino designation encompasses several races.

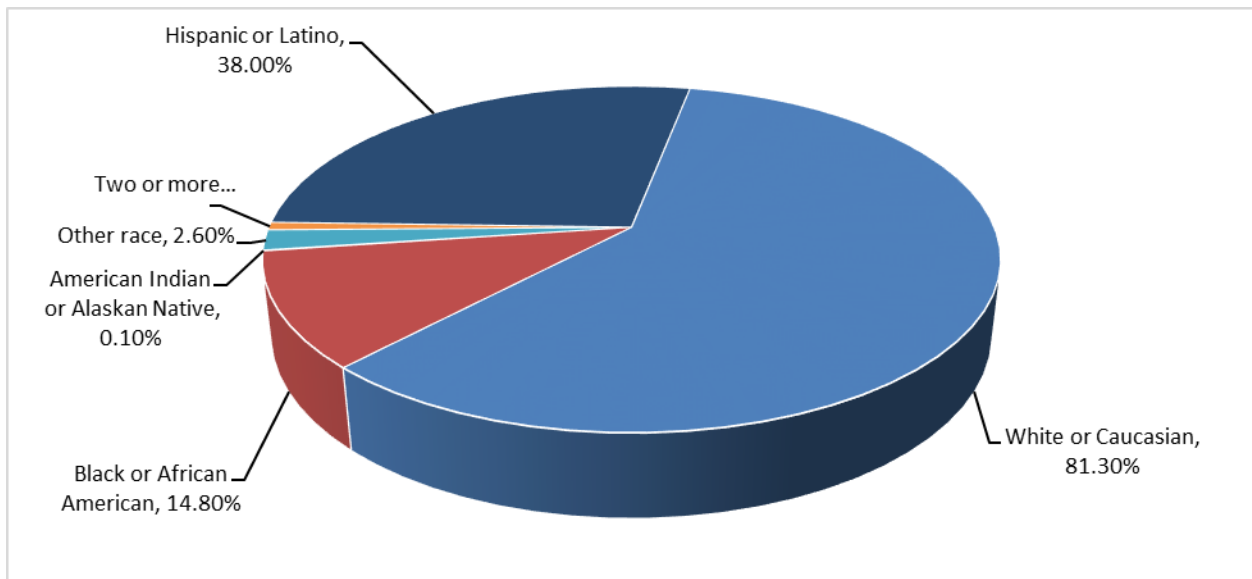


Figure 6-18. Wharton County Ethnic Distribution

Wharton County has a 9.0% foreign-born population. Other than English, the most commonly spoken language in Wharton County is Spanish. The U.S. Census estimates 9.5% of the residents speak English “less than very well.”

## 6.7 ECONOMY

Select 2013 economic characteristics estimated for Wharton County by the U.S. Census Bureau are shown in Table 6-7.

**TABLE 6-7.  
WHARTON COUNTY ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

	Wharton County	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton
Families Below Poverty Level	15.1%	15.3%	19.1%	21.1%
Individuals Below Poverty Level	18.8%	16.0%	23.6%	25.5%
Median Home Value	\$95,600	\$135,100	\$101,100	\$80,000
Median Household Income	\$40,411	\$48,409	\$40,698	\$42,546
Per Capita Income	\$20,310	\$24,405	\$20,401	\$16,511
Population >16 Years Old in Labor Force	62.9%	70.0%	64.9%	60.5%
Population Employed	58.4%	67.5%	60.3%	55.3%
Source: factfinder.census.gov; www.city-data.com				

### 6.7.1 Income

In the United States, individual households are expected to use private resources to some extent to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. This means that households living in poverty are automatically disadvantaged when confronting hazards. Additionally, the poor typically occupy more poorly built and inadequately maintained housing. Mobile or modular homes, for example, are more susceptible to damage in earthquakes and floods than other types of housing. In urban areas, the poor often live in older houses and apartment complexes, which are more likely to be made of un-reinforced masonry, a building type that is particularly susceptible to damage during earthquakes. Furthermore, residents below the poverty level are less likely to have insurance to compensate for losses incurred from natural disasters. This means that residents below the poverty level have a great deal to lose during an event and are the least prepared to deal with potential losses. The events following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 illustrated that personal household economics significantly impact people's decisions on evacuation. Individuals who cannot afford gas for their cars will likely decide not to evacuate.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates, per capita income in the planning area in 2013 was \$20,310 and the median household income was \$40,411. It is estimated that 10% of households receive an income between \$100,000 and \$149,999 per year and 4.2% are above \$150,000 annually. Families with incomes below the poverty level in 2013 made up 15.1% of all families and 18.8 % of the total population in Wharton County.

### 6.7.2 Employment Trends

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Wharton County's unemployment rate as of March 1, 2015, was 3.4%, compared to a statewide rate of 4.2%. Figure 6-19 shows Wharton County's unemployment trends from 1990 through March 1, 2015. Wharton County's unemployment rate was lowest both 1990 and 2008 at 3.5% and peaked in 2011 at 9.1%.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015, <http://m.research.stlouisfed.org/fred/>

Note: Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions



Figure 6-19. Wharton County Unemployment Rate (1990-2015)

According to the 2013 U.S. Census data, 63% of Wharton County's population 16 years and older is in the labor force, including 56% of women and 44% of men.

### 6.7.3 Occupations and Industries

According to 2013 U.S. Census data, the planning area's economy is strongly based in the education, health care and social assistance industries (24.5% of total employment), followed by the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining (11.5%), retail trade (10.6%), and construction (10.3%). Figure 6-20 shows the distribution of industry types in Wharton County, based on share of total employment.

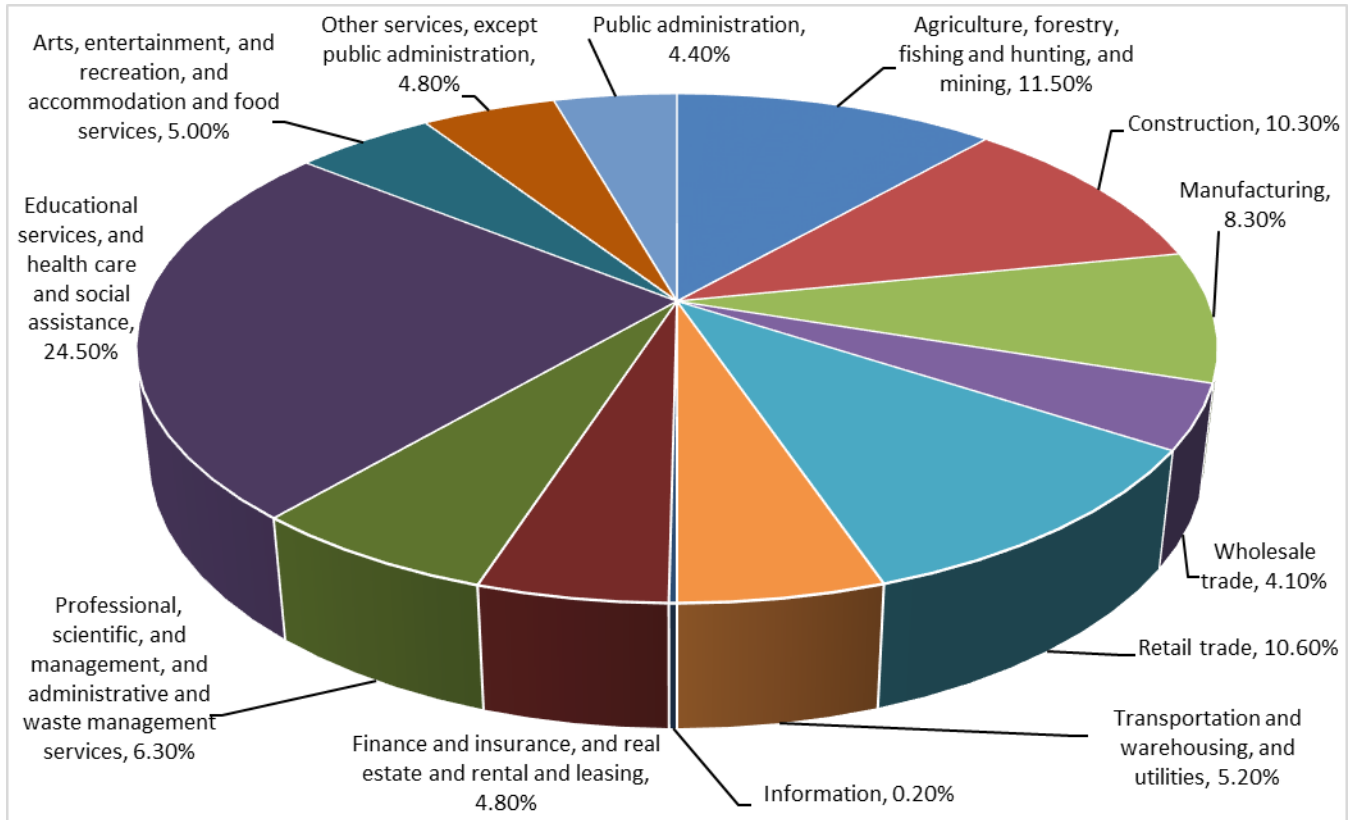


Figure 6-20. Percent of Total Employment by Industry in Wharton County

## 6.8 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT

The municipal planning partners have adopted plans that govern land use decision and policy making in their jurisdictions. Decisions on land use will be governed by these programs. This plan will work together with these programs to support wise land use in the future by providing vital information on the risk associated with natural hazards in the planning area.

It is the goal that all municipal planning partners will incorporate this hazard mitigation plan update in their comprehensive plans (if applicable) by reference. This will help ensure that future development trends can be established with the benefits of the information on risk and vulnerability to natural hazards identified in this plan. The participating communities have not formally tracked the impacts of changes in development over the last five years and how these changes in development were influenced by the risk associated with natural hazards in the county or the communities. As part of this hazard mitigation plan update, Wharton County and the cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton are now equipped with the knowledge and the tools to track and implement changes to the plan during their annual reviews and 5-year updates to reflect development changes. However, it should be noted that the mitigation actions developed and prioritized through the mitigation action ranking process reflect the current development conditions and applicable policies.

### 6.8.1 Wharton County

Wharton County consists primarily of agricultural land. Developed land accounts for only 5.8 % of the county. Table 6-8 lists the present land use in Wharton County.



**TABLE 6-8.  
PRESENT LAND USE IN PLANNING AREA**

Present Use Classification	Area (acres)	% of Total Land Area
Agriculture	555,647	77.1
Developed, Open Space	32,984	4.6
Developed, High Intensity	602	<0.1
Developed, Medium Intensity	1,880	0.3
Developed, Low Intensity	5,447	0.8
Forest Land	48,273	6.7
Grassland/Prairie	36,823	5.1
Water/Wetland	38,374	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>720,030</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Acreage covers only mapped parcels and thus excludes many rights of way and major water features.

As described in Chapter 6.6.1, the population of Wharton County increased by 3% from 1990 to 2013. Most of the population in the county lives in unincorporated areas, while the cities of El Campo and Wharton are also large population centers.

Housing units in Wharton County are mainly single-family detached homes; however, there are approximately 2,089 mobile homes in the county.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of residential building permits reported in Wharton County declined significantly over the last 10 years, spiking in 2006 (164 permits) and have recently begun to increase from a low in 2011. Even so, Wharton County would be impacted by an increase in vulnerability since additional residential building permits have been issued since 2010. Records on Wharton County building permits include all permits issued in the unincorporated portions of the county, as well as in the City of East Bernard. Therefore, the City of East Bernard would also be impacted by an increase in vulnerability. Figure 6-21 shows the reported residential building permits in unincorporated Wharton County and the City of East Bernard.

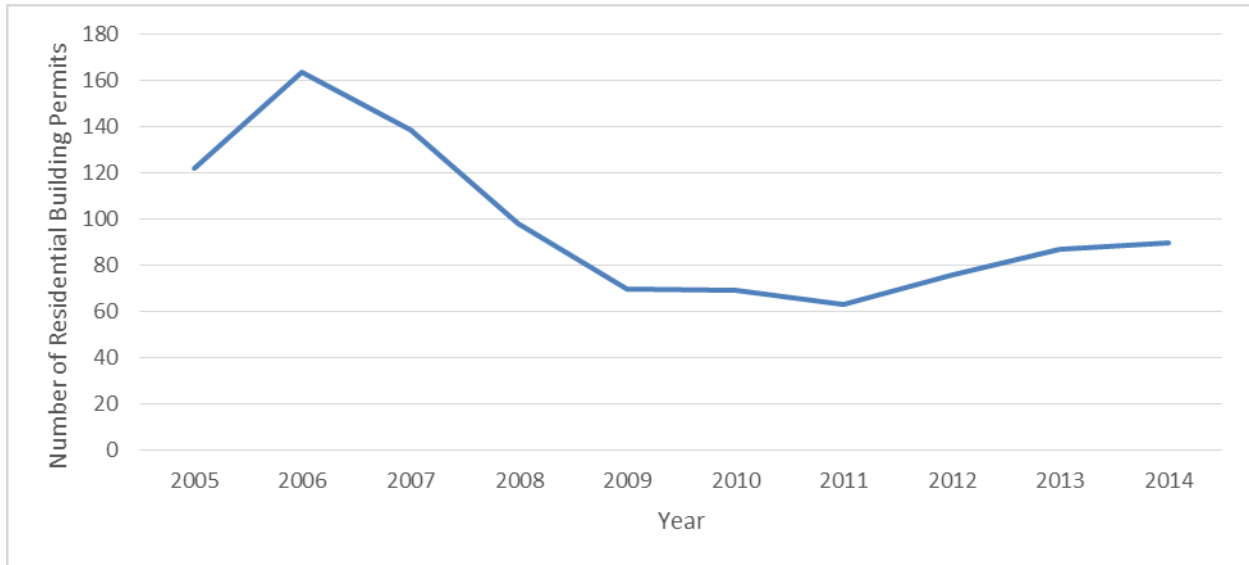


Figure 6-21. Residential Building Permits in Unincorporated Wharton County

### 6.8.2 City of East Bernard

According to 2013 U.S. Census data, the population of the City of East Bernard increased approximately 48.1% from 1990 to 2013, as shown on Figure 6-22. Building permits for the City of East Bernard are managed by Wharton County – see section 6.8.1 for historical building permit trends in unincorporated Wharton County and the City of East Bernard. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 861 homes in the City of East Bernard are single-family homes and 170 are mobile homes.

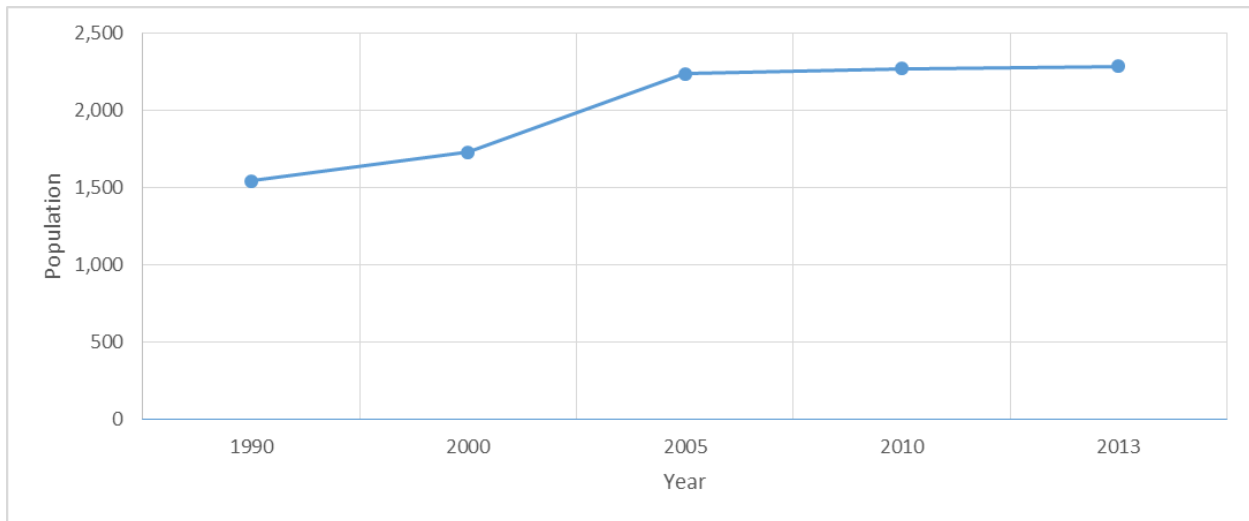


Figure 6-22. Population of City of East Bernard

### 6.8.3 City of El Campo

According to 2013 U.S. Census data, the population of the City of El Campo increased approximately 9% from 1990 to 2013, as shown on Figure 6-23. The number of residential building permits reported in the City of El Campo fluctuated during the last 10 years, from a high of 82 permits in 2013, as shown on Figure 6-24. New residential building permits issued since 2010 will result in an increased vulnerability within the

City of El Campo. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 3,323 homes in the City of El Campo are single-family homes and 383 are mobile homes.

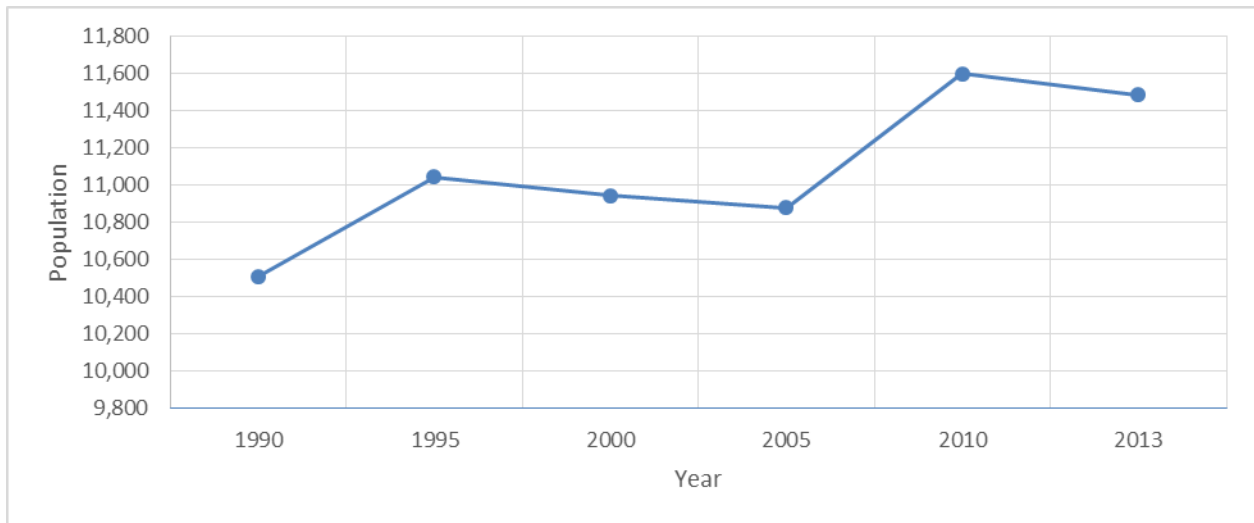


Figure 6-23. Population of City of El Campo

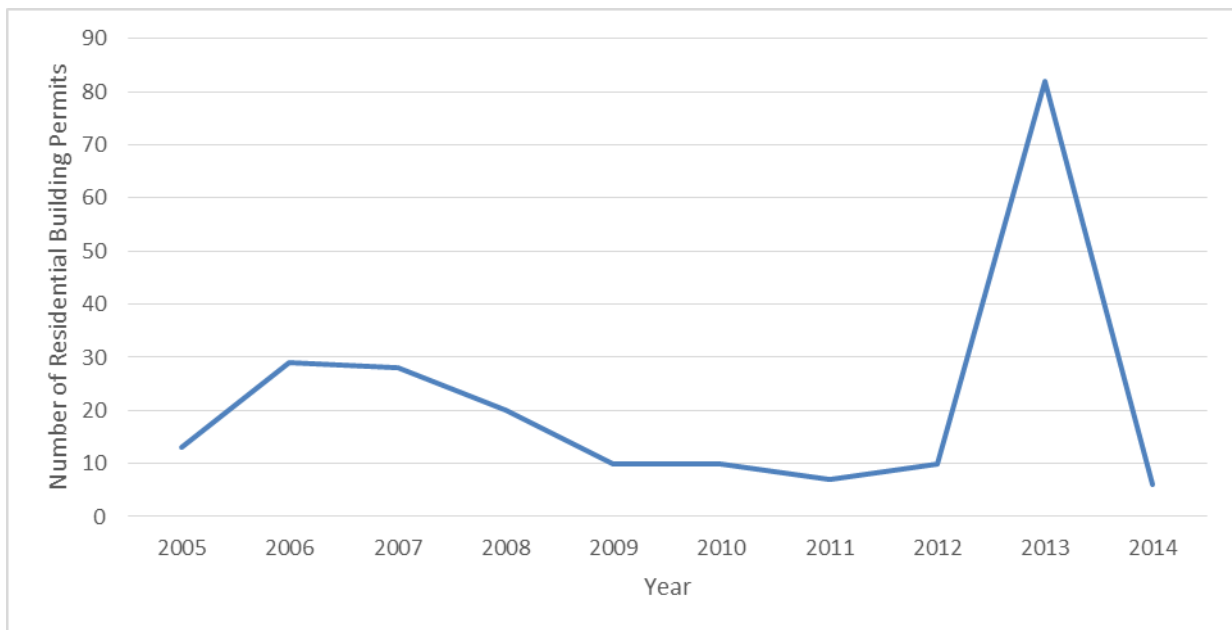


Figure 6-24. Residential Building Permits in the City of El Campo

### 6.8.4 City of Wharton

According to 2013 U.S. Census data, the population of the City of Wharton decreased approximately 3% from 1990 to 2013, as shown on Figure 6-25. The number of residential building permits reported in the City of Wharton declined over the last 10 years, spiking in 2006 (32 permits) and have recently begun to increase from a low in 2010 as shown on Figure 6-26. The City of Wharton will be impacted and vulnerability will be increased as a result of the residential building permits issued since 2010. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 2,227 homes in the City of Wharton are single-family homes and 268 are mobile homes.

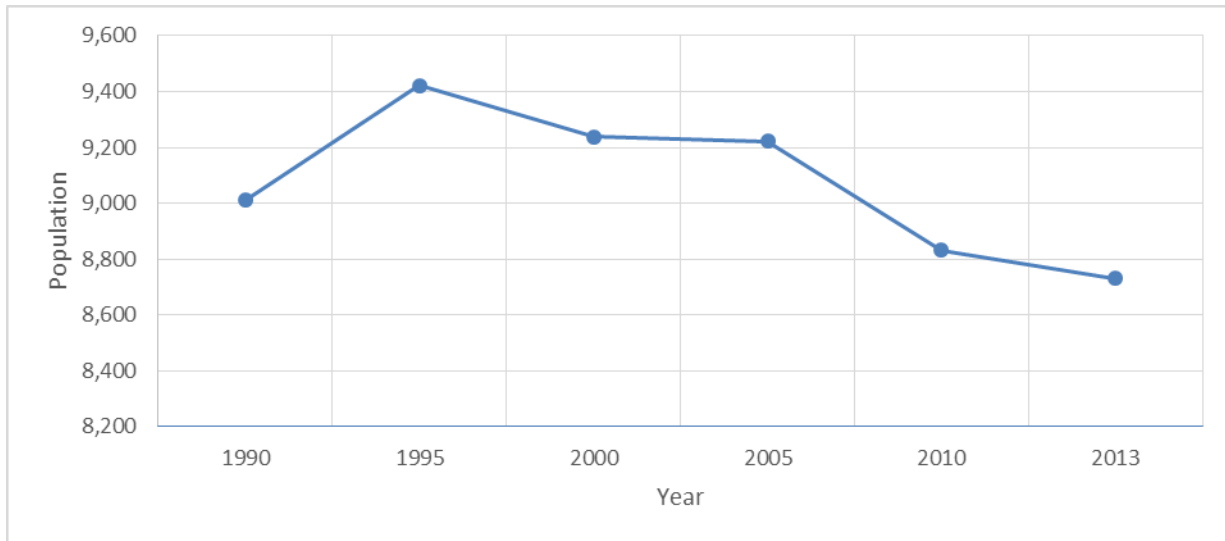


Figure 6-25. Population of City of Wharton

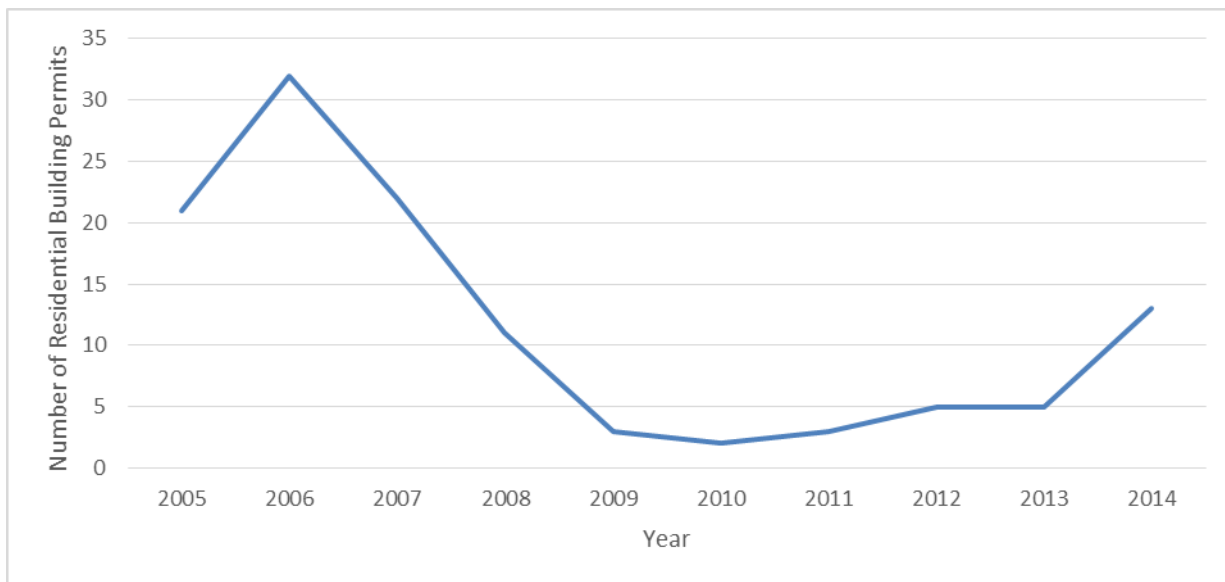


Figure 6-26. Residential Building Permits in the City of Wharton

## 6.9 LAWS AND ORDINANCES

Existing laws, ordinances, and plans at the federal, state, and local level can support or impact hazard mitigation actions identified in this plan. Hazard mitigation plans are required to include review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information as part of the planning process (44 CFR, Section 201.6(b)(3)). Pertinent federal, state, and local laws are described below. These laws, programs, documents, and departments were reviewed to identify the plans, regulations, personnel, and funding mechanisms available to the county and planning partners to impact and mitigate the effects of natural hazards. The county and cities have the capacity to expand their hazard mitigation capabilities through the training of existing staff, cross-training staff across program areas, and hiring of

additional staff, as well as acquiring additional funding through the attainment of grant funds, raising of taxes, and levying of new taxes.

## 6.9.1 Federal

### ***Disaster Mitigation Act***

The DMA is the current federal legislation addressing hazard mitigation planning. It emphasizes planning for disasters before they occur. It specifically addresses planning at the local level, requiring plans to be in place before Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds are available to communities. This plan is designed to meet the requirements of DMA, improving the planning partners' eligibility for future hazard mitigation funds.

### ***Endangered Species Act***

The federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) was enacted in 1973 to conserve species facing depletion or extinction and the ecosystems that support them. The act sets forth a process for determining which species are threatened and endangered and requires the conservation of the critical habitat in which those species live. The ESA provides broad protection for species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered. Provisions are made for listing species, as well as for recovery plans and the designation of critical habitat for listed species. The ESA outlines procedures for federal agencies to follow when taking actions that may jeopardize listed species and contains exceptions and exemptions. It is the enabling legislation for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Criminal and civil penalties are provided for violations of the ESA and the Convention.

Federal agencies must seek to conserve endangered and threatened species and use their authorities in furtherance of the ESA's purposes. The ESA defines three fundamental terms:

- **Endangered** means that a species of fish, animal, or plant is "in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." (For salmon and other vertebrate species, this may include subspecies and distinct population segments.)
- **Threatened** means that a species "is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future." Regulations may be less restrictive for threatened species than for endangered species.
- **Critical habitat** means "specific geographical areas that are...essential for the conservation and management of a listed species, whether occupied by the species or not."

Five sections of the ESA are of critical importance to understanding the act:

- **Section 4: Listing of a Species**—NOAA's Fisheries Service is responsible for listing marine species; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for listing terrestrial and freshwater aquatic species. The agencies may initiate reviews for listings, or citizens may petition for them. A listing must be made "solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available." After a listing has been proposed, agencies receive comment and conduct further scientific reviews for 12 to 18 months, after which they must decide if the listing is warranted. Economic impacts cannot be considered in this decision, but it may include an evaluation of the adequacy of local and state protections. Critical habitat for the species may be designated at the time of listing.
- **Section 7: Consultation**—Federal agencies must ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed or proposed species or adversely modify its critical habitat. This includes private and public actions that require a federal permit. Once a final listing is made, non-federal actions are subject to the same review, termed a "consultation." If the listing agency finds that an action will "take" a species, it must propose mitigations or "reasonable and prudent" alternatives to the action; if the proponent rejects these, the action cannot proceed.

- **Section 9: Prohibition of Take**—It is unlawful to “take” an endangered species, including killing or injuring it or modifying its habitat in a way that interferes with essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.
- **Section 10: Permitted Take**—Through voluntary agreements with the federal government that provide protections to an endangered species, a non-federal applicant may commit a take that would otherwise be prohibited as long as it is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity (such as developing land or building a road). These agreements often take the form of a “Habitat Conservation Plan.”
- **Section 11: Citizen Lawsuits**—Civil actions initiated by any citizen can require the listing agency to enforce the ESA’s prohibition of taking or to meet the requirements of the consultation process.

### ***Clean Water Act***

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) employs regulatory and non-regulatory tools to reduce direct pollutant discharges into waterways, finance municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and manage polluted runoff. These tools are employed to achieve the broader goal of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation’s surface waters so that they can support “the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and recreation in and on the water.”

Evolution of CWA programs over the last decade has included a shift from a program-by-program, source-by-source, and pollutant-by-pollutant approach to more holistic watershed-based strategies. Under the watershed approach, equal emphasis is placed on protecting healthy waters and restoring impaired ones. A full array of issues are addressed, not just those subject to CWA regulatory authority. Involvement of stakeholder groups in the development and implementation of strategies for achieving and maintaining water quality and other environmental goals is a hallmark of this approach.

### ***National Flood Insurance Program***

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides federally backed flood insurance in exchange for communities enacting floodplain regulations. Participation and good standing under NFIP are prerequisites to grant funding eligibility under the Robert T. Stafford Act. Wharton County and the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton participate in the NFIP and have adopted regulations that meet the NFIP requirements. At the time of the preparation of this plan, Wharton County and the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton were in good standing with NFIP requirements.

## **6.9.2 State and Regional**

### ***Texas Division of Emergency Management***

The TDEM is a division within the Texas Department of Public Safety and has its roots in the civil defense programs established during World War II. It became a separate organization through the Texas Civil Protection Act of 1951, which established the Division of Defense and Disaster Relief in the Governor’s Office to handle civil defense and disaster response programs. The division was collocated with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) in 1963. The division was renamed the Division of Disaster Emergency Services in 1973. After several more name changes, it was designated an operating division of the Texas Department of Public Safety in 2005. Legislation passed during the 81<sup>st</sup> session of the Texas Legislature in 2009 formally changed the name to TDEM. TDEM operates according to the Texas Disaster Act of 1975 (Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code).

TDEM’s is “charged with carrying out a comprehensive all-hazard emergency management program for the state and for assisting cities, counties, and state agencies in planning and implementing their emergency management programs. A comprehensive emergency management program includes pre- and post-disaster mitigation of known hazards to reduce their impact; preparedness activities, such as emergency planning,

training, and exercises; provisions for effective response to emergency situations; and recovery programs for major disasters.”

### ***Texas Water Development Board***

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) was created in 1957 but its history dates back to a 1904 constitutional amendment authorizing the first public development of water resources. The TWDB mission is “to provide leadership, information, education, and support for planning, financial assistance, and outreach for the conservation and responsible development of water for Texas.” TWDB provides water planning, data collection and dissemination, financial assistance, and technical assistance services.

TWDB financial assistance programs are funded through state-backed bonds, a combination of state bond proceeds and federal grant funds, or limited appropriated funds. Since 1957, the Texas State Legislature and voters approved constitutional amendments authorizing TWDB to issue up to \$10.93 billion in Texas Water Development Bonds. To date, TWDB has sold nearly \$3.95 billion of these bonds to finance the construction of water- and wastewater-related projects. In 1987, TWDB added the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) to its portfolio of financial assistance programs. Low-interest loans from the CWSRF finance costs associated with the planning, design, construction, expansion, or improvement of wastewater treatment facilities, wastewater recycling and reuse facilities, collection systems, stormwater pollution control projects, and nonpoint source pollution control projects. Funded in part by federal grant money, CWSRF provides loans at interest rates lower than the market can offer to any eligible applicant. CWSRF offers 20-year loans using either a traditional long-term, fixed-rate or a short-term, variable-rate construction period loan that converts to a long-term, fixed-rate loan on project completion.

### ***Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board***

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) is the state agency that administers Texas’ soil and water conservation law and coordinates conservation and nonpoint source water pollution abatement programs. The TSSWCB was created in 1939 by the Texas Legislature to organize the state into 216 soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) and to serve as a centralized agency for communicating with the Texas Legislature as well as other state and federal entities. The TSSWCB is the lead state agency for the planning, management, and abatement of agricultural and silvicultural (forestry) nonpoint source water pollution, and administers the Water Supply Enhancement Program. Each SWCD is an independent political subdivision of state government. Local SWCDs are actively involved throughout the state in soil and water conservation activities such as operation and maintenance of flood control structures.

### ***Texas Bureau of Economic Geology***

The University of Texas at Austin, Bureau of Economic Geology serves as the State Geological Survey of Texas. The bureau conducts research focusing on the intersection of energy, environment, and economy. The bureau partners with federal, state, and local agencies, academic institutions, industry, nonprofit organizations, and foundations to conduct high-quality research and to disseminate the results to the scientific and engineering communities as well as to the broad public. The Geophysical Log Facility (GLF) is the official well log repository for the Railroad Commission of Texas, which by law receives a copy of geophysical logs from every new, deepened, or plugged well drilled in Texas since September 1985.

### ***Texas Forest Service***

Texas Forest Service (TFS) was created in 1915 by the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislature as an integral part of the Texas A&M University System. It is mandated by law to assume direction of all forest interests and all matters pertaining to forestry within the jurisdiction of the state. TFS administers the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) to reduce related risks to life, property, and the environment. Its Fire Control Department provides leadership in wildland fire protection for state and private lands in Texas and reduces wildfire-related loss of life, property, and critical resources.

The intention of the TFS CWPP is to reduce the risk of wildfire and promote ecosystem health. The plan also is intended to reduce home losses and provide for the safety of residents and firefighters during wildfires. It has the following goals and objectives.

Goals:

- Provide for the safety of residents and emergency personnel
- Limit the number of homes destroyed by wildfire
- Promote and maintain healthy ecosystems
- Educate citizens about wildfire prevention

Objectives:

- Complete wildfire risk assessments
- Identify strategic fuels reduction projects
- Address treatment of structural ignitability
- Identify local capacity building and training needs
- Promote wildfire awareness programs

CWPPs are developed to mitigate losses from wildfires. By developing a CWPP, a community is outlining a strategic plan to mitigate, prepare, respond, and recover.

### ***Texas Department of State Health Services***

The mission of the Department of State Health Services is to protect and preserve the health of the citizens of Texas. Public health nurses provide a variety of services including immunizations, preventive assessments of children and the elderly, and a full range of services designed to assist individuals and groups to attain and maintain good health and to cope with illnesses.

### ***Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition***

The TCRFC is a partnership of cities and counties in the Colorado River Basin and surrounding areas seeking better ways to reduce and mitigate flood damage. The coalition was formed in response to a combination of rapid growth, a greatly expanded number of homes and businesses in the floodplain, and devastating floods that have reoccurred in the basin. TCRFC's mission statement is to "Encourage comprehensive consistent management of the floodplain along the Colorado River and its tributaries; provide a forum for data exchange; and facilitate a structured approach to managing the complex issues related to floodplain management." TCRFC is the sponsoring agency for the development of this hazard mitigation plan to address all natural hazards that could potentially affect communities.

### ***Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments***

The Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments (H-GAC) is the regional organization through which local governments consider issues and cooperate in solving area-wide problems. Through H-GAC, local governments also initiate efforts in anticipating and preventing problems, and saving public funds. The 13 counties in H-GAC's service region are: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, and Wharton. There are more than 100 member cities in the region.

H-GAC's mission is to serve as the instrument of local government cooperation, promoting the region's orderly development and the safety and welfare of its citizens. H-GAC provides planning programs in most areas of shared governmental concern. All H-GAC programs are carried out under the policy direction of H-GAC's local elected official Board of Directors. H-GAC is made up of the region's local governments



and their elected officials, and works together with public and private sector organizations and a host of volunteers.

H-GAC provides regional 911 and emergency communications planning. The regional 911 system represents the cooperative efforts of 8 counties (Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Liberty, Matagorda, Walker, Waller, and Wharton), 23 public safety answering points, some 224 emergency service providers, and numerous telephone companies. H-GAC also provides hurricane evacuation planning; provides information on disaster debris management; and includes several committees and councils relating to natural hazard mitigation, planning, and recovery, including the Regional Flood Management Council.

### **6.9.3 Wharton County**

The Wharton County government is made up of the following offices and departments:

- County Judge
- Commissioners' Court
- County Attorney
- County Clerk
- County Treasurer
- County Tax Assessor/Collector
- Constable
- Sheriff
- Justice of the Peace
- Indigent Health Care
- Elections
- Information Technology
- Child Support
- Permits/Inspections
- 911 Addressing
- Veterans Services

Wharton County has multiple plans and functions in place that guide growth and development within the county. The county also has an Economic Development Corporation. Excerpts from applicable policies, regulations, and plans and program descriptions follow to provide more detail on existing mitigation capabilities.

#### ***Wharton County Master Subdivision Policy, 2005 (as amended)***

The Wharton County Master Subdivision Policy established rules, regulations, and standards governing the subdivision of land within the unincorporated areas of Wharton County. The Commissioners' Court has the authority to renew, approve, issue variances, or disapprove of any plat submitted under this policy.

The county currently has regulations that limit lot sizes down to one acre with some limitations. It also established standards and specifications for construction of roads and drainage, utilities, private sewage facilities, and development within the floodplain. The subdivision regulations were designed and enacted for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the public and to establish standards of subdivision design, which will encourage the development of sound, economical, stable neighborhoods and create a healthy environment for present and future inhabitants of Wharton County

#### ***Wharton County's Flood Damage Prevention Order***

The Flood Damage Prevention Order established the Wharton County Permit and Inspection Department as the governing body to administer the National Flood Insurance Act and Texas Flood Control and Insurance Act. The purpose of the order and attached regulations is "to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions in specific areas by regulations designed to: (1) protect human life and health; (2) minimize the expenditure of public money for costly flood control projects; (3) minimize the need for rescue and relief efforts associated with flooding and usually undertaken at public expense; (4) minimize prolonged business interruptions; (5) minimize damage to public facilities and utilities such as water and gas mains, electric, telephone and sewer lines,

and streets and bridges located in or near floodplains; (6) help maintain a stable tax base by providing for the sound use and development of flood-prone areas in such a manner as to minimize future flood blight areas; and (7) ensure that potential buyers are notified that property is in a flood area.”

The order will be implemented through methods authorized by federal and state law to: (1) restrict or prohibit uses that are dangerous to health, safety, or property in times of flood, or uses that cause excessive increases in flood heights or velocities; (2) require that uses vulnerable to floods, including facilities which serve such uses, be protected against flood damage at the time of initial construction; (3) control the alteration of natural floodplains, stream channels, watercourses, and natural protective barriers which are involved in the accommodation of flood waters; (4) control filling, grading, dredging, and other development which may increase flood damage; and (5) prevent or regulate the construction of flood barriers which will unnaturally divert flood waters or which may increase flood hazards to other lands.

The responsibilities of the Commissioners’ Court are to: (1) fulfill an obligation mandated by federal and state law; (2) regulate construction in an area designated under law as a floodplain; (3) regulate sewer and on-site sewage/sewer facilities (OSSF); (4) prevent waste; (5) protect the rights of owners of interests in groundwater; (6) prevent subsidence; (7) provide a response to a real and substantial threat to public health and safety, said response being designed to significantly advance the public purposes herein described and not to impose a greater burden than is necessary to achieve said purposes; and (8) prevent the imminent destruction of property or injury to persons from flooding within a floodplain established by a federal flood control program and enacted to prevent the flooding of buildings intended for public occupancy.

### ***Wharton County Drainage Fee Ordinance, 2011 as amended***

The drainage fee ordinance requires a review of all development and its impact to draining including single family residential development, commercial/industrial development, minor and major creek crossings, based on current hydraulic models, work maps, and FIRM maps.

### ***Wharton County Floodplain Map***

The current floodplain maps from FEMA are dated 1983. FEMA is currently revising the maps and intends to have the updated version available in 2015.

### ***Wharton County Basic Emergency Operations Plan, 2015***

The Wharton County Basic Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) covers the entire county including the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, Wharton. The EOP is jointly signed by all participants. The EOP outlines the joint approach to emergency operations. It provides general guidance for emergency management activities and an overview of methods of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The plan describes participating emergency response organizations and assigns responsibilities for various emergency tasks. The plan is intended to provide a framework for more specific functional annexes that describe in more detail who does what, when, and how. The plan applies to all local officials, departments, and agencies within the communities of Wharton County, and the Cities of Wharton, El Campo and East Bernard. The primary audience for the document includes the chief elected official and other elected officials of each jurisdiction, the emergency management staff members, department and agency heads and their senior staff members, leaders of local volunteer organizations that support emergency operations, and others who may participate in mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. A hazard assessment is also included.

### ***Wharton County/City Office of Emergency Management***

The joint Wharton County/City Office of Emergency Management coordinates with all county fire and EMS services to prepare and plan for emergencies in Wharton County. In addition, communication is maintained with state and federal agencies for coordination in the event of large disasters, natural or manmade.

### **Wharton County Commissioners' Court**

The Wharton County Commissioners' Court consist of the County Judge and four Commissioners. The court is responsible for approving platting and enforcing the subdivision rules.

### **Wharton County Economic Development Corporation**

The Wharton County Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), a nonprofit industrial development corporation, was formed in March 1998 with the passage of the one half cent sales tax increase. WEDC functions under the City of Wharton, Texas, pursuant to Article 5190.6, Section 4B of the Development Corporation Act of 1979, as amended. Expenditures of the tax revenues are intended for the development of commercial, industrial, and manufacturing enterprises and to promote and encourage employment and public welfare. The purpose for the corporation and constituents include:

- Develop a positive climate for business and industrial growth and investment.
- Assist in creation of jobs.
- Increase the tax base of the various taxing entities.
- Diversify the local economy to make it more impervious to state and national economic recession.
- Make plans and take necessary actions to insure that essential infrastructure is in place to allow for proper development.
- Take necessary actions to stop negative developments from occurring that would denigrate the quality of life in the city or impede future development.
- Act as a catalyst for solutions to problems that cross geo-political boundaries.

### **6.9.4 City of East Bernard**

The government of the City of East Bernard is made up of the following offices and departments:

- Administration
- Maintenance Department
- Municipal Court

The City of East Bernard has multiple plans and functions in place that guide growth and development within the community. Excerpts from applicable policies, regulations, and plans and program descriptions follow to provide more detail on existing mitigation capabilities.

#### **City of East Bernard Comprehensive Plan, 2005**

The City of East Bernard Comprehensive Plan was created in 2005 in conjunction with the LCRA. The comprehensive plan lays out recommendations for the City of East Bernard and attempts to balance long-term, expensive projects, such as developing a recreation center, with smaller, faster projects, such as a Yard of the Month program. The purpose of the smaller projects is to have some early, quick successes that will build additional community support for the more challenging projects. Because the City of East Bernard is a new city with very limited resources, the plan draws upon many other community organizations, notably the Chamber of Commerce, for implementation. The plan has the following chapters, each of which serves a role in the overall comprehensive plan:

- Baseline Analysis
- Land Use
- Growth Management
- Community Development

- Economic Development
- Housing
- Implementation Guide
- Resources

### ***City of East Bernard Code of Ordinances***

Some of the chapters in the City of East Bernard Code of Ordinances have provisions related, directly or indirectly, to hazard mitigation. These provisions are discussed below:

- **General Ordinance**
  - Establishment of the East Bernard Emergency Management Coordinator
  - Identification of the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Emergency Management Director
  - Development of an emergency management plan to establish and designate divisions and functions; assign responsibilities, tasks, duties, and powers; and designate officers and employees to carry out the provisions of this division
- **Building Ordinance**
  - Building permit requirements (June 15, 2009)
  - Adoption of the International Building Code, 2009 edition (June 15, 2009)
- **Floodplain Ordinance**
  - Methods of reducing flood losses (May 17, 2004)
  - Basis for establishing the areas of special flood hazard and permitting requirements (May 17, 2004)
  - Designation, duties, and responsibilities of the floodplain administrator (May 17, 2004)
  - Permit and variance procedures for a floodplain development permit (May 17, 2004)
  - Construction standards for new construction and substantial improvements to minimize flood damage (May 17, 2004)
  - Review of proposed subdivisions and land use areas to minimize flood damage (May 17, 2004)
- **Subdivision Regulations**
  - This chapter includes the purpose of the subdivision regulations and establishes established rules, regulations, and standards governing the subdivision of land within the city. It established standards and specifications for construction of roads and drainage, private sewage facilities, and development within the floodplain (August 16, 2004)

### **6.9.5 City of El Campo**

The government of the City of El Campo is made up of the following offices and departments:

- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| • City Manager    | • Animal Control       |
| • Finance         | • Streets and Drainage |
| • Municipal Court | • Parks and Recreation |

- Inspections
- Police
- Emergency Medical Services
- Volunteer Fire Department
- Utilities
- Aquatic Center
- Civic Center
- Office of Emergency Management

The City of El Campo has multiple plans and functions in place that guide growth and development within the community. The city also has the following citizen committees, boards and commissions: Board of Adjustment; Planning and Zoning; Northside Board; Building Board; Electrical Board; Fire Prevention Board; Mechanical Board; Plumbing Board; Housing Authority Board; Charter Review Commission; Community Services Board; City Development Corporation; El Campo Health Facilities Development Board; and Aquatic Center Board. Excerpts from applicable policies, regulations, and plans and program descriptions follow to provide more detail on existing mitigation capabilities.

### **City of El Campo 2020 Plan, 1999**

The *City of El Campo 2020 Plan*, was originally developed in 1999 and is currently being updated. An update was needed because 75% of the comprehensive plans objectives have been completed and the remaining elements are no longer relevant. The city and various commissions use the plan to help the city budget, prepare for, and manage growth. The plan is cover housing, land use, and other aspects pertinent to the proper growth of a city.

### **City of El Campo Code of Ordinances**

Some of the chapters in the City of El Campo Code of Ordinances have provisions related, directly or indirectly, to hazard mitigation. These provisions are discussed below:

- **Chapter 2 – Administration**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Designation of the Building Official, roles, responsibilities, and authorities (Code 1988, ch. 8, § 5.00; Ord. of 6-16-1969, §§ 2—5)
- Creation of the community services board to advice city council on activities and policies concerning parks, recreation and the El Campo Civic Center. (Code 1988, ch. 8, § 11.01)
- Standards of care for emergency action (Code 1988, ch. 1, § 2.00; Ord. No. 1986-12, 5-27-1986)

- **Chapter 10 – Buildings**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Adoption of the International Building Code, 2009 edition (Code 1988, ch. 3, § 2.01; Ord. No. 1996-12, 6-11-1996; Ord. No. 2006-06, § 1(2.01), 3-28-2006; Ord. No. 2013-11, § 1, 7-8-2013)
- Creation of the fire limit districts (Code 1988, ch. 3, § 1.00; Ord. of 4-11-1966, § 1)
- Building permit requirements (Ord. No. 2006-06, § 1(2.02), 3-28-2006)
- Description of enforcement, authorization, and purpose of the Standard for Floodplain Management (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.05, 3-14-2006)
- Methods of reducing flood losses (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.17, 3-14-2006)
- Designation, duties, and responsibilities of the floodplain administrator (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.12, 3-14-2006)

- Basis for establishing the areas of special flood hazard and permitting requirements (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.14, 3-14-2006)
- Permit and variance procedures for a floodplain development permit (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.15, 3-14-2006)
- Construction standards for new construction and substantial improvements to minimize flood damage (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.04, 3-14-2006)
- Review of proposed subdivisions and land use areas to minimize flood damage (Ord. No. 2006-02, exh. A, § 8.18, 3-14-2006)

- **Chapter 14 – Emergency Management**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Establishment of the El Campo Emergency Management Organization (Code 1988, ch. 1, § 8.01; Ord. No. 1988-09, § 1, 7-26-1988)
- Identification of the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Emergency Management Director (Code 1988, ch. 1, § 8.02; Ord. No. 1988-09, § 2, 7-26-1988)
- Development of an emergency management plan to establish and designate divisions and functions; assign responsibilities, tasks, duties, and powers; and designate officers and employees to carry out the provisions of this division (Code 1988, ch. 1, § 8.03; Ord. No. 1988-09, § 3, 7-26-1988)

- **Chapter 5 – Fire Prevention and Protection**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Creation of the Office of Fire Marshal (Code 1988, ch. 5, § 8.01; Ord. of 4-19-1911, § 1)
- Ban on outdoor burning (Code 1988, ch. 5, § 3.00)
- Adoption of the International Fire Code, 2000 edition (Code 1988, ch. 5, § 9.01; Ord. No. 1996-09, 6-11-1996; Ord. No. 2006-08, § 1(9.01), 4-25-2006)
- Regulations on the use, possession, and sale of fireworks (Ord. No. 2008-5, § 6.02, 6-10-2008)

- **Chapter 10 – Subdivision Regulations**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Established rules, regulations, and standards governing the subdivision of land (Ord. No. 2014-08, § I(exh. A), 9-8-2014)
- Defines the process and permits required (Ord. No. 2014-08, § I(exh. A), 9-8-2014)
- Preparation and criteria of a Master Plan for zoning by the city planning and zoning commission (Ord. No. 2014-08, § I(exh. A), 9-8-2014)
- It established standards and specifications for construction of roads and drainage (Ord. No. 2014-08, § I(exh. A), 9-8-2014)

- **Chapter 14 – Zoning**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- The purpose of the zoning regulations (Ord. No. 2000-09, exh. A, § 1.E, 8-8-2000)

- Establishes zoning districts within El Campo (Ord. No. 2000-09, exh. A, § 4.A, 8-8-2000; Ord. No. 2004-09, exh. A, 5-25-2004)

### ***City of El Campo Office of Municipal Services***

Based on the close proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, the City of El Campo has conducted extensive hurricane response planning. Standard operating procedures have been developed with roles, responsibilities, checklist, and staffing assignments pre and post landfall. Topic areas include streets and bridges, debris clearance, high water, parks, utilities, water plant, equipment maintenance, damage assessment, and incident command.

### ***City of El Campo Emergency Medical Services***

The City of El Campo EMS Department consists of 11 full-time medics. The department also has 19 part-time medics. The City of El Campo EMS operates at the Mobile Intensive Care Level. The EMS department has four in-service Type 1 ambulances and one backup Type 1 ambulance.

### ***City of El Campo Code Enforcement***

The City of El Campo maintains a Building Official to ensure city ordinances are being upheld. Ordinances enforced include all nuisance ordinances and the Dangerous Building Ordinance.

### ***City of El Campo Citizen Committees, Boards and Commissions***

The following citizen committees, boards and commissions assist in the governance of the City of El Campo.

- **Board of Adjustment:** Hears and decides appeals for interpretations, special exceptions, and variances to the terms of the zoning ordinance, as well as permits.
- **Planning and Zoning:** Recommends changes in development codes and zoning ordinances to City Council. Makes studies and recommendations with regards to proposed annexations. Has final authority over all plats submitted to the city.
- **Northside Board:** Guides and provides feedback and assistance to the Northside Education Center concerning maintenance and operations of the center.
- **Building Board:** The Building Board hears and decide appeals for interpretations and special exceptions to the terms of the technical code.
- **Electrical Board:** The Electrical Board hears and decide appeals for interpretations and special exceptions to the terms of the technical code.
- **Fire Prevention Board:** The Fire Prevention Board aids in the education of citizenry on fire prevention. Guides and provides feedback and assistance to the city in discussing prevention program.
- **Mechanical Board:** The Mechanical Board hears and decide appeals for interpretations and special exceptions to the terms of the technical code.
- **Plumbing Board:** The Plumbing Board hears and decide appeals for interpretations and special exceptions to the terms of the technical code.
- **Housing Authority Board:** Guides the Housing Authority by setting policy and providing leadership and oversight that enables the Housing Authority to reach its goals and advance its mission of providing quality, affordable housing options.
- **Charter Review Commission:** Advises council on any additions, edits or revisions to the city's charter.

- **Community Services Board:** Advises and recommends to City Council on all matters concerning the establishment, maintenance and operations of parks, and establishment and operation of recreational programs conducted by the city.
- **City Development Corporation:** Aids in the economic development of the city. Provides guidance and feedback to the council regarding use of 4A sales tax.
- **El Campo Health Facilities Development Board:** The El Campo Health Facilities Development Corporation Board acquires, constructs, provides, improves, finances and refinances health facilities to assist the maintenance of public health.
- **Aquatic Center Board:** Provides advisory information to city staff with regards to issues and operations of the facility.

### 6.9.6 City of Wharton

The City of Wharton government is made up of the following offices and departments:

- |                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| • City Secretary     | • Public Works Department    |
| • Finance Department | • Facilities Maintenance     |
| • Police Department  | • Community Services         |
| • Fire Department    | • Emergency Medical Services |
| • Code Enforcement   | • Civic Center               |
| • Municipal Court    | • Airport                    |

The City of Wharton has multiple plans and functions in place that guide growth and development within the community. The city also has the following boards and commissions: Airport Board, Beautification City Commission, Building Standards Commission, Electrical Board, Holiday Lighting Board, Planning Commission, Plumbing and Mechanical Board, Mayor’s Committee on People with Disabilities, Wharton Economic Development Corporation. Excerpts from applicable policies, regulations, and plans and program descriptions follow to provide more detail on existing mitigation capabilities.

#### **City of Wharton Code of Ordinances**

Some of the chapters in the City of Wharton Code of Ordinances have provisions related, directly or indirectly, to hazard mitigation. These provisions are discussed below:

- **Article XII. – Planning and Zoning**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Establishing a Planning Commission, powers, and duties (Ord. No. 78-3, § 7, 2-13-78)
- Requirements for a master plan for the growth, development and beautification of the city (Ord. No. 78-3, § 7, 2-13-78)

- **Chapter 6 – Aircraft and Airports**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Establishment of airport zoning regulations (Code 1978, § 3-36)
- Establishment the board of adjustment and their powers, policies, and procedures (Code 1978, § 3-38)

- **Chapter 18 – Buildings and Construction**



Provisions under this chapter include:

- Establishment of fire zone limits (Code 1978, § 6-6)
- Establishment of a Building Official, duties, and powers (Code 1978, § 6-1)
- Building permit requirements (Ord. No. 2000-18, § I, 9-11-00; Ord. No. 2001-09, 5-14-01; Ord. No. 2006-21, 10-23-06)
- Adoption of the International Building Code, 2012 edition (Ord. No. 2000-18, § I, 9-11-00; Ord. No. 2002-11, § I, 5-28-02; Ord. No. 2006-21, 10-23-06; Ord. No. 2012-11, 9-10-12)
- Establishment of the Building Standards Commission, powers, and duties (Code 1978, § 6-30)
- Description of enforcement, authorization, and purpose of the Standard for Floodplain Management (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06)
- Methods of reducing flood losses (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06; Ord. No. 2009-04, 5-26-09)
- Basis for establishing the areas of special flood hazard and permitting requirements (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06)
- Designation, duties, and responsibilities of the floodplain administrator (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06)
- Permit and variance procedures for a floodplain development permit (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06)
- Construction standards for new construction and substantial improvements to minimize flood damage (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06; Ord. No. 2009-04, 5-26-09)
- Review of proposed subdivisions and land use areas to minimize flood damage (Ord. No. 2006-06, 3-13-06; Ord. No. 2009-04, 5-26-09)

• **Chapter 26 – Emergency Management**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Establishment of the Wharton Emergency Management Organization (Code 1978, § 7-1; Ord. No. 2003-08, 8-11-03)
- Identification of the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Emergency Management Director (Code 1978, § 7-2)
- Development of an emergency management plan to establish and designate divisions and functions; assign responsibilities, tasks, duties, and powers; and designate officers and employees to carry out the provisions of this division (Code 1978, § 7-3)

• **Chapter 27 – Emergency Medical Services**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Agreement with Emergency Services District (ESD) #3 to provide EMS services for their established service area including the city (Ord. No. 2011-08(Corr.), 5-9-2011)

• **Chapter 30 – Fire Prevention and Protection**

Provisions under this chapter include:

- Adoption of the International Fire Code, 2012 edition (Ord. No. 2012-15, 10-22-12)

- Creation of the Office of Fire Marshal (Ord. No. 2012-15, 10-22-12)
- Regulations on the use, possession, and sale of fireworks (Ord. No. 2012-15, 10-22-12)
- **Chapter 34 – Health and Sanitation**

Provisions under this chapter include:

  - Ban on outdoor burning (Code 1978, § 9-1)
- **Appendix A. Subdivisions**

Provisions under this chapter include:

  - Established rules, regulations, and standards governing the subdivision of land (Ord. No. 82-8, 3-22-82; Ord. No. 87-4, 2-9-87)
  - Defines the process and permits required (Ord. No. 82-8, 3-22-82; Ord. No. 87-4, 2-9-87)
  - It established standards and specifications for construction of roads and drainage (Ord. No. 73-2, 1-22-73; Ord. No. 75-22, 11-10-75; Ord. No. 76-25, 12-13-76; Ord. No. 82-6, 3-8-82; Ord. No. 2004-10, 4-12-04; Ord. No. 2013-11, 6-10-13)

### ***City of Wharton Planning Commission***

The Planning Commission is charged with the review, investigation, and recommendation of land use within the City of Wharton. The purpose and goals of the commission are to:

- Make and amend a master plan for the physical development of the city.
- Report to the council proposed zoning regulations and land use plan, and its approval or disapproval of proposed future changes in the zoning plan.
- Exercise control over platting and the subdividing of land within the corporate limits of the city and within an area extending one mile beyond the corporate limits.

### ***City of Wharton Economic Development Corporation***

The Wharton Economic Development Corporation (WDEC) is dedicated to creating opportunities for economic development through desirable business growth. WDEC manages the affairs of the City's 4B Corporation which promotes economic development in order to eliminate unemployment and underemployment, and to promote and encourage employment and the public welfare of, for, and on behalf of the city by developing, purchasing, leasing, implementing, providing, and financing projects.

### ***City of Wharton Code Enforcement/Floodplain Management***

The City of Wharton maintains a Code Ordinance Enforcement Officer to ensure city ordinances are being upheld. Ordinances enforced include all construction, nuisance ordinances, and the Dangerous Building Ordinance.

### ***City of Wharton Volunteer Fire Department***

The City of Wharton Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) provides fire, rescue and HAZMAT services for the city and surrounding areas. The department provides automatic mutual aid with Glen Flora VFD, Hungerford VFD, and Boling VFD. The department also maintains a mutual aid agreement with all of Wharton County.

## CHAPTER 7. HAZARD MITIGATION CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT

The planning team performed an inventory and analysis of existing authorities and capabilities called a “capability assessment.” A capability assessment creates an inventory of an agency’s mission, programs and policies, and evaluates its capacity to carry them out. The county and the planning partners used this capabilities assessment to identify mitigation actions to strengthen their ability to mitigate the effects of a natural hazard.

### 7.1 WHARTON COUNTY

#### 7.1.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities

Table 7-1 lists planning and land management tools typically used by local jurisdictions to implement hazard mitigation activities and indicates those that are in place in Wharton County.

<b>TABLE 7-1. WHARTON COUNTY REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
General plan	No	
Zoning ordinance	No	
Subdivision ordinance	Yes	Wharton County Master Subdivision Policy, 2005 (as amended)
Growth management	Yes	Growth management is accomplished through compliance with the Wharton County Subdivision Ordinance.
Floodplain ordinance	Yes	Flood Damage Prevention Order signed October 22, 2001.
Other special purpose ordinance (stormwater, steep slope, wildfire)	No	
Building code	No	
Erosion or sediment control program	No	
Stormwater management	No	
Site plan review requirements	No	
Capital improvement plan	No	
Economic development plan	No	
Local emergency operations plan	Yes	Wharton County Basic Emergency Operations Plan
Other special plans	No	

<b>TABLE 7-1. WHARTON COUNTY REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
Flood insurance study or other engineering study for streams	Yes	The Department Land Development and Permitting is the local repository for the FEMA FIRM for the unincorporated areas of the county and makes the maps available for public review. The department maintains flood insurance rate maps in conjunction with the NFIP. The new floodplain maps went into effect on May 2, 2012.
Elevation certificates	Yes	The Commissioners' Court of Wharton County keeps records of flood elevation certificates on file in its office.
Notes: FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency FIRM Flood Insurance Rate Map NFIP National Flood Insurance Program		

### 7.1.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities

Table 7-2 identifies the county personnel responsible for activities related to mitigation and loss prevention in Wharton County.

<b>TABLE 7-2. WHARTON COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Personnel Resources	Yes/No	Department/Position
Planner/engineer with knowledge of land development/land management practices	No	
Engineer/professional trained in construction practices related to buildings or infrastructure	No	
Planner/engineer/scientist with an understanding of natural hazards	No	
Personnel skilled in GIS	No	
Full-time building official	No	
Floodplain manager	Yes	Permit and Inspection Department
Emergency manager	Yes	Commissioners' Court
Grant writer	No	
Other personnel	No	
GIS data: Hazard areas	No	
GIS data: Critical facilities	No	
GIS data: Building footprints	No	
GIS data: Land use	No	
GIS data: Links to Assessor's data	No	

<b>TABLE 7-2. WHARTON COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
<b>Personnel Resources</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Department/Position</b>
Warning systems/services (Reverse 911 callback, cable override, outdoor warning signals)	Yes	911-based emergency phone notifications, EAS, Wharton County Emergency Notification System, neighborhood warning procedures
Other	No	
Notes: EAS    Emergency Alert System GIS    Geographic Information System		

### 7.1.3 Financial Capabilities

Table 7-3 identifies financial tools or resources that Wharton County could use to help fund mitigation activities.

<b>TABLE 7-3. WHARTON COUNTY FINANCIAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>	
<b>Financial Resources</b>	<b>Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)</b>
Community Development Block Grants	No
Capital improvements project funding	No
Authority to levy taxes for specific purposes	No
Fees for water, sewer, gas, or electric services	No
Impact fees for new development	No
Incur debt through general obligation bonds	Yes
Incur debt through special tax bonds	Yes
Incur debt through private activities	No
Withhold spending in hazard prone areas	No
Other	No

## 7.2 CITY OF EAST BERNARD

### 7.2.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities

Table 7-4 lists regulatory and planning tools typically used by local jurisdictions to implement hazard mitigation activities and indicates those that are in place in the City of East Bernard.

<p align="center"><b>TABLE 7-4. CITY OF EAST BERNARD REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b></p>		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
General plan	Yes	East Bernard Comprehensive Plan was created in 2005 to help the city prepare for and manage growth.
Zoning ordinance	No	
Subdivision ordinance	Yes	Subdivision regulations are included in the Johnson East Bernard Zoning Code (2004, as amended).
Growth management	No	
Floodplain ordinance	Yes	Adopted the Standard for Floodplain Management (2004).
Other special purpose ordinance (stormwater, steep slope, wildfire)	No	
Building code	Yes	East Bernard adopted the International Building Code and International Residential Code (2009 editions).
Erosion or sediment control program	No	Erosion and sediment control is managed by the LCRA.
Stormwater management	No	Stormwater management is managed by the LCRA.
Site plan review requirements	Yes	Contracted to the county.
Capital improvements plan	No	
Economic development plan	No	
Local emergency operations plan	No	East Bernard works in conjunction with the Wharton County Emergency Management.
Other special plans	No	
Flood insurance study or other engineering study for streams	Yes	FEMA floodplain maps indicate flood insurance is necessary along the San Bernard River.
Elevation certificates	No	The Commissioners' Court of Wharton County keeps records of flood elevation certificates on file in its office.
<p>Notes:                      FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency                      LCRA Lower Colorado River Authority</p>		

### 7.2.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities

Table 7-5 identifies the city personnel responsible for activities related to mitigation and loss prevention in the City of East Bernard.

Personnel Resources	Yes/No	Department/Position
Planner/engineer with knowledge of land development/land management practices	No	Outsourced to the county (when necessary)
Engineer/professional trained in construction practices related to buildings or infrastructure	No	Outsourced to the county (when necessary)
Planner/engineer/scientist with an understanding of natural hazards	No	
Personnel skilled in GIS	No	
Full-time building official	No	Managed by the county (when necessary)
Floodplain manager	Yes	City Secretary
Emergency manager	Yes	City Secretary
Grant writer	No	Outsourced as needed
Other personnel	No	
GIS data: Hazard areas	No	
GIS data: Critical facilities	No	
GIS data: Building footprints	No	
GIS data: Land use	No	
GIS data: Links to Assessor's data	No	
Warning systems/services (Reverse 911 callback, cable override, outdoor warning signals)	No	Warning signals are managed by the local volunteer fire department
Other	Yes	Local radio station
Notes: GIS Geographic Information System		

### 7.2.3 Financial Capabilities

Table 7-6 identifies financial tools or resources that the City of East Bernard could use to help fund mitigation activities.

Financial Resources	Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)
Community Development Block Grants	Yes
Capital improvements project funding	No
Authority to levy taxes for specific purposes	No
Fees for water, sewer, gas, or electric services	No
Impact fees for new development	No

TABLE 7-6. CITY OF EAST BERNARD FINANCIAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX	
Financial Resources	Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)
Incur debt through general obligation bonds	No
Incur debt through special tax bonds	No
Incur debt through private activities	No
Withhold spending in hazard prone areas	No
Other	No

### 7.3 CITY OF EL CAMPO

#### 7.3.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities

Table 7-7 lists planning and land management tools typically used by local jurisdictions to implement hazard mitigation activities and indicates those that are in place in the City of El Campo.

TABLE 7-7. CITY OF EL CAMPO REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
General plan	Yes	The <i>El Campo 2020 Plan</i> was created in 1999 to help the city prepare for and manage growth.
Zoning ordinance	Yes	Chapter 14, Zoning (2000, as amended).
Subdivision ordinance	Yes	Chapter 10, Subdivision (2014, as amended).
Growth management	No	
Floodplain ordinance	Yes	Part of the Chapter 10, Buildings (2006, as amended).
Other special purpose ordinance (stormwater, steep slope, wildfire)	No	
Building code	Yes	El Campo adopted the International Building Code and International Residential Code (2009 editions)
Erosion or sediment control program	Yes	Managed by the Public Works Department.
Stormwater management	Yes	Managed by the Public Works Department.
Site plan review requirements	Yes	Managed by the Building Official and Public Works Department.
Capital improvements plan	Yes	Part of the <i>El Campo 2020 Plan</i> and annual budget review cycle.
Economic development plan	Yes	Managed by the City Development Corporation who manages use of 4A sales tax.
Local emergency operations plan	Yes	Police Department.
Other special plans	No	



<b>TABLE 7-7. CITY OF EL CAMPO REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
Flood insurance study or other engineering study for streams	Yes	FEMA floodplain maps indicate flood insurance is necessary along the Tres Palacios and Blue Creek.
Elevation certificates	No	The Commissioners' Court of Wharton County keeps records of flood elevation certificates on file in its office.
Notes: FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency		

### 7.3.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities

Table 7-8 identifies the City of El Campo personnel responsible for activities related to mitigation and loss prevention.

<b>TABLE 7-8. CITY OF EL CAMPO ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Personnel Resources	Yes/No	Department/Position
Planner/engineer with knowledge of land development/land management practices	Yes	Public Works Department
Engineer/professional trained in construction practices related to buildings or infrastructure	Yes	Public Works Department
Planner/engineer/scientist with an understanding of natural hazards	Yes	Public Works Department
Personnel skilled in GIS	Yes	Public Works Department
Full-time building official	Yes	Inspection Department
Floodplain manager	Yes	Public Works Department
Emergency manager	No	Assistant Police Chief
Grant writer	Yes	Managed by individual departments including Public Works, Fire, Police, etc.
Other personnel	No	
GIS data: Hazard areas	No	
GIS data: Critical facilities	No	
GIS data: Building footprints	No	
GIS data: Land use	Yes	Public Works Department
GIS data: Links to Assessor's data	Yes	Public Works Department
Warning systems/services (Reverse 911 callback, cable override, outdoor warning signals)	Yes	Blackboard connect phone notifications and warning sirens

TABLE 7-8. CITY OF EL CAMPO ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX		
Personnel Resources	Yes/No	Department/Position
Other	Yes	Local radio station
Notes: GIS Geographic Information System		

### 7.3.3 Financial Capabilities

Table 7-9 identifies financial tools or resources that City of El Campo could use to help fund mitigation activities.

TABLE 7-9. CITY OF EL CAMPO FINANCIAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX	
Financial Resources	Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)
Community Development Block Grants	Yes
Capital improvements project funding	Yes
Authority to levy taxes for specific purposes	Yes
Fees for water, sewer, gas, or electric services	Water and Sewer
Impact fees for new development	No
Incur debt through general obligation bonds	Yes
Incur debt through special tax bonds	Yes
Incur debt through private activities	No
Withhold spending in hazard prone areas	Yes
Other	No

## 7.4 CITY OF WHARTON

### 7.4.1 Legal and Regulatory Capabilities

Table 7-10 lists planning and land management tools typically used by local jurisdictions to implement hazard mitigation activities and indicates those that are in place in the City of Wharton.

TABLE 7-10. CITY OF WHARTON REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
General plan	Yes	Wharton Comprehensive Plan was created in 2009 to help the city prepare for and manage growth.
Zoning ordinance	Yes	Wharton Code of Ordinance – Zoning (1997, as amended).
Subdivision ordinance	Yes	Subdivision regulations are included in the Johnson City Zoning Code (1997, as amended).

<b>TABLE 7-10. CITY OF WHARTON REGULATORY MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Regulatory Tool (ordinances, codes, plans)	Yes/No	Comments
Growth management	Yes	Growth management is accomplished through compliance the Subdivision regulations are included in the Wharton Zoning Code (1997, as amended).
Floodplain ordinance	Yes	Adopted the Standard for Floodplain Management (1996).
Other special purpose ordinance (stormwater, steep slope, wildfire)	No	
Building code	Yes	The City of Wharton adopted the International Building Code and International Residential Code (2006 editions).
Erosion or sediment control program	No	Erosion and sediment control is managed by the LCRA.
Stormwater management	No	Stormwater management is managed by the LCRA.
Site plan review requirements	Yes	Contracted to a third party, Steve Killman and Associates
Capital improvements plan	No	
Economic development plan	Yes	Key policies and actions to guide economic development are managed by the Wharton Economic Development Advisory Board.
Local emergency operations plan	No	Wharton works in conjunction with the Wharton County Emergency Management/911 Coordinator.
Other special plans	No	
Flood insurance study or other engineering study for streams	Yes	FEMA floodplain maps indicate flood insurance is necessary along the Wharton River.
Elevation certificates	No	The Commissioners' Court of Wharton County keeps records of flood elevation certificates on file in its office.
Notes:		
FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency		
LCRA Lower Colorado River Authority		

## 7.4.2 Administrative and Technical Capabilities

Table 7-11 identifies the City of Wharton personnel responsible for activities related to mitigation and loss prevention.

<b>TABLE 7-11. CITY OF WHARTON ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX</b>		
Personnel Resources	Yes/No	Department/Position
Planner/engineer with knowledge of land development/land management practices	Yes	

TABLE 7-11. CITY OF WHARTON ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX		
Personnel Resources	Yes/No	Department/Position
Engineer/professional trained in construction practices related to buildings or infrastructure	Yes	
Planner/engineer/scientist with an understanding of natural hazards	Yes	
Personnel skilled in GIS	No	
Full-time building official	Yes	Code Enforcement Department
Floodplain manager	Yes	Code Enforcement Department
Emergency manager	No	Wharton works in conjunction with the Wharton County Emergency Manager.
Grant writer	Yes	Administration
Other personnel	No	
GIS data: Hazard areas	No	Currently under development
GIS data: Critical facilities	No	
GIS data: Building footprints	No	
GIS data: Land use	No	
GIS data: Links to Assessor's data	No	
Warning systems/services (Reverse 911 callback, cable override, outdoor warning signals)	Yes	County 911-based emergency phone notifications
Other	Yes	Local TV or radio station
Notes:		
GIS Geographic Information System		

### 7.4.3 Financial Capabilities

Table 7-12 identifies financial tools or resources that City of Wharton could use to help fund mitigation activities.

TABLE 7-12. CITY OF WHARTON FINANCIAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX	
Financial Resources	Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)
Community Development Block Grants	Yes
Capital improvements project funding	Yes
Authority to levy taxes for specific purposes	Yes
Fees for water, sewer, gas, or electric services	No
Impact fees for new development	Yes
Incur debt through general obligation bonds	Yes

**TABLE 7-12.  
CITY OF WHARTON FINANCIAL MITIGATION CAPABILITIES MATRIX**

Financial Resources	Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)
Incur debt through special tax bonds	Yes
Incur debt through private activities	No
Withhold spending in hazard prone areas	Yes
Other	No

**PART 2**  
**RISK ASSESSMENT**

# CHAPTER 8.EXPANSIVE SOILS

EXPANSIVE SOILS RANKING	
Jurisdiction	Expansive Soils
Wharton County	Medium
City of East Bernard	Medium
City of El Campo	Medium
City of Wharton	Medium

## DEFINITIONS

**Expansive Soils** — Expansive soils are soils that expand when water is added, and shrink when they dry out. They usually undergo significant volume change with the addition or depletion of pore water. Generally, the result of the chemical structure of certain types of clay soils.

## 8.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

Expansive and collapsible soils are some of the most widely distributed and costly geologic hazards. Collapsible soils are a group of soils that can rapidly settle or collapse the ground. They are also known as metastable soils and are unsaturated soils that undergo changes in volume and settlement in response to wetting and drying, often resulting in severe damage to structures. The sudden and usually large volume change could cause considerable structural damage. Expansive soil and rock are characterized by clayey material that shrinks as it dries or swells as it becomes wet. In addition, trees and shrubs placed closely to a structure can lead to soil drying and subsequent shrinkage. The parent (source) rock most associated with expansive soils is shale. Figure 8-1 shows expansive soil distribution in the U.S. Collapsible soils consist of loose, dry, low-density materials that collapse and compact under the addition of water or excessive loading. Soil collapse occurs when the land surface is saturated at depths greater than those reached by typical rain events. This saturation eliminates the clay bonds holding the soil grains together. Similar to expansive soils, collapsible soils result in structural damage such as cracking of the foundation, floors, and walls in response to settlement. Swelling soils cause cracked foundations, as well as damage to upper floors of a building when the motion in the structure is significant. Shrinkage as result of dried soils can remove support from buildings or other structures and result in damaging subsidence. Fissures in the soil can also develop. These fissures can facilitate the deep penetration of water when moist conditions or runoff occurs.

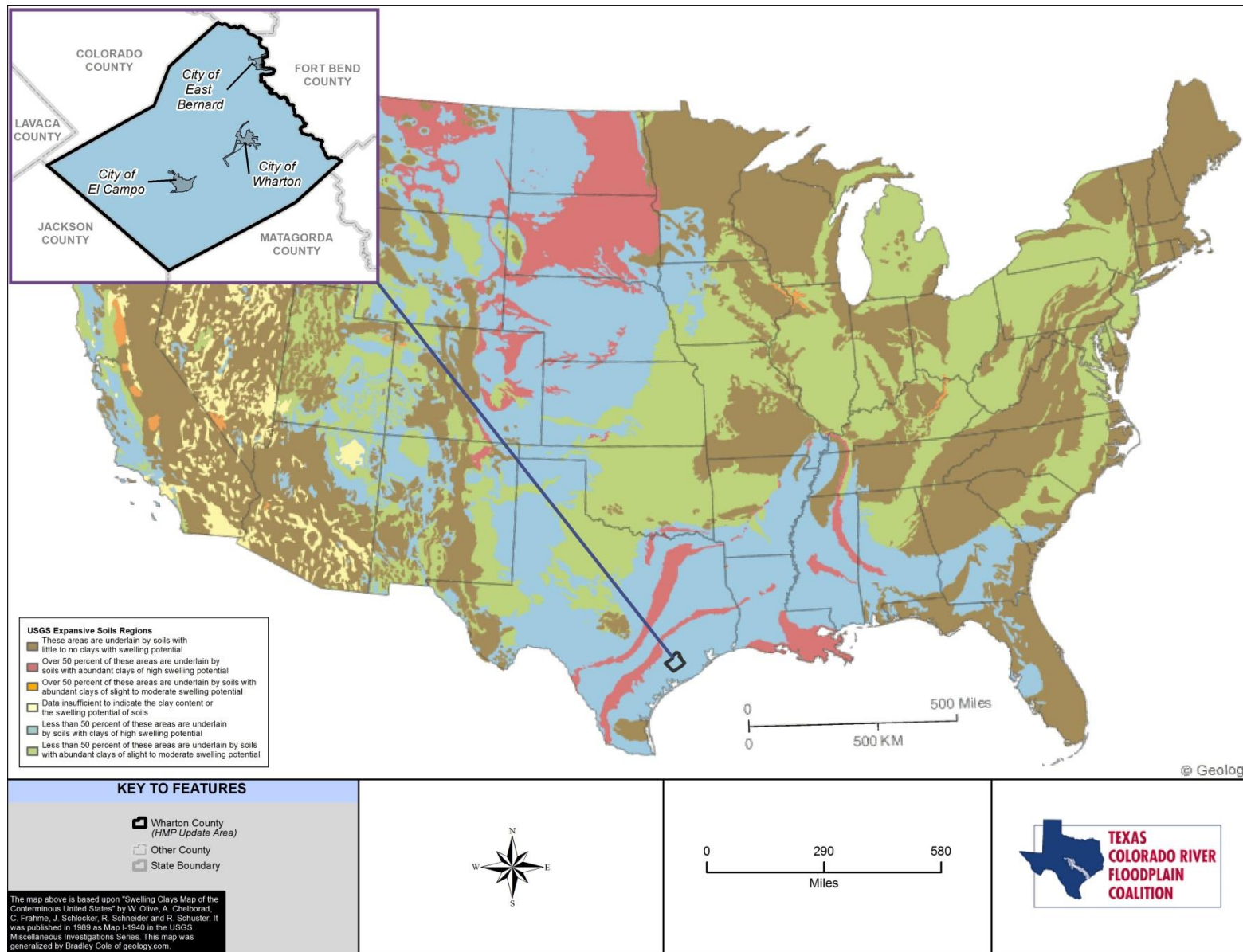


Figure 8-1. Expansive Soil Regions



## 8.2 HAZARD PROFILE

### 8.2.1 Past Events

Wharton County is mostly underlain by soils with clayey textures that have high shrink-swell properties. (Figure 8-1). Expansive soils can cause structural damage, and even though structural foundation issues occur in the HMP update area there is little documentation of site-specific past events from local, state, or national datasets.

Expansive soil is a condition that is native to Wharton County and participating communities because of the clay composition of the soils in this region.. Expansive soils cannot be documented as a time-specific event, except when it leads to structural and infrastructure damage. There are no specific damage reports or historical records of events in Wharton County and participating communities, however future events can occur. See Chapter 8.2.3 below for more information on future events.

### 8.2.2 Location

Structural foundation issues are a known occurrence through this region of South Texas including Wharton County and participating communities. The potential vertical rise of the clay soil in the area can be as high as several inches over a drought cycle. Structural foundations in the participating communities are thus subject to cyclical perimeter lifting and lowering from seasonal changes in soil moisture content because of the semi-arid conditions that persist in the area. Figure 8-1 shows the location of expansive soils areas for the participating communities.

### 8.2.3 Frequency

Expansive soil is a condition that is native to Wharton County and participating communities. In Texas, it can take five or more years for an initial moisture dome to stabilize in a foundation. The establishment of the initial moisture dome usually causes the worst of the damage from foundation deflection. Afterward, the foundation is subject to cyclic perimeter lifting and lowering from seasonal changes in soil moisture content. For example, most homeowners with moving foundations find that cracks widen in the summer and close in the winter because Wharton County and participating communities normally gets most of its annual rainfall in May and October, summers can be quite dry, and evapotranspiration is less in the winter. Due to the amount of swelling potential, an event is rare or unlikely (event possible in next 10 years) for Wharton county and participating communities.

#### ***Future Events***

The large increase in development in the greater Houston-Galveston area, of which Wharton County is a part, could lead to an increase in land subsidence events. More structures, residents, and people could cause a strain on previously undeveloped areas of land and resources. This could increase the probability of an event occurring in Wharton County and participating communities. Future events are considered rare (event possible in next 10 years) for Wharton county and participating communities.

### 8.2.4 Severity

The severity of expansive soils are largely are largely related to the extent and location of areas that are impacted. Such events can cause property damage as well as loss of life; however, events may also occur in remote areas of the HMP update area where there is little to no impact to people or property.

Expansive soil is the hidden force behind basement and foundation problems. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture claims that expansive soils are responsible for more home damage every year than floods, tornadoes and hurricanes combined. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture estimates 50% of all homes in the U.S. are built on expansive soils. Each year in the U.S., expansive soils cause \$2.3 billion in structural damage. Structures

may be condemned as a result of this damage resulting in large losses. Shrink-swell problems are the second most likely problem a homeowner would encounter, after insects.

The *State of Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan* defines soil expansion measurements in terms of its swelling potential or volumetric swell. The State uses the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) soil expansion index adopted by ASTM in 1988. This expansion index has been determined to have a greater range and better sensitivity of expansion than other indexes. The following ratings define expansive soil extent 'per the ASTM D4729-11 Expansive Soils Index:

0-20%	Very Low
21-50%	Low
51-90%	Medium
91-130%	High
130%+	Very High

As seen on Figure 8-1, Wharton County and participating communities are vulnerable to expansive soils as less than 50% of the area is underlain by soils with clays of high swelling potential, and therefore fall under the 'Low' Extent. Most Unified Building Codes (UBC) mandates that special foundation design consideration be employed if the Expansion Index is 20 or greater. This applies to all participating communities.

### 8.2.5 Warning Time

Soil expansion generally occurs gradually over time; however, these processes may be intensified as a result of natural or human-induced activities.

## 8.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS

Events that cause damage to improved areas can result in secondary hazards, such as explosions from natural gas lines, loss of utilities such as water and sewer due to shifting infrastructure, and potential failures of reservoir dams. Additionally, these events may occur simultaneously with other natural hazards such as flooding. Erosion can cause undercutting that can result in an increase in landslide or rockfall hazards. Additionally erosion can result in the loss of topsoil, which can affect agricultural production in the area. Deposition can have impacts that aggravate flooding, bury crops, or reduce capacities of water reservoirs.

## 8.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

In areas where climate change results in less precipitation and reduced surface-water supplies, communities will pump more groundwater. Changes in precipitation events and the hydrological cycle may result in changes in the rate of subsidence and soil erosion. According to a 2003 paper published by the Soil and Water Conservation Society (Soil and Water Conservation 2003):

*The potential for climate change – as expressed in changed precipitation regimes – to increase the risk of soil erosion, surface runoff, and related environmental consequences is clear. The actual damage that would result from such a change is unclear. Regional, seasonal, and temporal variability in precipitation is large both in simulated climate regimes and in the existing climate record. Different landscapes vary greatly in their vulnerability to soil erosion and runoff. Timing of agricultural production practices creates even greater vulnerabilities to soil erosion and runoff during certain seasons. The effect of a particular storm event depends on the moisture content of the soil before the storm starts. These interactions between precipitation, landscape, and management mean the actual outcomes of any particular change in precipitation regime will be complex.*

## 8.5 EXPOSURE

While all structures and foundations are exposed to expansive soils, Wharton County and participating communities clay soil composition increases the likelihood and severity of the seasonal swelling and

contraction of soils. Each participating communities structures and population are potentially exposed and equally at risk by expansive soils. Table 8-1 lists the exposed population and structure count for each participating jurisdiction.

### 8.5.1 Population

It can be assumed that the entire planning area is exposed equally to some extent to expansive soils events. Certain areas are more exposed due to geographic location and local weather patterns. Current growth trends could cause more area residents to be exposed to expansive soils. Increased population will increase demands on structure development, as well as surface and sub-surface soil activities, and may introduce new expansive soils in areas where soil expansion activities have not yet occurred.

### 8.5.2 Property

According to the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), there are 15,781 buildings within the census blocks that define the planning area with an asset replaceable value of over \$4 million (excluding contents). About 98% of these buildings (and 78% of the building value) are associated with residential housing. Within the participating communities in the HMP update area, there are an estimated 14,741 buildings (residential, commercial, and other) with a total asset inventory (excluding contents) value of over \$3.7 million. Other types of buildings in this report include agricultural, education, religious, and governmental structures. See hazard loss tables for community-specific total assessed numbers (e.g. Table 8-1 and Table 8-3). Table 8-1 lists the exposed structures and population for the participating communities.

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	830	10	9	849	2,272
City of El Campo	3,989	83	39	4,111	11,602
City of Wharton	3,021	92	23	3,136	8,832
Unincorporated Area	6,585	29	31	6,645	15,949
<b>Total</b>	14,425	214	102	14,741	38,655

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

### 8.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

Any critical facilities or infrastructure that are located in the participating communities on or near areas prone to expansive soils and are equally exposed to risk from this hazard. Bare ground or lack of tree cover may result in additional exposure.

### 8.5.4 Environment

Expansive soils are naturally occurring processes, but can still cause damage to the natural environment. These processes and events can alter the natural environment where they occur.

## 8.6 VULNERABILITY

Wharton County and participating communities have low to limited risk from expansive soils because of the amounts of clay with swelling potential within the soils in these communities. All jurisdictions classified their risk as ‘low’. Because expansive soils cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical local knowledge of the region were used for this assessment.

### 8.6.1 Population

The risk of injury or fatalities as a result of this hazard is limited, but possible. The most vulnerable demographics will be the economically disadvantaged population areas, children under 16 years, and the elderly. Economically disadvantaged families and those living on a fixed income may not have the financial means to adequately deal with the effects of an event and make the necessary structural improvements. The youth and elderly population may require further assistance as dependents if an event were to occur. Table 8-2 show vulnerable populations per participating community.

Jurisdiction	Youth Population ( < 16 )	% of Total Population	Elderly Population ( > 65 )	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	638	28.08	342	15.05	129	5.68
City of El Campo	3,400	29.31	1,646	14.19	993	8.56
City of Wharton	2,319	26.26	1,288	14.58	1,252	14.18
Unincorporated Area	3,965	24.86	2,390	14.99	1,304	8.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,322</b>	<b>26.70</b>	<b>5,666</b>	<b>14.66</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>9.51</b>

### 8.6.2 Property

All properties are equally at risk from expansive soils, but properties in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations (economically disadvantaged communities and areas with low tree cover) may risk the most damage. Generally, damage is minimal and goes unreported.

Loss estimations for expansive soil hazards are not based on damage functions, because no such damage functions have been generated. Instead, loss estimates were developed representing projected damages (annualized loss) on exposed values. Historical events, statistical analysis and probability factors were applied to the county’s and communities exposed values to create an annualized loss. Table 8-3 lists the property loss estimates for each participating community. Annualized losses of ‘negligible’ are less than \$50 annually. Negligible loss hazards are still included despite minimal annualized losses because of the potential for a high value damaging event.

**TABLE 8-3.  
LOSS ESTIMATES FOR EXPANSIVE SOILS**

Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$391,249,566	Negligible	<0.01
City of El Campo	\$2,159,712,946	Negligible	<0.01
City of Wharton	\$1,416,664,643	Negligible	<0.01
Unincorporated Area	\$2,255,940,086	\$1,807	<0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$6,223,567,243</b>	<b>\$1,807</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

### ***Vulnerability Narrative***

All participating communities are equally at risk to expansive soils. Table 8-2 lists the vulnerable population per community. Table 8-3 lists the estimated annualized losses in dollars for each participating community.

- **City of East Bernard** - The effects of expansive soils are more likely to be felt in the more developed areas of the City, such as along US 90 or SH 60. Property owners face additional maintenance costs because of structure foundation issues caused by the swelling of soils. Owners unaware of the areas of higher risk at the time the property was purchased are more at risk to not be prepared for its effects. If an event were to occur near a critical facility, such as an area school, government building or site containing hazardous materials, area residents would be increasingly impacted. Communities implementing Emergency Response Plans help to mitigate these negative impacts.
- **City of El Campo** - Recent weather events of greater disparity (such as short intense periods of rainfall to prolonged drought conditions) cause more stress on areas affected by expansive soils. As the soil expands, cracks in foundations can occur as well as other structural damages. This can cause damages to critical facilities (such as emergency response facilities, schools and homes). If major area thoroughfares, such as US 59, were to be closed or become impassable by an event, response times to the community and mobility in an out of the city would be limited. Structures built without the benefit of building requirements designed to minimize the risk of property damage are more vulnerable as well. Communities unaware of the areas of higher risk, such as with the implementation of hazard mapping, are more at risk as well.
- **City of Wharton** - The effects of expansive soils are more likely to be felt in the more developed areas of the City, such as along TX 183. Property owners face additional maintenance costs because of structure foundation issues caused by the swelling of soils. Owners unaware of the areas of higher risk at the time the property was purchased are more at risk to not be prepared for its effects. If an event were to occur near a critical facility, such as area schools, emergency response centers, or medical facilities, residents would be increasingly impacted. Communities who do not proactively identify the mitigation measures that would mitigate negative impacts of expansive soils increase their vulnerability as well.

**Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** – All of the Unincorporated Areas of Wharton County are vulnerable to expansive soils as up to 50% of the area is underlain by soils with clays of high swelling potential. Critical facilities and structures that have not been inspected for expansive soils may have a greater risk. If an event were to occur in one of these areas (or any rural area) response

times could be slow. Residents and business owners who are unaware of the dangers of expansive soils are more vulnerable as well. Communities who monitor the structural integrity of critical facility structures and conduct the improvements needed to major thoroughfares or crossings help to mitigate these risks.

### **Community Perception of Vulnerability**

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

### **8.6.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

Even though expansive soils cause enormous amounts of damage, the effects can occur slowly and may not be attributed to a specific event. The damage done by expansive soils is then attributed to poor construction practices or a misconception that all buildings experience this type of damage as they age. Cracked foundations, floors, and basement walls, as well damage to the upper floors of the building when the motion in the structure is significant are typical types of damage done by swelling soils. Shrinkage can remove support from buildings or other structures and result in damaging subsidence.

When critical facilities and infrastructure are affected and closed down for maintenance due to structure foundation problems as a result of soil expansion, critical response times and services to the affected communities will become limited.

### **8.6.4 Environment**

Ecosystems that are exposed to increased soil expansion as a result of the clay content of their soil habitats. However, some soil swelling and contraction is required for healthful ecosystem functioning. Ecosystems that are already exposed to other pressures, such as encroaching development, may be more vulnerable to impacts from these hazards.

## **8.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

Jurisdictions in the planning area should ensure that known hazard areas are regulated under their planning and zoning programs. In areas where hazards may be present, permitting processes should require geotechnical investigations to assess risk and vulnerability to hazard areas. Soil expansion issues generally do impact land use and structure development. Issues pertaining to land use in these areas are likely addressed through jurisdictional building codes, ordinances, and regulations.

## **8.8 SCENARIO**

A worst case scenario would occur if a rapidly occurring soil swelling and contraction caused severe structure deformation or the subsurface soil to crack and open up beneath a structure where many individuals lived or worked. This situation could result in a number of injuries or fatalities and would cause extensive damage to the area directly impacted.

## **8.9 ISSUES**

The major issues for soil expansion are the following:

- Onset of actual or observed soil expansion in many cases is related to changes in land use. Land uses permitted in known hazard areas should be carefully evaluated.
- Knowledge of hydrologic factors is critical for evaluating most types of soil swelling.
- Some land use and housing developments have had soil site investigations completed before development. This practice should be reviewed and expanded as needed.

- More detailed analysis should be conducted for critical facilities and infrastructure exposed to hazard areas. This analysis should address how potential structural issues were addressed in facility design and construction.

# CHAPTER 9. DAM/LEVEE FAILURE

DAM/LEVEE FAILURE RANKING	
Wharton County	No Exposure
City of East Bernard	No Exposure
City of El Campo	No Exposure
City of Wharton	No Exposure

## 9.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 9.1.1 Dams

Water is an essential natural resource and one of the most efficient ways to manage and control water resources is through dam construction. A dam is defined in the Texas Water Code as a barrier, including one for flood detention, designed to impound liquid volumes and which has a height of dam greater than six feet” (Texas Administrative Code, Ch. 299, 1986).

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has jurisdiction over rule changes to dams as 99% of dams are under state regulatory authority. Those regulations are implemented by the TCEQ Dam Safety Program, which monitors and regulates both private and public dams in Texas. The program periodically inspects dams that pose a high or significant hazard and makes recommendations and reports to dam owners to help them maintain safe facilities. The primary goal of the state’s Dam Safety Program is to reduce the risk to lives and property from the consequences of dam failure.

In 2008, TCEQ proposed several rule changes including the definition of dams and dam classifications. According to the new definition, a dam in Texas is a barrier with a “height greater than or equal to 25 feet and a maximum storage (top of dam) capacity of 15 acre-feet; a height greater than 6 feet and a maximum storage capacity greater than or equal to 50 acre-feet; or one that poses a threat to human life or property in the event of failure, regardless of height or maximum storage capacity.” Figure 9-1 shows the specifications required for a dam to be regulated by TCEQ.

### DEFINITIONS

**Breach** — An opening through which floodwaters may pass after part of a levee has given way.

**Dam Failure** — An uncontrolled release of impounded water due to structural deficiencies in a dam.

**Emergency Action Plan** — A document that identifies potential emergency conditions at a dam and specifies actions to be followed to minimize property damage and loss of life. The plan specifies actions the dam owner should take to alleviate problems at a dam. It contains procedures and information to assist the dam owner in issuing early warning and notification messages to responsible downstream emergency management authorities of the emergency situation. It also contains inundation maps to show emergency management authorities the critical areas for action in case of an emergency. (FEMA 64)

**High Hazard Dam** — Dams where failure or operational error will probably cause loss of human life. (FEMA 333)

**Significant Hazard Dam** — Dams where failure or operational error will result in no probable loss of human life but can cause economic loss, environmental damage, or disruption of lifeline facilities, or can impact other concerns. Significant hazard dams are often located in rural or agricultural areas but could be located in areas with population and significant infrastructure. (FEMA 333)

**Accredited Levee** — A levee that is shown on a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) as providing protection from the 1% annual chance or greater flood. A **non-accredited or de-accredited levee** is a levee that is not shown on a FIRM as providing protection from the 1% annual chance or greater flood. A **provisionally accredited levee** is a previously accredited levee that has been de-accredited for which data and/or documentation is pending that will show the levee is compliant with National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) regulations.



Source: DamSafetyAction.Org, Texas

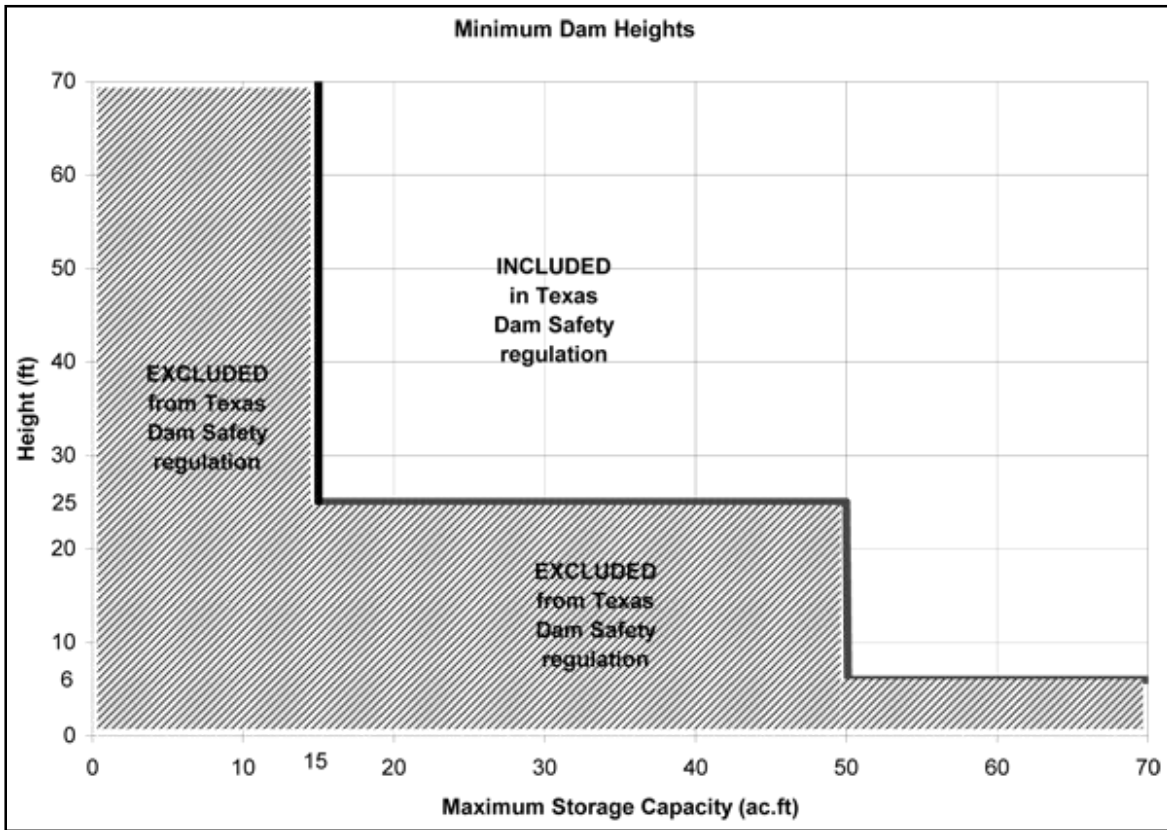


Figure 9-1. TCEQ Dam Definition

The majority of dams and lakes in Texas are used for water supply. Dams also provide benefits such as irrigation for agriculture, hydropower, flood control, maintenance of lake levels, and recreation. The primary purposes and benefits of dams are shown on Figure 9-2. However, despite the benefits and importance of dams to our public works infrastructure, many safety issues exist for dams as with any complex infrastructure; the most serious threat is dam failure. Almost all the dams in Wharton County are privately owned.

Source: FEMA, Dams

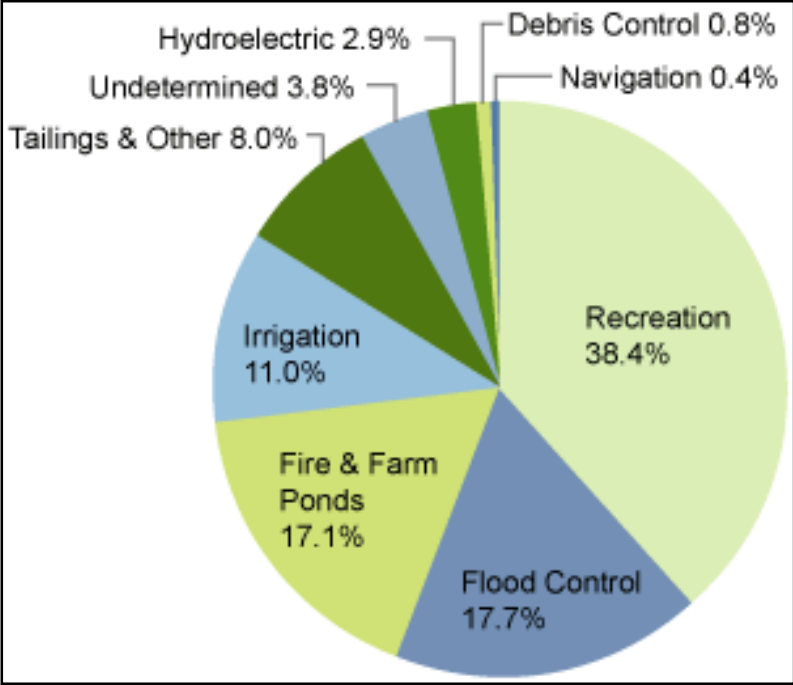


Figure 9-2. Primary Purpose/Benefit of U.S. Dams

Approximately 8% of the dams in all of Wharton County and participating communities are owned by either the local government or local government agency. The remaining 92% are privately owned. See Figure 9-3 for location of dams in the participating communities.

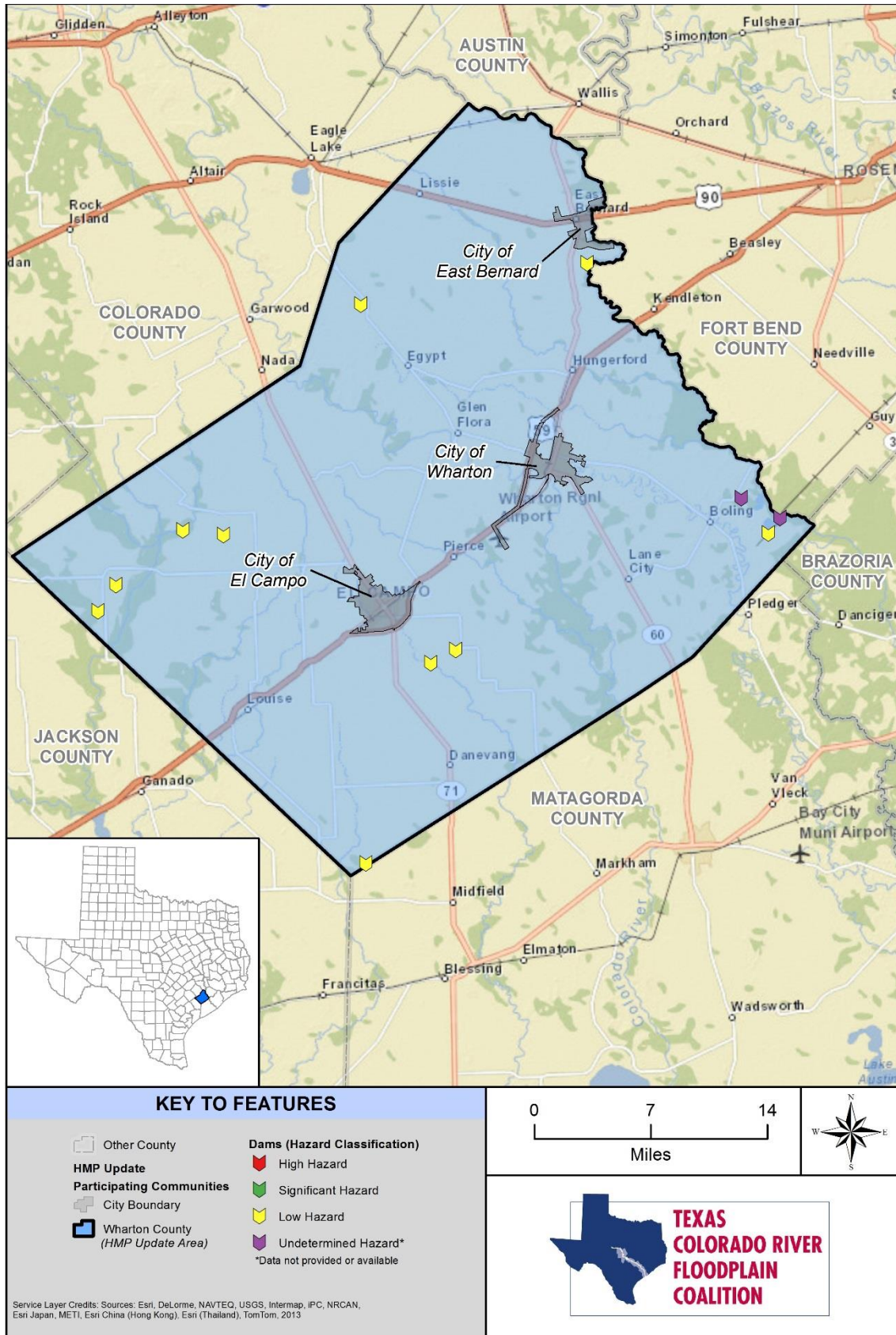


Figure 9-3. Locations of Dams in Wharton County and Participating Communities

### 9.1.2 Levees

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines a levee as a “man-made structure, usually an earthen embankment, designed and constructed in accordance with sound engineering practices to contain, control, or divert the flow of water so as to provide protection from temporary flooding.” The terms dike and levee are sometimes used interchangeably. A few examples of levee systems are the Texas City Hurricane Protection Structure, Freeport Hurricane Protection Structure, the Port Arthur Hurricane Protection Structure in the Houston area, and the Trinity Floodway Levees in the Dallas area. Levees reduce the risk of flooding but no levee system can eliminate all flood risk. There is always a chance that a flood will exceed the capacity of a levee, no matter how well built. Levees can work to provide critical time for local emergency management officials to safely evacuate residents during flooding events. The possibility exists that levees can be overtopped or breached by large floods; however, levees sometimes fail even when a flood is small.

Although there are levees in all 50 states, there is no single agency responsible for levee construction and maintenance. It is a common misperception that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) manages all levees in the nation. In reality, the levees included in the USACE Levee Safety Program represent only about 10% of the nation’s levees (as estimated by the National Committee on Levee Safety). Some estimates indicate that over 100,000 miles of levees exist across the nation. Of that number, the USACE designed and constructed over 14,000 miles of levees with another 14,000 to 16,000 miles operated by other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The majority of the nation’s levees were constructed by private and non-federal interests and are not federally operated or maintained. However, more than 10 million people live or work behind USACE program levees. For this reason, USACE considers its role in assessing, communicating, and managing risk to be a top priority. Figure 9-4 shows USACE program levees versus other levee programs. Wharton County and participating communities do have known levees (See Figure 9-5). Wharton County contains five levees according to the FEMA Midterm Levee Inventory (MLI), the Hazards, United States-Multi Hazard (HAZUS-MH) database, and local knowledge. These levees are the Colorado River Levees (East and West), Jarvis Creek Levee, Sandy Branch Levee, and the West Bernard Creek Levee. All of these levees are located within the Wharton County Unincorporated area. The Cities of East Bernard, El Camp, and Wharton do not have any levees inside their city limits. Additional small private levees may exist..

Flooding can happen anywhere, but certain areas are especially prone to serious flooding. To help communities understand their risk behind levee structures, FEMA uses levee accreditation on flood insurance rate maps (FIRM) to show the locations with reduced risks from the base flood. Conditions in, near, or under levees can change due to environmental factors. The FIRMs take these factors into consideration. If the risk level for a property changes, so may the requirement to carry flood insurance.

Levee accreditation is FEMA’s recognition that a levee is reasonably certain to contain the base (1% annual chance exceedance, sometimes referred to as the 100-year flood) regulatory flood. In order to be accredited, levee owners must certify to FEMA that the levee will provide protection from the base flood. Certification is a technical finding by a professional engineer based on data, drawings, and analyses that the levee system meets the minimum acceptable standards. FEMA’s accreditation is not a guarantee of performance; it is intended to provide updated information for insurance and floodplain development.

Source: USACE

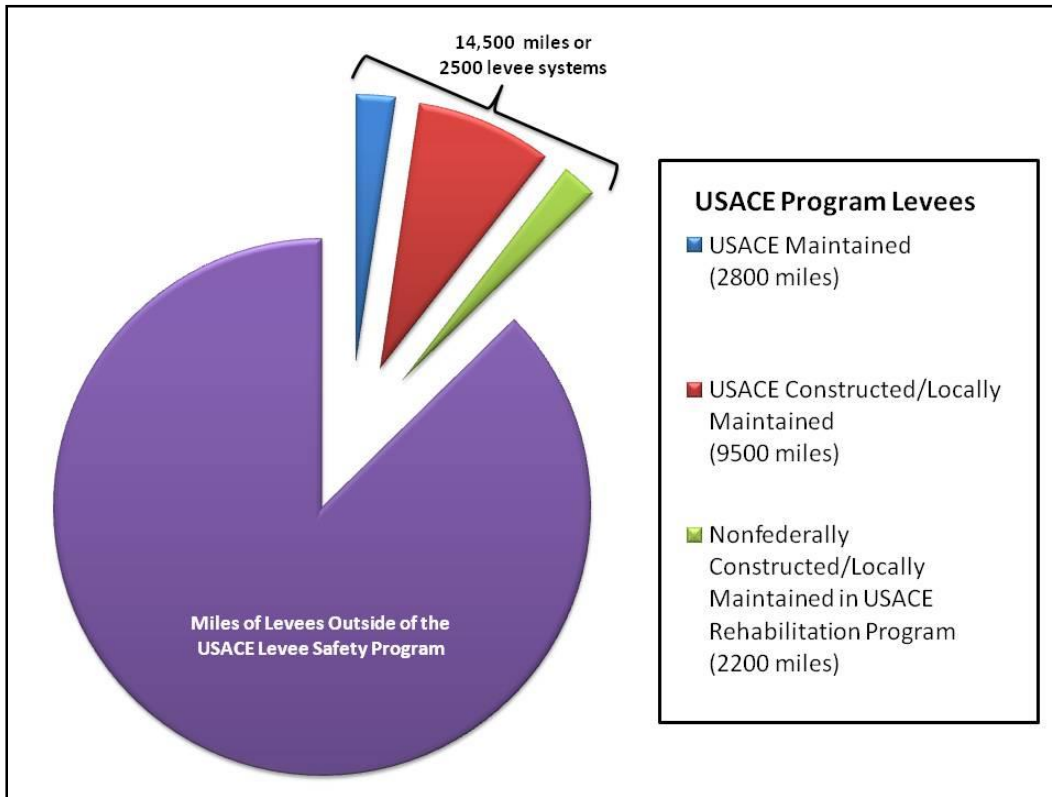


Figure 9-4. U.S. Levee Systems

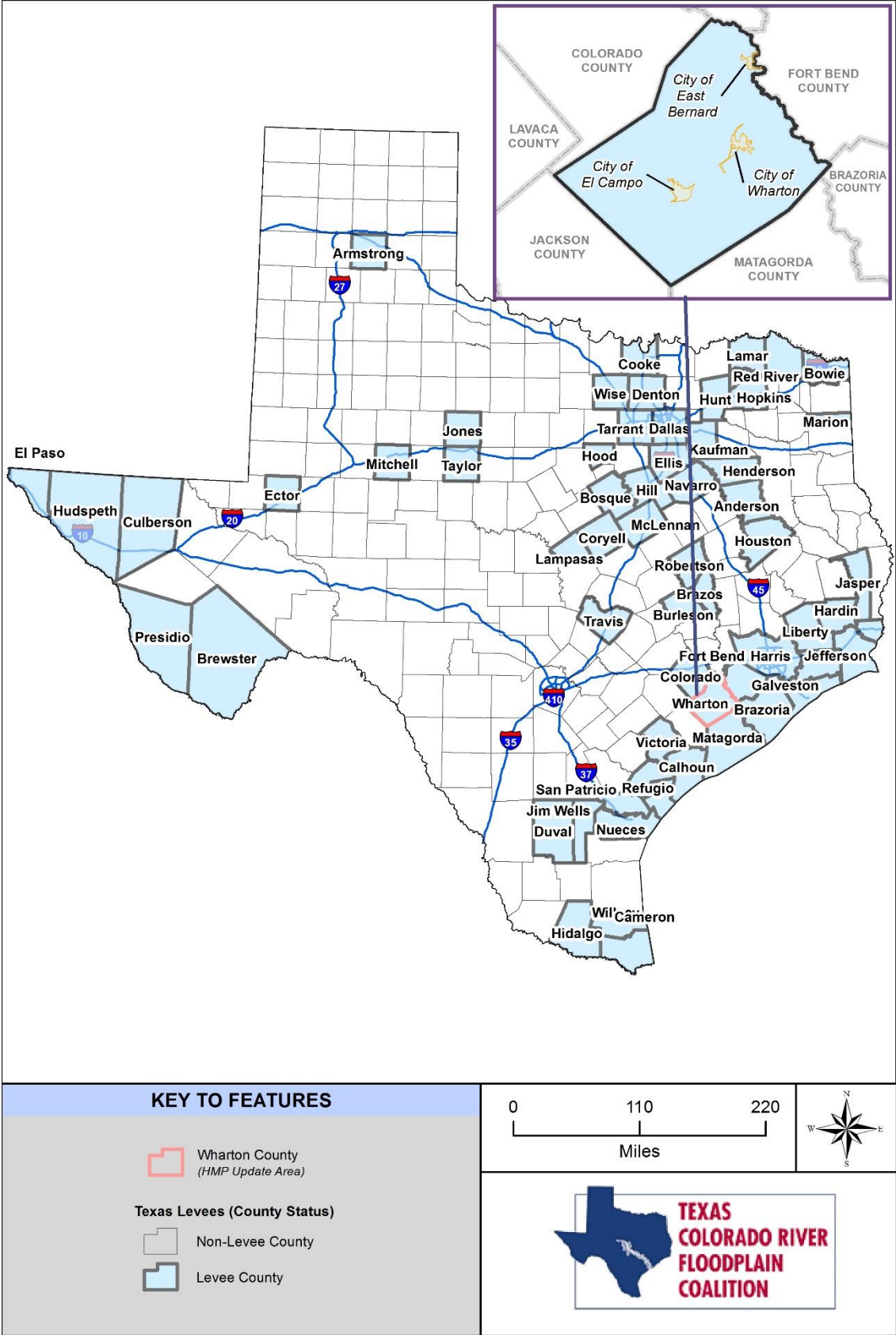


Figure 9-5. Counties in Texas with Levees

### 9.1.3 Causes of Dam Failure

Dam failure is a collapse or breach in a dam. While most dams have storage volumes small enough that failures have little or no repercussions, dams with large storage amounts can cause significant downstream flooding. Dam failures in the United States typically occur from any one or combination of the following:

- Overtopping of the primary dam structure, which accounts for 34% of all dam failures, can occur due to inadequate spillway design, settlement of the dam crest, blockage of spillways, and other factors.
- Foundation defects due to differential settlement, slides, slope instability, uplift pressures, and foundation seepage can also cause dam failure. These account for 30% of all dam failures.
- Failure due to piping and seepage accounts for 20% of all failures. These are caused by internal erosion due to piping and seepage, erosion along hydraulic structures such as spillways, erosion due to animal burrows, and cracks in the dam structure.
- Failure due to problems with conduits and valves, typically caused by the piping of embankment material into conduits through joints or cracks, constitutes 10% of all failures.

The remaining 6% of U.S. dam failures are due to miscellaneous causes. Many dam failures in the United States have been secondary results from other disasters. The prominent causes are earthquakes, landslides, extreme storms, massive snowmelt, equipment malfunction, structural damage, foundation failures, and sabotage.

Poor construction, lack of maintenance and repair, and deficient operational procedures are preventable or correctable by a program of regular inspections. Terrorism and vandalism are serious concerns that all operators of public facilities must plan for; these threats are under continuous review by public safety agencies.

### 9.1.4 Causes of Levee Failure

Levee data used in this report is from the FEMA Midterm Levee Inventory (MLI) and the Hazards, United States-Multi Hazard (HAZUS-MH) database. The FEMA MLI captures all levee data (USACE and non-USACE), with a primary focus on levees that provide protection from the base (1% annual chance) flood. Levees providing less than base flood protection will also be included, but only for those levees with data readily available. The HAZUS-MH database did not list any levees in Wharton County. However, the FEMA MLI database did contain levees for Wharton County. In addition, it is possible that there are private levees located within the county and participating cities that are not listed in these databases.

A levee breach occurs when part of a levee gives way, creating an opening through which floodwaters may pass. A breach may occur gradually or suddenly. The most dangerous breaches happen quickly during periods of high water. The resulting torrent can quickly swamp a large area behind the failed levee with little or no warning.

Earthen levees can be damaged in several ways. For instance, strong river currents and waves can erode the surface. Debris and ice carried by floodwaters—and even large objects such as boats or barges—can collide with and gouge the levee. Trees growing on a levee can blow over, leaving a hole where the root wad and soil used to be. Burrowing animals can create holes that enable water to pass through a levee. If severe enough, any of these situations can lead to a zone of weakness that could cause a levee breach. In seismically active areas, earthquakes and ground shaking can cause a loss of soil strength, weakening a levee and possibly resulting in failure. Seismic activity can also cause levees to slide or slump, both of which can lead to failure. Unfortunately, in the rare occurrence when a levee system fails or is overtopped, severe flooding can occur due to increased elevation differences associated with levees and the increased water velocity that is created.

It is also important to remember that no levee provides protection from events for which it was not designed, and proper operation and maintenance are necessary to reduce the probability of failure. In some cases, flooding may not be directly attributable to a river, stream, or lake overflowing its banks. Rather, it may simply be the combination of excessive rainfall or snowmelt, saturated ground, and inadequate drainage. With no place to go, the water will find the lowest elevations—areas that are often not in a floodplain. This type of flooding, often referred to as sheet flooding, is becoming increasingly prevalent as development outstrips the ability of the drainage infrastructure to properly carry and disburse the water flow. Flooding also occurs due to combined storm and sanitary sewers that cannot handle the amount of water.

The complicated nature of levee protection was made evident by events such as Hurricane Katrina. Flooding can be exacerbated by levees that are breached or overtopped. As a result, FEMA and USACE are re-evaluating their policies regarding enforcement of levee maintenance and post-flood rebuilding. Both agencies are also conducting stricter inspections to determine how much protection individual levees actually provide. The Texas Water Development Board's (TWDB) mission is to provide leadership, information, education, and support for planning, financial assistance, and outreach for the conservation and responsible development of water for Texas. TWDB will assist qualifying entities who are in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) through technical and financial assistance. TWDB assistance may include grant funding, participation in levee inspections, assistance in developing Maintenance Deficiency Correction Plans, site visits, and participation in public hearings. In addition, the TWDB will also discourage the construction of new levees to protect new developments, and instead encourage other types of flood mitigation projects.

### **9.1.5 Regulatory Oversight**

The potential for catastrophic flooding due to dam failures led to passage of the National Dam Safety Act (Public Law 92-367). The National Dam Safety Program requires a periodic engineering analysis of every major dam in the country. The goal of this FEMA-monitored effort is to identify and mitigate the risk of dam failure so as to protect the lives and property of the public.

#### ***Texas Rules and Regulations for Dam Safety and Dam Construction***

Effective September 1, 2013, dams are exempt from safety requirements if they are located on private property, have a maximum impoundment capacity of less than 500 acre-feet, are classified as low or significant hazard, are located in a county with a population of less than 350,000 (as per 2010 U.S. Census), and are not located within the corporate limits of a municipality. Dam owners will still have to comply with maintenance and operation requirements. There is no exemption expiration date. Figure 9-6 shows counties in Texas that fall under this exemption criteria. One of the dams in Wharton County is non-exempt while the others are exempt per 30 TAC 299.

To help the State Dam Safety Program achieve its goal, the state's dam safety regulations now include the requirement for emergency action plans on all non-exempt Significant-Hazard and High-Hazard Potential dams (Title 30, Texas Administrative Code, Ch. 299, 299.61b). Dam count and exemptions 30 TAC 299 are detailed below by jurisdiction in Table 9-1.



<b>TABLE 9-1. DAM COUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS</b>		
Jurisdiction	Dam Count	Exemptions
City of East Bernard	0	0
City of El Campo	0	0
City of Wharton	0	0
Unincorporated Areas	12	11
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>
*Dams data provided by Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) in 2015.		

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Dam Safety Program**

USACE is responsible for safety inspections of some federal and non-federal dams in the United States that meet the size and storage limitations specified in the National Dam Safety Act. USACE has inventoried dams; surveyed each state and federal agency’s capabilities, practices, and regulations regarding design, construction, operation and maintenance of the dams; and developed guidelines for inspection and evaluation of dam safety (USACE 1997).

**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Dam Safety Program**

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) cooperates with a large number of federal and state agencies to ensure and promote dam safety. More than 3,000 dams are part of regulated hydroelectric projects in the FERC program. Two-thirds of these are more than 50 years old. As dams age, concern about their safety and integrity grows, so oversight and regular inspection are important. FERC inspects hydroelectric projects on an unscheduled basis to investigate the following:

- Potential dam safety problems
- Complaints about constructing and operating a project
- Safety concerns related to natural disasters
- Issues concerning compliance with the terms and conditions of a license

Every 5 years, an independent engineer approved by the FERC must inspect and evaluate projects with dams higher than 32.8 feet (10 meters) or with a total storage capacity of more than 2,000 acre-feet.

FERC monitors and evaluates seismic research and applies it in investigating and performing structural analyses of hydroelectric projects. FERC also evaluates the effects of potential and actual large floods on the safety of dams. During and following floods, FERC visits dams and licensed projects, determines the extent of damage, if any, and directs any necessary studies or remedial measures the licensee must undertake. The FERC publication *Engineering Guidelines for the Evaluation of Hydropower Projects* guides the FERC engineering staff and licensees in evaluating dam safety. The publication is frequently revised to reflect current information and methodologies.

FERC requires licensees to prepare emergency action plans and conducts training sessions on how to develop and test these plans. The plans outline an early warning system if there is an actual or potential sudden release of water from a dam due to failure. The plans include operational procedures that may be used, such as reducing reservoir levels and reducing downstream flows, as well as procedures for notifying affected residents and agencies responsible for emergency management. These plans are frequently updated and tested to ensure that everyone knows what to do in emergency situations.

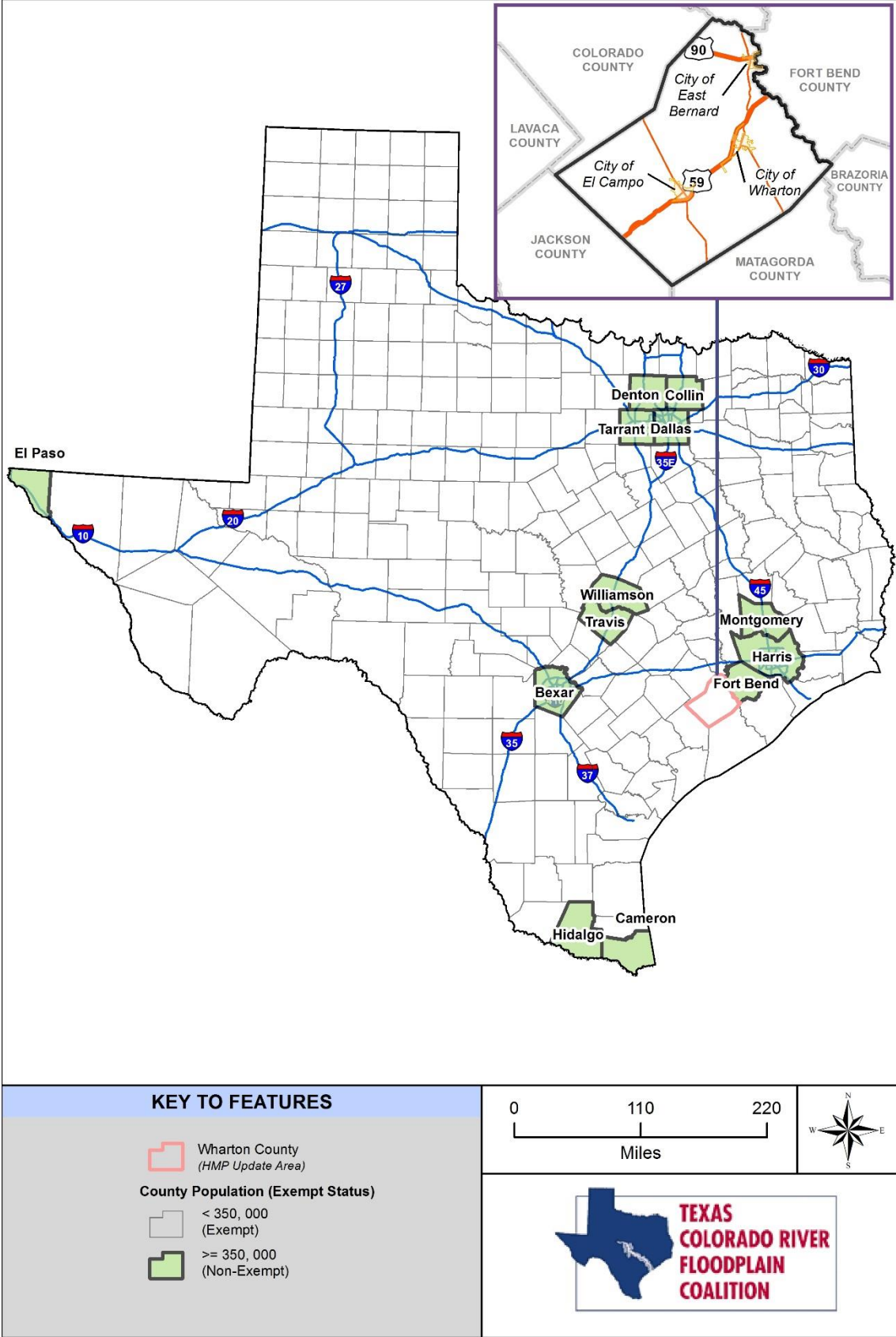


Figure 9-6. Texas County Population Exemptions for Dams

## 9.2 HAZARD PROFILE

### 9.2.1 Past Events

There are approximately 7,290 dams in the inventory of dams in Texas. Only two major dam failures have occurred in the entire Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition (TCRFC) planning region. Both occurred in the City of Austin, which is not a participating jurisdiction in this effort. The last failure for the city was in 1915. There have been no previous dam failure events in Wharton County and the participating communities.

After a series of high-profile failures throughout the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. Congress enacted legislation mandating inspections and strict safety requirements for all governmental and privately operated dams. Stricter state and federal dam safety regulations were adopted in the 1970s and 1980s as a direct response to numerous dam failures across the country. These standards require that dams be able to withstand the most severe flood imaginable, the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF). This flood is so severe and statistically remote that its probability of occurrence in any given year cannot be measured. Since that time the number of failures and deaths has dramatically decreased.

The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) conducted a Dam Modernization Program between 1994 and 2004 to strengthen the dams in its jurisdiction and ensure their safety for years to come. This program addressed a common problem with the stability of the “gravity” sections of the dams. Since gravity sections derive strength from their size and weight, post-tensioned anchors were added to improve stability. The dam modernization program helps ensure that LCRA’s dams meet required design safety standards to resist the water load and pressure of the PMF.

An extreme precipitation event occurred May 23 through 25, 2015, (this event is further outlined in Chapter 12, Flood) causing a rise in Lake Travis (Mansfield Dam, Figure 9-7); however no releases occurred from LCRA.

Source: LCRA

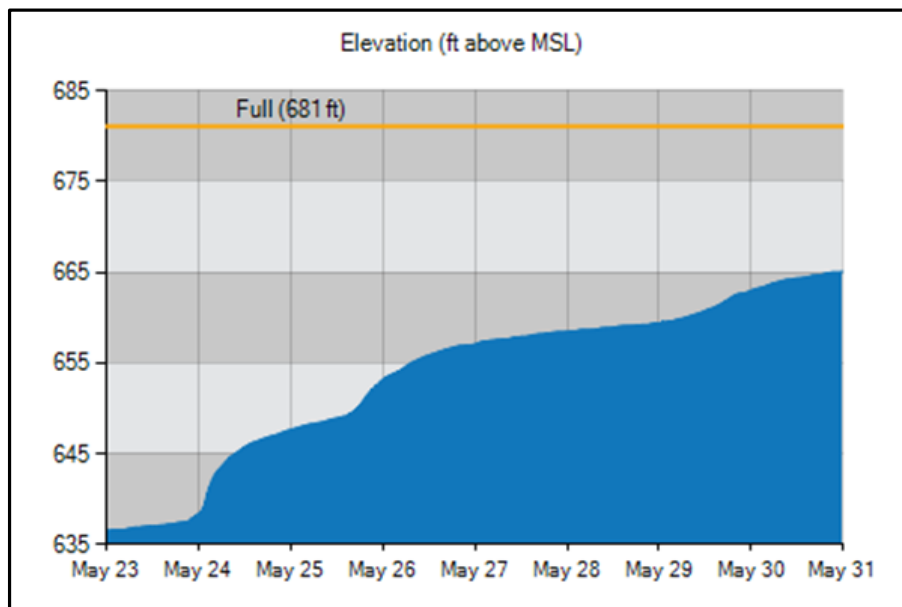


Figure 9-7. Lake Travis Water Surface Elevation During the May 2015 Precipitation Event

## 9.2.2 Location

TWDB provided a database of dams based on the National Inventory of Dams. Table 9-2 shows the number documented high and significant hazard dams in each participating community. This database lists 12 dams in Wharton County and participating communities and classifies dams based on the potential hazard to the downstream area resulting from failure or mis-operation of the dam or facilities:

- High-Hazard Potential—Probable loss of life (one or more persons)
- Significant-Hazard Potential—No probable loss of human life but can cause economic loss, environment damage, disruption of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns; often located in predominantly rural or agricultural areas but could be located in areas with population and significant infrastructure
- Low-Hazard Potential—No probable loss of human life and low economic or environmental losses; losses are principally limited to the owner's property

Based on these classifications, there are no high-hazard or significant-hazard dams in Wharton County. Figure 9-8 shows locations of the dams in the county and participating cities. The FEMA MLI data provided a listing of levee locations in Texas. Figure 9-5 shows counties with levees in Texas and Figure 9-9 shows levee locations in Wharton County. These levees have not been certified as proving protection from the 100-year floodplain (See section 9.1.2 for more information on certification). Figure 9-8 shows the estimated potential dam inundation extents and population vulnerability. All of the levees in Wharton County are not located near populated areas. The one near the City of Wharton is located on the southern edge of the city, not along the populated town center. All of the levees in the participating jurisdiction are earthen and not certified (not used to remove people and property out of the 100 year flood plain).

There are an uncounted number of 'non-jurisdictional' dams on public and private lands in the planning area. These are small dams that normally do not store water but may impound water during heavy precipitation events. Because they are not monitored or maintained, there is potential for them to overtop or fail and cause flooding and property damage during a significant rainfall event. The extent and risk associated with these dams is not known.

The risks of a dam failure are spread throughout the county while that of a levee failure is limited to the City of Wharton and the southern portions of the county. The planning area could be impacted by several high-hazard dams that are located outside of the county. If a failure of one of these high-hazard dams occurred, it could result in loss of life. Other high-hazard dams are located outside of the county and their drainages enter Wharton County and participating communities either by direct drainage through parts of the planning area or by inflow into the Colorado River or San Bernard River upstream from Colorado County. However there have not been any dam breaches immediately upstream of or within the participating communities, thus the overall chance of this occurring is minimal, and therefore classified as 'No Exposure'. Additionally major dams located outside of the planning area that could affect the participating communities, including Cedar Creek Dam and Tom Miller Dam are located approximately 65 and 165 miles, respectively, upstream of Wharton County, along the Colorado River. Because of these two dam's upstream location, any major dam breach will minimally effect Wharton County. A detailed description of exposure and vulnerability per jurisdiction is described in Chapter 9.5 and Chapter 9.6.

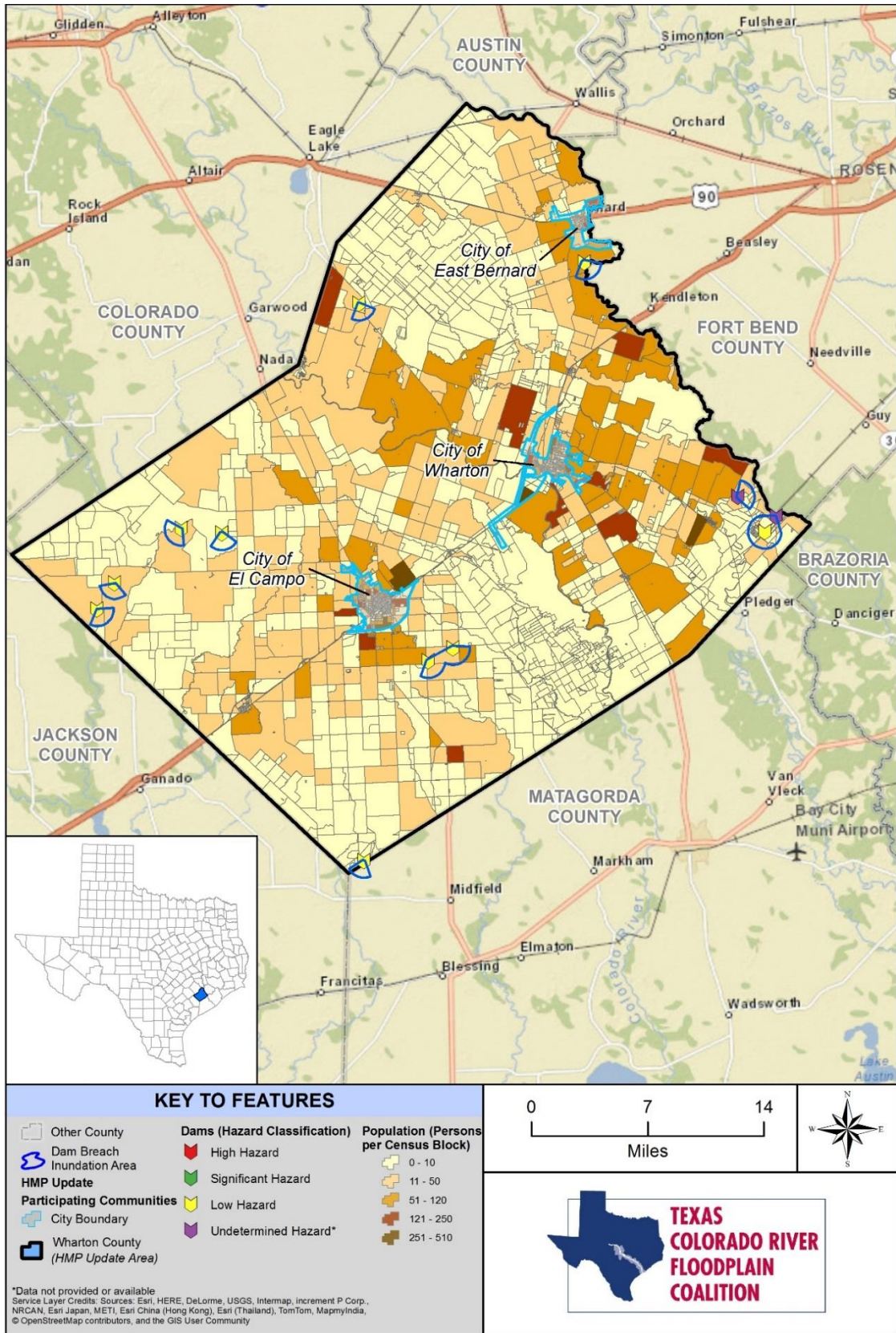


Figure 9-8. Wharton County and Participating Communities Dam Potential Inundation Areas and Population

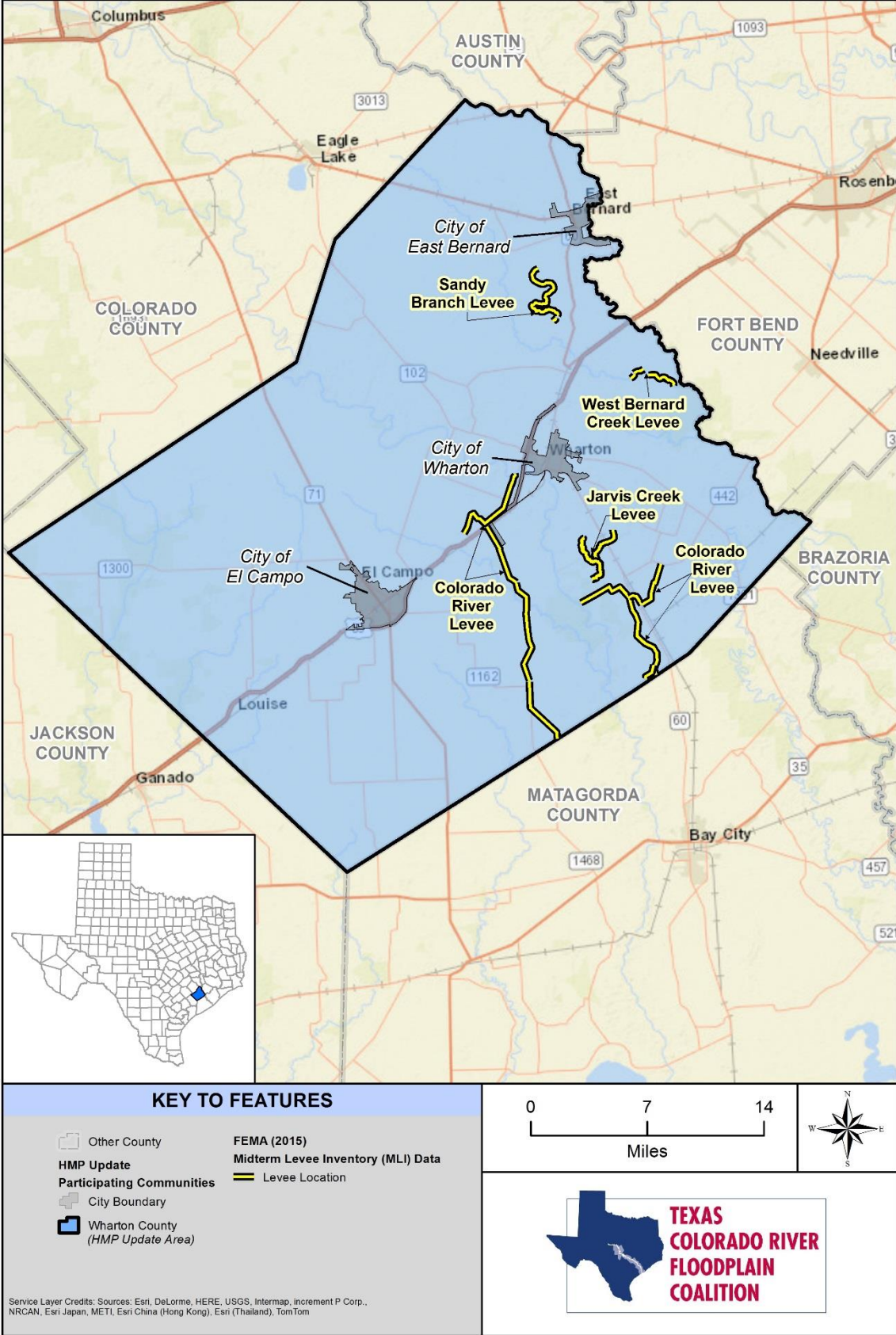


Figure 9-9. Levees in Wharton County

### 9.2.3 Frequency

There has been no occurrence of dam failure in the past 100 years in the HMP update area. Overall, the probability of a dam failure somewhere in Wharton County and the participating communities is considered rare or unlikely (event not probable in the next 10 years). This same probability applies to future events (event not probable in the next 10 years).

### 9.2.4 Severity

USACE and TCEQ developed the classification system shown in Table 9-2 and Table 9-3 for the hazard potential of dam failures. The hazard rating systems are both based only on the potential consequences of a dam failure; neither system takes into account the probability of such failures. Table 9-3 shows the specifications required for a dam to be regulated by TCEQ.

<b>TABLE 9-2. USACE HAZARD POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION</b>				
Hazard Category <sup>a</sup>	Direct Loss of Life <sup>b</sup>	Lifeline Losses <sup>c</sup>	Property Losses <sup>d</sup>	Environmental Losses <sup>e</sup>
Low	None (rural location, no permanent structures for human habitation)	No disruption of services (cosmetic or rapidly repairable damage)	Private agricultural lands, equipment, and isolated buildings	Minimal incremental damage
Significant	Possible (rural location, only transient or day-use facilities)	Disruption of essential facilities and access	Major public and private facilities	Major mitigation required
High	Certain (one or more persons; extensive residential, commercial, or industrial development)	Disruption of essential facilities and access	Extensive public and private facilities	Extensive mitigation cost or impossible to mitigate

a. Categories are assigned to overall projects, not individual structures at a project.  
 b. Loss of life potential based on inundation mapping of area downstream of the project. Analyses of loss of life potential should take into account the population at risk, time of flood wave travel, and warning time.  
 c. Indirect threats to life caused by the interruption of lifeline services due to project failure or operational disruption; for example, loss of critical medical facilities or access to them.  
 d. Damage to project facilities and downstream property and indirect impact due to loss of project services, such as impact due to loss of a dam and navigation pool, or impact due to loss of water or power supply.  
 e. Environmental impact downstream caused by the incremental flood wave produced by the project failure, beyond what would normally be expected for the magnitude flood event under which the failure occurs.  
 Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1995

<b>TABLE 9-3. TCEQ HAZARD POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION</b>		
Hazard Category	Human Impact	Economic Impact
Low	No loss of life expected (no lives or permanent habitable structures in the inundation area)	Minimal economic loss (failure may cause damage to occasional farms, agricultural improvements, and minor highways)

Significant	Loss of life is possible (1 to 6 lives or 1 to 2 permanent habitable structures in the inundation area)	Appreciable economic loss (failure may cause damage to isolated homes, secondary highways, minor railroads, or cause interruption of public services)
High	Loss of life is expected (7 or more lives or 3 or more permanent habitable structures in the inundation area)	Excessive economic losses (failure may cause damage to public, agricultural, industrial, or commercial facilities or utilities, and main highways or railroads)
Source: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, <a href="http://www.tceq.texas.gov/field/damsafetyprog.html">http://www.tceq.texas.gov/field/damsafetyprog.html</a>		

### 9.2.5 Warning Time

Warning time for dam failure varies depending on the cause of the failure. In events of extreme precipitation or massive snowmelt, evacuations can be planned with sufficient time. In the event of a structural failure due to earthquake, there may be no warning time. A dam's structural type also affects warning time. Earthen dams do not tend to fail completely or instantaneously. Once a breach is initiated, discharging water erodes the breach until either the reservoir water is depleted or the breach resists further erosion. Concrete gravity dams also tend to have a partial breach as one or more monolith sections are forced apart by escaping water. The time of breach formation ranges from a few minutes to a few hours (USACE 1997).

Emergency action plans for all high-hazard dams that would affect Wharton County are on file with TCEQ. Additionally, possible evacuation routes in the event of a failure have been identified.

### 9.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS

Dam failure can cause severe downstream flooding, depending on the magnitude of the failure. Other potential secondary hazards of dam failure are landslides around the reservoir perimeter, bank erosion on the rivers, and destruction of downstream habitat.

### 9.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Dams are designed partly based on assumptions about a river's flow behavior, expressed as hydrographs. Changes in weather patterns can have significant effects on the hydrograph used for the design of a dam. If the hydrograph changes, it is conceivable that the dam can lose some or all of its designed margin of safety, also known as freeboard. If freeboard is reduced, dam operators may be forced to release increased volumes earlier in a storm cycle in order to maintain the required margins of safety. Such early releases of increased volumes can increase flood potential downstream.

Dams are constructed with safety features known as "spillways." Spillways are put in place on dams as a safety measure in the event of the reservoir filling too quickly. Spillway overflow events, often referred to as "design failures," result in increased discharges downstream and increased flooding potential. Although climate change will not increase the probability of catastrophic dam failure, it may increase the probability of design failures.

### 9.5 EXPOSURE AND VULNERABILITY

Dam data records and exposures are described in general in this section. Figure 9-8 shows potential estimated areas of impact by a dam breach and population vulnerability by census block. While some communities have property and population that may be effected by an event, due to the lack of previous events, local knowledge and no high hazard dams or certified levees in the area, the overall probability of occurrence is minimal and therefore classified as 'No Exposure'.

Table 9-4 below list the dams in each jurisdiction, as well as dam height, maximum discharge, and storage. A higher discharge and storage area corresponds with a greater extent of damage from a dam failure. High hazard dams (Table 9-2) are susceptible to human, economic, and environmental impact from a failure



(Table 9-2 and Table 9-3). This table includes major upstream dams outside of the planning area that may affect Wharton County participating communities. However, due to their distant location from the planning area, the effects of a dam breach are minimized, and would not significantly contribute to damages.

Overall, dam failure impacts would likely be rare and limited in Wharton County, largely affecting the downstream areas during a failure event. Roads closed due to dam failure floods could result in serious transportation disruptions due to the limited number of roads in the county. The maximum inundation depth for a dam breach would be in line to the height of the dam, as listed in the table below. Small dams in the rural parts of unincorporated area of the county do not have the data available to predict breach analysis inundation effects on local road crossing. Existing road closure policies and emergency management practices will be used. The Colorado River at the City of Wharton has a bank full stage of 20 feet and a Flood Stage of 39 feet. The San Bernard River at East Bernard has an action stage of 13', and a flood stage of 17'. Participating communities use gauges for measurements, monitoring of conditions, road closures, and emergency conditions during events.

Table 9-4 below list the dams in each jurisdiction, as well as dam height, maximum discharge, and storage. A higher discharge and storage area corresponds with a greater extent of damage from a dam failure. High hazard dams (Table 9-2) are susceptible to human, economic, and environmental impact from a failure (Table 9-2 and Table 9-3).

Overall, dam failure impacts would likely be rare and limited in Wharton County, largely affecting the downstream areas during a failure event. Roads closed due to dam failure floods could result in serious transportation disruptions due to the limited number of roads in the county.

<b>TABLE 9-4. WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES DAM EXTENTS</b>				
<b>Dam Name</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Dam Height (feet)</b>	<b>Max Discharge (cubic feet/second)</b>	<b>Max Storage (acre feet)</b>
CARLSON FRANCIS RESERVOIRS	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	7	NA	209
E S ROTHROCK TRUST LAKE NO 1 DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	21	244	340
EG GOFF DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	8	NA	63
HUTCHINS LAKE DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	9	NA	108
NEWGULF LAKE LEVEE	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	18	3,701	20,609
NEWGULF OFF-CHANNEL RESERVOIR LEVEE	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	18	1,498	2,596
RESERVOIR NO 4 DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	7	NA	150
RICHARDS NO 2 LEVEE	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	8	160	194

<b>TABLE 9-4. WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES DAM EXTENTS</b>				
<b>Dam Name</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Dam Height (feet)</b>	<b>Max Discharge (cubic feet/second)</b>	<b>Max Storage (acre feet)</b>
ROACH RESERVOIR DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	6	NA	150
ROBERT MEEK FARMS DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	14	NA	134
ROCKIN RANCH LAKE DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	6	NA	50
TEXAS GULF INC RESERVOIR DAM	Wharton County Unincorporated Area	10	NA	2,150
TOM MILLER DAM**	City of Austin	85	1,517,697	115,404
CEDAR CREEK DAM**	Fayette County Unincorporated Area	102	1,152	88,628
*No Dams within participating communities city limits				
** Major Dams upstream of participating Communities				

## 9.5.1 Population

Exposed populations are all populations downstream from dam failures or behind levees that are incapable of escaping the area within the allowable time frame. This population includes the elderly and young who may be unable to get themselves out of the inundation area. The vulnerable population also includes those who would not have adequate warning from a television or radio emergency warning system. Table 9-5 lists the exposed structures and population for the participating communities based on the estimated inundation areas. While some communities have population that may be effected by an event, due to the lack of previous events, local knowledge and no high hazard dams in the area, the overall probability of occurrence is minimal and therefore classified as ‘No Exposure’.

## 9.5.2 Property

According to the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), there are 15,781 buildings within the census blocks that define the planning area with an asset replaceable value of over \$4 million (excluding contents). About 98% of these buildings (and 78% of the building value) are associated with residential housing. Within the participating communities in the HMP update area, there are an estimated 14,741 buildings (residential, commercial, and other) with a total asset inventory (excluding contents) value of over \$3.7 million. Other types of buildings in this report include agricultural, education, religious, and governmental structures. See hazard loss tables for community-specific total assessed numbers (Table 9-7). While some communities have property that may be effected by an event, due to the lack of previous events, local knowledge and no high hazard dams in the area, the overall probability of occurrence is minimal and therefore classified as ‘No Exposure’.

**TABLE 9-5.  
EXPOSED STRUCTURES AND POPULATION**

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	0	0	0	0	0
City of El Campo	0	0	0	0	0
City of Wharton	2	0	0	2	7
Wharton County Unincorporated Area	868	2	1	871	1965
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>1972</b>

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

### 9.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

Any critical facilities or infrastructure that are located within the dam inundation area are exposed to risk from the hazard. Dam or levee failure can result in serious structural damage to critical facilities and infrastructure, in particular roads, bridges, underground utilities, and pipelines.

### 9.5.4 Environment

Reservoirs held behind dams affect many ecological aspects of a river. River topography and dynamics depend on a wide range of flows, but rivers below dams often experience long periods of very stable flow conditions or saw-tooth flow patterns caused by releases followed by no releases. Water releases from dams usually contain very little suspended sediment; this can lead to scouring of river beds and banks.

The environment would be vulnerable to a number of risks in the event of dam failure. The inundation could introduce many foreign elements into local waterways. This could result in destruction of downstream habitat and could have detrimental effects on many species of animals.

## 9.6 EXPOSURE

Dam failure inundation mapping for the planning area was not available to allow HAZUS loss estimations to be modeled. Due to this data deficiency, for both levees and dams, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical local knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. Overall, dam failure impacts would likely be rare and limited in Wharton County and the participating communities, with 10 to 25% of the planning area affected during a failure event. While parts of the county could be effected, the likelihood of this occurring (based on historical events, and local knowledge) is minimal. Roads closed due to dam failure floods could result in serious transportation disruptions due to the limited number of roads in the rural areas of the HMP update area.

After profiling and analyzing the dam and levee information (including general background, historical occurrences, extent, exposure and vulnerability), the risk analysis was discussed and among the participating members. Through these discussions and analysis, it was decided that while some communities have property and population that may be effected by an event due to the local knowledge, lack of previous events, no high hazard dams in the immediate or upstream area, no certified levees effected 100 year floodplain requirements, and the overall probability of a minimal occurrence, all participating communities classified their respective jurisdictions as ‘No Exposure’.

## 9.6.1 Population

The risk of injury or fatalities as a result of this hazard is limited, but possible. The most vulnerable demographics will be the economically disadvantaged population areas, children under 16 year, and the elderly. See Table 9-6 for vulnerable populations per participating community in the inundation area.

Table 9-5 lists the exposed structures and population for the participating communities based on the estimated inundation areas.

Jurisdiction	Youth Population ( < 16 )	% of Total Population	Elderly Population ( > 65 )	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of El Campo	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of Wharton	3	42.86	0	0	0	0
Wharton County Unincorporated Area	526	26.77	274	13.94	130	6.62
Wharton County Total	529	26.83	274	13.89	130	6.59

## 9.6.2 Property

All downstream properties in the inundation area are equally at risk from a dam breach, but properties in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations (economically disadvantaged communities and areas nearest to the dam breach) may risk the most damage.

Loss estimations for dam hazards are not based on HAZUS modeled damage functions, because detailed dam inundation mapping from hydrology and hydraulic modeling was unavailable. Annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical local knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. Table 9-7 lists the property loss estimates for each participating community. Annualized losses of 'negligible' are less than \$50 annually. Negligible loss hazards are still included despite minimal annualized losses because of the potential for a high value damaging event.

	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$0	0	0
City of El Campo	\$0	0	0

City of Wharton	\$700,000	Negligible	<0.01
Unincorporated Area	\$250,341,000	Negligible	<0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$251,041,000</b>	<b>Negligible</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

### ***Vulnerability Narrative***

The entire participating communities are equally at risk to a dam breach. Communities with dams inside as well as upstream of their jurisdictions are the most vulnerable. Table 9-6 lists the vulnerable population per community. Table 9-7 lists the estimated annualized losses in dollars for each participating community. The previous tables list the minimally exposed structures to an unlikely event. Based on previous occurrences (0), local knowledge and no high hazard dams in the area, the overall probability of occurrence is minimal and therefore classified as ‘No Exposure’.

- **City of East Bernard** - The City of East Bernard does not have any documented dams or levees within the city limits. With no known significant or high hazard dams upstream of the City, no known previous events, and local knowledge, the City of East Bernard is classified as ‘No Exposure’.
- **City of El Campo** - The City of El Campo does not have any documented dams or levees within the city limits. With no known significant or high hazard dams upstream of the City, no known previous events, and local knowledge, the City of El Campo is classified as ‘No Exposure’.
- **City of Wharton** – The City of Wharton does not have any documented dams or levees within the city limits. With no known significant or high hazard dams upstream of the City, no known previous events, and local knowledge, the City of Wharton is classified as ‘No Exposure’.
- **Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** – Wharton County Unincorporated Areas do not have any high or significant hazard dams within the County. While an upstream event may affect the county, the extremely minimal chance occurrence (as based on previous events, local knowledge, and dam hazard classification), the community can be described as ‘No Exposure’. With no known previous events, and local knowledge, Wharton County Unincorporated Areas are classified as ‘No Exposure’.

### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this plan update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

## **9.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

Land use in the planning area will be directed by general plans. The safety elements of the general plans establish standards and plans for the protection of the community from hazards. Dam or levee failure is not typically addressed as a standalone hazard in the safety elements, but flooding is. The planning partners have established plans and policies regarding sound land use in identified flood hazard areas. Most of the areas vulnerable to the more severe impacts from dam failure are likely to intersect the mapped flood hazard areas. Flood-related policies in the general plans will help to reduce the risk associated with the dam failure hazard for all future development in the planning area.

## 9.8 SCENARIO

An earthquake in the region (although rare) could lead to liquefaction of soils around a dam or levee. This could occur without warning during any time of the day. A human-caused failure such as a terrorist attack also could trigger a catastrophic failure of a dam or levee that impacts the planning area. While the probability of dam or levee failure is very low, the probability of flooding associated with changes to dam operational parameters in response to climate change is higher. Dam and levee designs and operations are developed based on hydrographs with historical record. If these hydrographs experience significant changes over time due to the impacts of climate change, the design and operations may no longer be valid for the changed condition. This could have significant impacts on dams and levees that provide flood control. Specified release rates and impound thresholds may have to be changed. This would result in increased discharges downstream of these facilities, thus increasing the probability and severity of flooding.

## 9.9 ISSUES

The most significant issue associated with dam and levee failure involves the properties and populations in the inundation zones. Flooding as a result of a dam failure would significantly impact these areas. There is often limited warning time for dam failure. These events are frequently associated with other natural hazard events such as earthquakes, landslides, or severe weather, which limits their predictability and compounds the hazard. Important issues associated with dam failure hazards include the following:

- Federally regulated dams have an adequate level of oversight and sophistication in the development of emergency action plans for public notification in the unlikely event of failure. However, the protocol for notification of downstream citizens of imminent failure needs to be tied to local emergency response planning.
- Mapping for federally regulated dams is already required and available; however, mapping for non-federally regulated dams that estimates inundation depths is needed to better assess the risk associated with dam failure from these facilities.
- Most dam failure mapping required at federal levels requires determination of the PMF. While the PMF represents a worst-case scenario, it is generally the event with the lowest probability of occurrence. For non-federally regulated dams, mapping of dam failure scenarios that are less extreme than the PMF but have a higher probability of occurrence can be valuable to emergency managers and community officials downstream of these facilities. This type of mapping can illustrate areas potentially impacted by more frequent events to support emergency response and preparedness.
- The concept of residual risk associated with structural flood control projects should be considered in the design of capital projects and the application of land use regulations.
- Security concerns should be addressed and the need to inform the public of the risk associated with dam failure is a challenge for public officials.
- The county should maintain accreditation of the levees in Wharton County.

# CHAPTER 10. DROUGHT AND EXTREME HEAT

DROUGHT AND EXTREME HEAT RANKING		
Jurisdiction	Drought	Extreme Heat
Wharton County	Medium	Medium
City of East Bernard	High	High
City of El Campo	High	High
City of Wharton	High	High

## DEFINITIONS

**Drought** — The cumulative impacts of several dry years on water users. It can include deficiencies in surface and subsurface water supplies and generally impacts health, well-being, and quality of life.

**Extreme Heat** — Summertime weather that is substantially hotter or more humid than average for a location at that time of year.

## 10.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 10.1.1 Drought

Drought is a normal phase in the climatic cycle of most geographical areas. According to the National Drought Mitigation Center, drought originates from a deficiency of precipitation over an extended period, usually a season or more. This results in a water shortage for some activity, group, or environmental sector. Drought is the result of a significant decrease in water supply relative to what is “normal” in a given location. Unlike most disasters, droughts normally occur slowly but last a long time. There are four generally accepted operational definitions of drought (Wilhite and Glantz 1985):

- **Meteorological drought** is an expression of precipitation’s departure from normal over some period of time. Meteorological measurements are the first indicators of drought. Definitions are usually region-specific, and based on an understanding of regional climatology. A definition of drought developed in one part of the world may not apply to another, given the wide range of meteorological definitions.
- **Agricultural drought** occurs when there is not enough soil moisture to meet the needs of a particular crop at a particular time. Agricultural drought happens after meteorological drought but before hydrological drought. Agriculture is usually the first economic sector to be affected by drought.
- **Hydrological drought** refers to deficiencies in surface and subsurface water supplies. It is measured as stream flow and as lake, reservoir, and groundwater levels. There is a time lag between lack of rain and the volume of water in streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, so hydrological measurements are not the earliest indicators of drought. After precipitation has been reduced or deficient over an extended period of time, this shortage is reflected in declining surface and subsurface water levels. Water supply is controlled not only by precipitation, but also by other factors, including evaporation (which is increased by higher than normal heat and winds), transpiration (the use of water by plants), and human use.
- **Socioeconomic drought** occurs when a physical water shortage starts to affect people, individually and collectively. Most socioeconomic definitions of drought associate it with the supply and demand of an economic good.

Defining when drought begins is a function of the impacts of drought on water users, and includes consideration of the supplies available to local water users as well as the stored water they may have available in surface reservoirs or groundwater basins. Different local water agencies have different criteria for defining drought conditions in their jurisdictions. Some agencies issue drought watch or drought

warning announcements to their customers. Determinations of regional or statewide drought conditions are usually based on a combination of hydrologic and water supply factors.

### 10.1.2 Extreme Heat

Excessive heat events are defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “summertime weather that is substantially hotter or more humid than average for a location at that time of year” (EPA 2006). Criteria that define an excessive heat event may differ among jurisdictions and in the same jurisdiction depending on the time of year. Excessive heat events are often a result of more than just ambient air temperature. Heat index tables (see Figure 10-1) are commonly used to provide information about how hot it feels, which is based on the interactions between several meteorological conditions. Since heat index values were devised for shady, light wind conditions, exposure to full sunshine can increase heat index values by up to 15 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). Also, strong winds, particularly with very hot, dry air, can be extremely hazardous.

Source: NOAA National Weather Service

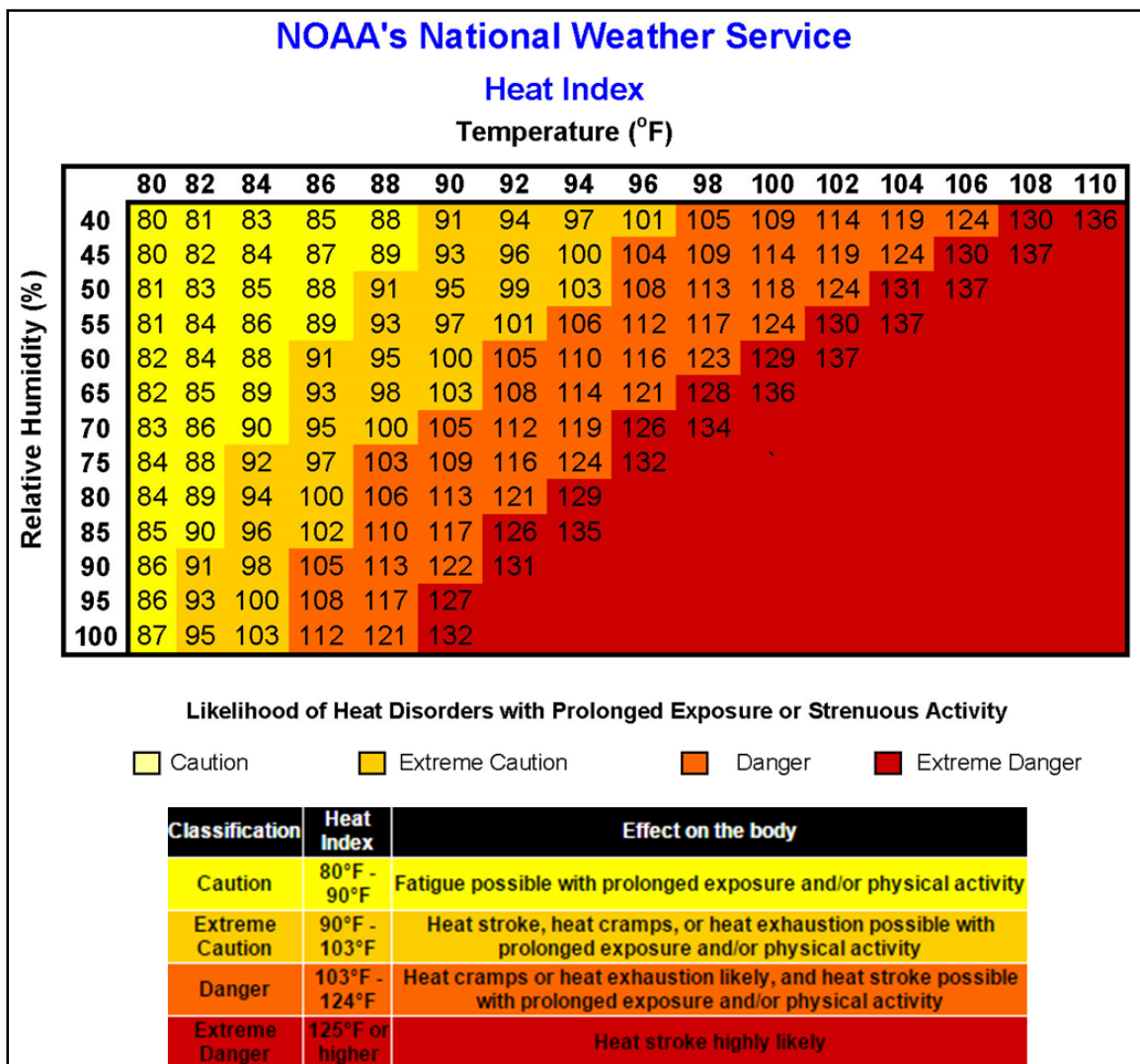


Figure 10-1. Heat Index Table



## 10.2 HAZARD PROFILE

Droughts originate from a deficiency of precipitation resulting from an unusual weather pattern. If the weather pattern lasts a short time (a few weeks or a couple months), the drought is considered short-term. If the weather pattern becomes entrenched and the precipitation deficits last for several months or years, the drought is considered to be long-term. It is possible for a region to experience a long-term circulation pattern that produces drought, and to have short-term changes in this long-term pattern that result in short-term wet spells. Likewise, it is possible for a long-term wet circulation pattern to be interrupted by short-term weather spells that result in short-term drought.

Precipitation into the area lakes and dams is the main source of Texas' water supply. Precipitation is the only naturally reoccurring/renewable water supply for Wharton County. Annual precipitation in the populated areas of the planning area is approximately 40 to 48 inches per year. There are various streams and tributaries contributing to water supply in the area. This supply is stored in four forms throughout the state: streamflow, reservoir water, soil moisture, and groundwater.

The summer months in Texas are frequently affected by severe heat hazards. Persistent domes of high pressure establish themselves, which set up hot and dry conditions. This high pressure prevents other weather features such as cool fronts or rain events from moving into the area and providing necessary relief. Daily high temperatures range into the upper 90s and low 100s. When combined with moderate to high relative humidity levels, the heat index moves into dangerous levels, and a heat index of 105°F is considered the level where many people begin to experience extreme discomfort or physical distress.

### 10.2.1 Past Events

#### *Drought*

Texas officially experienced the driest nine-month period in the state's history between October 2010 and June 2011 according to the National Weather Service (NWS) in Fort Worth. This beat the previous record of June 1917 to February 1918. The substantial dry period has led to widespread extreme to exceptional drought conditions throughout the state. The 2010-2011 drought neared record levels, ranking as the third worst in Texas history. The worst of the 2010-2011 drought was found in central and western Texas where precipitation deficits during the 10 months exceeded 20 inches in some areas.

Based on previous occurrences, drought conditions in South Texas counties, such as Wharton County (and participating communities), are usually limited, typically with periods of dryness and moderate drought. These drought conditions are shown as D0 to D2 drought intensity in Figure 10-2 and Figure 10-3. These figures show the severity of drought conditions in Texas in spring 2012 and spring 2015. As of March 2015, portions of Wharton County (and participating communities) were still experiencing D0 drought conditions. However, the drought conditions changed in May 2015 with heavy spring rains falling over the Texas region. Wharton County (and participating communities), like much of Texas, saw its wettest May on record. Texas received a statewide average of 8.81 inches of rain in May 2015, exceeding the previous record wet month of June 2004 during which a statewide average of 6.66 inches of rain fell, according to the Office of the State Climatologist at Texas A&M University. The Texas region received more rain in the first 5 months of 2015 than in all of 2011.

Figure 10-4 shows the drought conditions as of June 2015. For the first time in 3 years, none of the state falls within the U.S. Drought Monitor's most severe classification. Almost all of Wharton County (and participating communities) are now no longer experiencing drought and area reservoirs are 100% full or experienced large capacity gains during the spring and early summer of 2015.

The National Drought Mitigation Center developed the Drought Impact Reporter in response to the need for a national drought impact database for the United States. Information comes from a variety of sources: on-line drought-related news stories and scientific publications, members of the public who visit the website and submit a drought-related impact for their region, members of the media and members of relevant government agencies. The database is being populated beginning with the most recent impacts and working

backward in time. Since drought impacts affect large areas across multiple counties, the impacts affects Wharton County and participating communities equally.

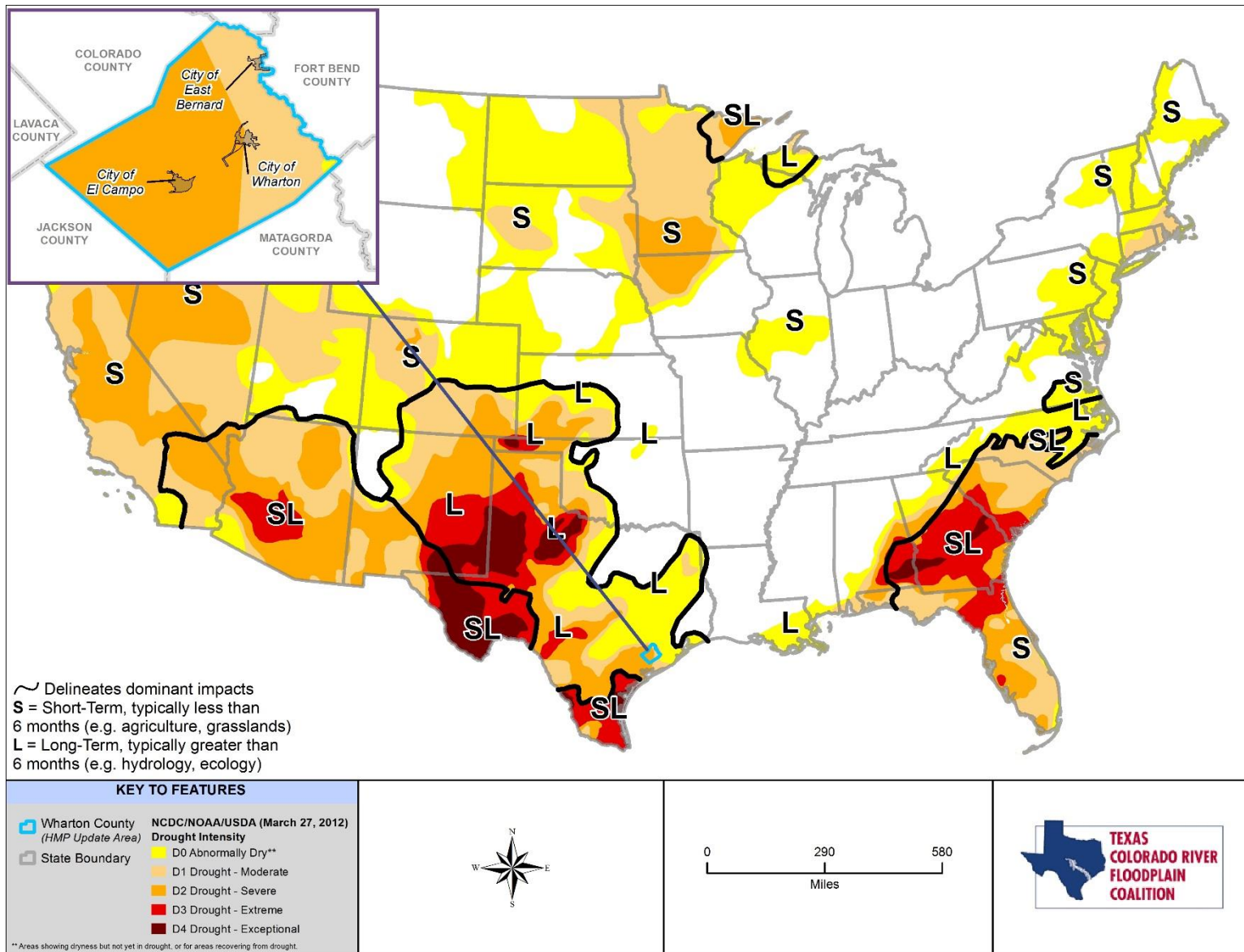


Figure 10-2. U.S. Drought Monitor, March 27, 2012

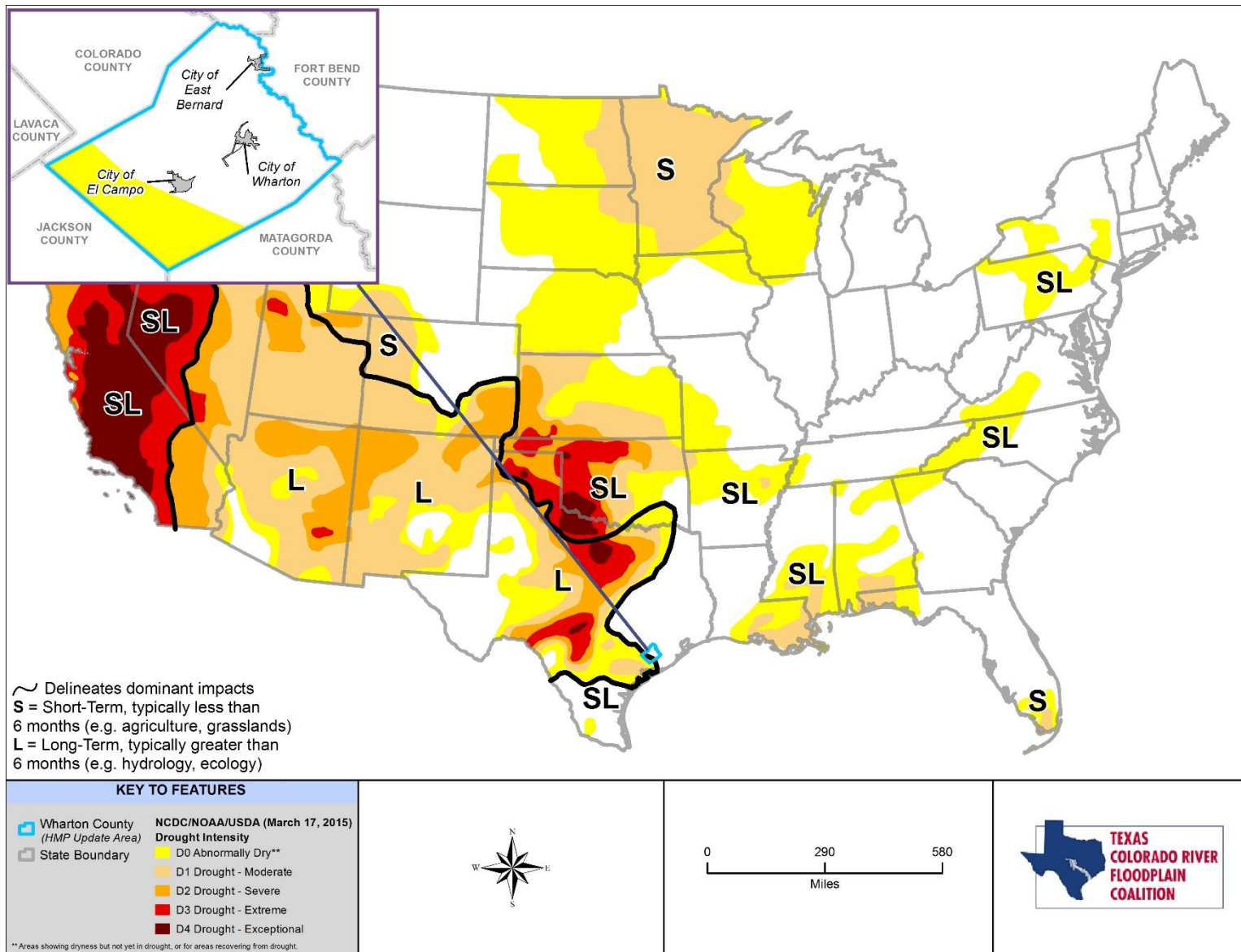


Figure 10-3. U.S. Drought Monitor, March 17, 2015

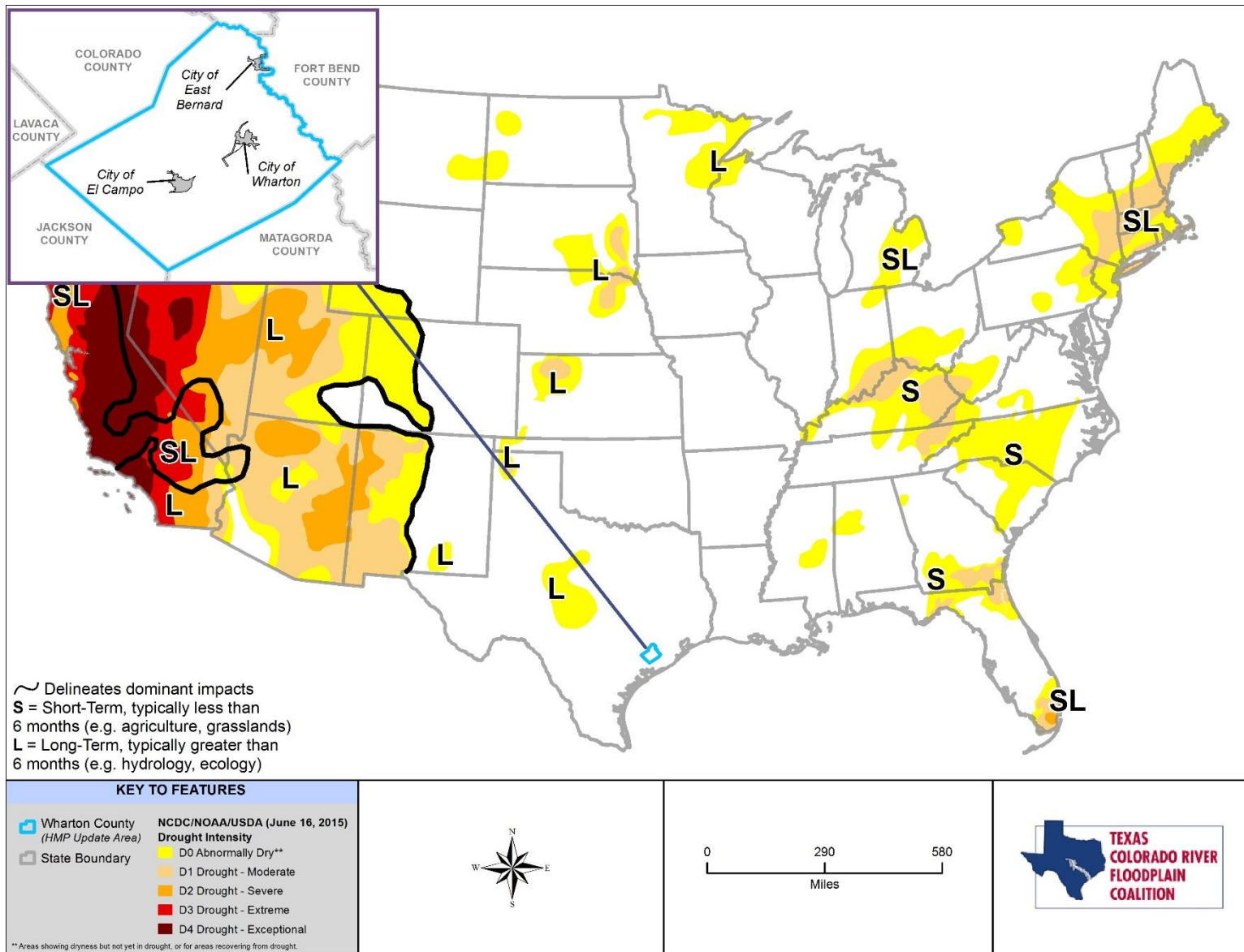


Figure 10-4. U.S. Drought Monitor, June 16, 2015

## **The Drought Impact Reporter**

The Drought Impact Reporter contains information on impacts from droughts that affected Wharton County and participating communities between January 2005 and April 2015. Most of the impacts were classified as “agriculture” (266). Other impacts include “society and public health” (73), “fire” (117), “tourism and recreation” (6), “water supply and quality” (97), “energy” (11), “business and industry” (32), “plants and wildlife” (73), and “relief, response, and restrictions” (151). These categories are described as follows:

- **Agriculture** – Drought effects associated with agriculture, farming, aquaculture, horticulture, forestry, or ranching. Examples of drought-induced agricultural impacts include damage to crop quality; income loss for farmers due to reduced crop yields; reduced productivity of cropland; insect infestation; plant disease; increased irrigation costs; cost of new or supplemental water resource development (wells, dams, pipelines) for agriculture; reduced productivity of rangeland; forced reduction of foundation stock; closure/limitation of public lands to grazing; high cost or unavailability of water for livestock, Christmas tree farms, forestry, raising domesticated horses, bees, fish, shellfish, or horticulture.
- **Society and Public Health** – Drought effects associated with human, public, and social health include health-related problems related to reduced water quantity or quality, such as increased concentration of contaminants; loss of human life (e.g., from heat stress, suicide); increased respiratory ailments; increased disease caused by wildlife concentrations; increased human disease caused by changes in insect carrier populations; population migration (rural to urban areas, migrants into the United States); loss of aesthetic values; change in daily activities (non-recreational, like putting a bucket in the shower to catch water); elevated stress levels; meetings to discuss drought; communities creating drought plans; lawmakers altering penalties for violation of water restrictions; demand for higher water rates; cultural/historical discoveries from low water levels; cancellation of fundraising events; cancellation/alteration of festivals or holiday traditions; stockpiling water; public service announcements and drought information websites; protests; and conflicts within the community due to competition for water.
- **Fire** – Drought often contributes to forest, range, rural, or urban fires, fire danger, and burning restrictions. Specific impacts include enacting or increasing burning restrictions; fireworks bans; increased fire risk; occurrence of fire (number of acres burned, number of wildfires compared to average, people displaced, etc.); state of emergency during periods of high fire danger; closure of roads or land due to fire occurrence or risk; and expenses to state and county governments of paying firefighters overtime and paying equipment (helicopter) costs.
- **Tourism and Recreation** – Drought effects associated with recreational activities and tourism include closure of state hiking trails and hunting areas due to fire danger; water access or navigation problems for recreation; bans on recreational activities; reduced license, permit, or ticket sales (e.g., hunting, fishing, ski lifts, etc.); losses related to curtailed activities (e.g., bird watching, hunting and fishing, boating, etc.); reduced park visitation; and cancellation or postponement of sporting events.
- **Water Supply and Quality** – Drought effects associated with water supply and water quality include dry wells; voluntary and mandatory water restrictions; changes in water rates; increasing water restrictions; increases in requests for new well permits; changes in water use due to water restrictions; greater water demand; decreases in water allocation or allotments; installation or alteration of water pumps or water intakes; changes to allowable water contaminants; water line damage or repairs due to drought stress; drinking water turbidity; change in water color or odor; declaration of drought watches or warnings; and mitigation activities.
- **Energy** – Drought effects on power production, rates and revenue include production changes for both hydropower and non-hydropower providers; changes in electricity rates; revenue shortfalls and/or windfall profits; and purchase of electricity when hydropower generation is down.

- **Business and Industry** – Drought effects on non-agriculture and non-tourism businesses, such as lawn care; recreational vehicles or gear dealers; and plant nurseries. Typical impacts include reduction or loss of demand for goods or services; reduction in employment; variation in number of calls for service; late opening or early closure for the season; bankruptcy; permanent store closure; and other economic impacts.
- **Plants and Wildlife** – Drought effects associated with unmanaged plants and wildlife, both aquatic and terrestrial, include loss of biodiversity of plants or wildlife; loss of trees from rural or urban landscapes, shelterbelts, or wooded conservation areas; reduction and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat; lack of feed and drinking water; greater mortality due to increased contact with agricultural producers as animals seek food from farms and producers are less tolerant of the intrusion; disease; increased vulnerability to predation (from species concentrated near water); migration and concentration (loss of wildlife in some areas and too much wildlife in others); increased stress on endangered species; salinity levels affecting wildlife; wildlife encroaching into urban areas; and loss of wetlands.
- **Relief, Response, and Restrictions** – Drought effects associated with disaster declarations, aid programs, requests for disaster declaration or aid, water restrictions, or fire restrictions. Examples include disaster declarations; aid programs; USDA Secretarial disaster declarations; Small Business Association disaster declarations; government relief and response programs; state-level water shortage or water emergency declarations; county-level declarations; a declared “state of emergency;” requests for declarations or aid; non-profit organization-based relief; water restrictions; fire restrictions; NWS Red Flag warnings; and declaration of drought watches or warnings.

### **Extreme Heat**

According a 2014 EPA study, a total of nearly 8,000 Americans suffered heat-related deaths between 1979 and 2010. The 2012 Natural Resource Defense Council study of 40 major U.S. cities showed that the historic average mortality per summer was 1,332 between 1975 and 2004. This reveals that annually more people in the U.S. die from severe summer heat than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined.

According to the National Climatic Data Center, a strong heat wave affected Texas in the summers of 1999, 2000, and 2011. During these heat waves, multiple counties suffered in terms of injuries and deaths, mostly to the elderly. During these periods, some Texas counties also experienced extreme heat events. Table 10-1 contains temperature summaries temperature summaries related to extreme heat for the Wharton weather station (Pierce 1 E).

Table 10-1 contains temperature summaries related to extreme heat for the Pierce 1 E weather station. These temperatures are experienced throughout the entire planning area (City of East Bernard, City of El Campo, City of Wharton, and Wharton County Unincorporated Areas).

**TABLE 10-1.  
TEMPERATURE DATA FROM PIERCE 1 E WEATHER STATION**

Statistic	Years	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
High Annual Maximum	1943-2014	85	95	97	99	100	105	107	108	112	100	94	93
Low Annual Maximum	1943-2014	70	70	78	81	86	90	94	95	88	85	76	72
Average Annual Maximum	1943-2014	78.5	80.8	85.0	88.6	92.6	96.6	98.6	99.7	96.7	92.7	85.7	80.5
Average Days Annually with a Maximum Above 90	1904-2012	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.8	6.6	21.0	26.5	27.5	18.8	5.8	0.2	0.0

Source: www.wrcc.dri.edu  
Temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit

## 10.2.2 Location

### *Drought*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has developed several indices to measure drought impacts and severity and to map their extent and locations:

- The Palmer Crop Moisture Index measures short-term drought on a weekly scale and is used to quantify drought’s impacts on agriculture during the growing season. Figure 10-5 shows this index for the week ending in March 28, 2015.
- The Palmer Z Index measures short-term drought on a monthly scale. Figure 10-6 shows this index for March 2015.
- The Palmer Drought Index (PDI) measures the duration and intensity of long-term drought-inducing circulation patterns. Long-term drought is cumulative, so the intensity of drought during a given month is dependent on the current weather patterns plus the cumulative patterns of previous months. Weather patterns can change quickly from a long-term drought pattern to a long-term wet pattern, and the PDI can respond fairly rapidly. Figure 10-7 and Figure 10-8 show this index for March 2015 and May 2015 to show the change in PDI after the May 2015 rain.
- The hydrological impacts of drought (e.g., reservoir levels, groundwater levels, etc.) take longer to develop and it takes longer to recover from them. The Palmer Hydrological Drought Index (PHDI), another long-term index, was developed to quantify hydrological effects. The PHDI responds more slowly to changing conditions than the PDI. Figure 10-9 shows this index for March 2015.
- While the Palmer indices consider precipitation, evapotranspiration and runoff, the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) considers only precipitation. In the SPI, an index of zero indicates the median precipitation amount; the index is negative for drought and positive for wet conditions. The SPI is computed for time scales ranging from 1 month to 24 months. Figure 10-10 shows the 24-month SPI map through the end of February 2015.



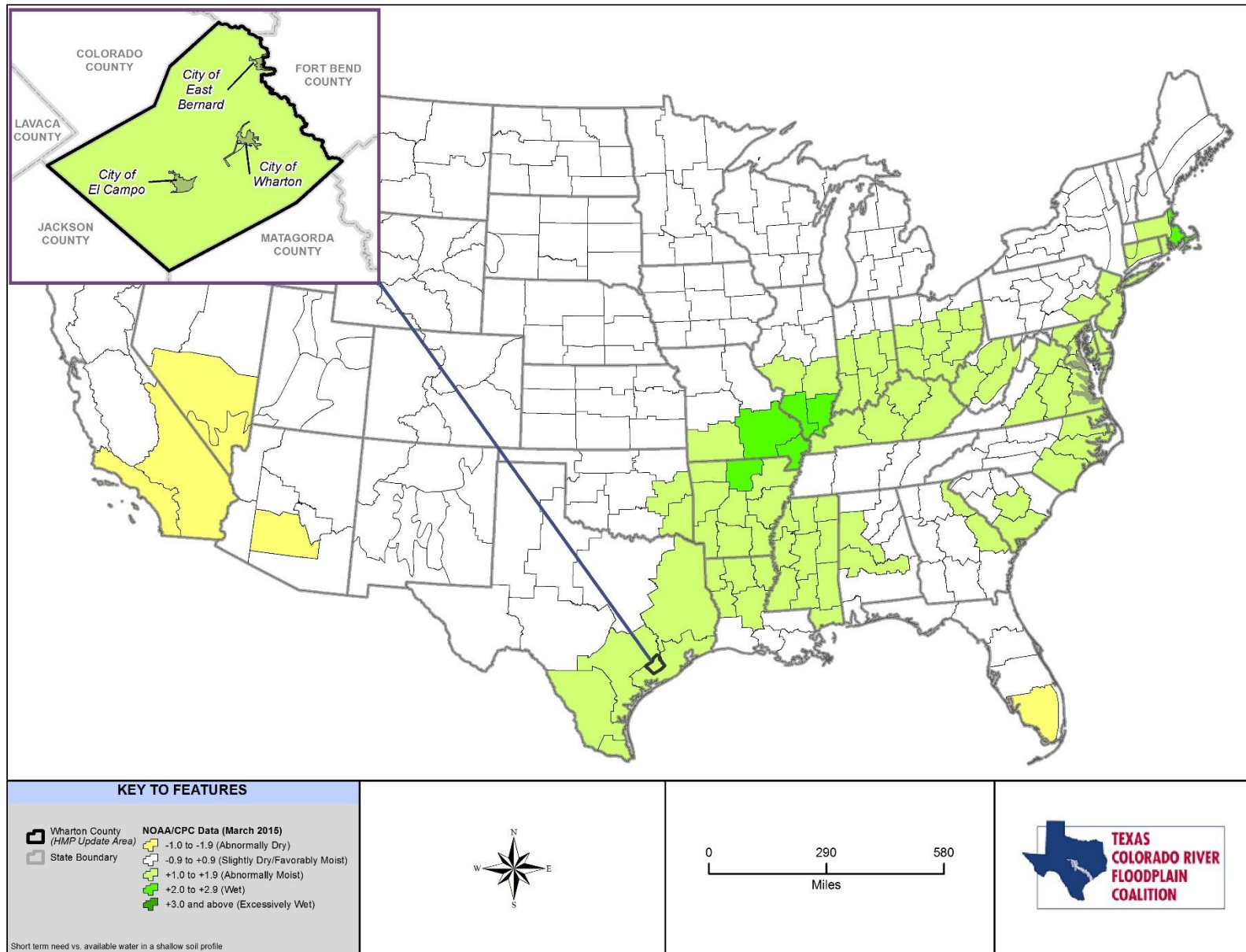


Figure 10-5. Crop Moisture Index (Week Ending March 28, 2015)

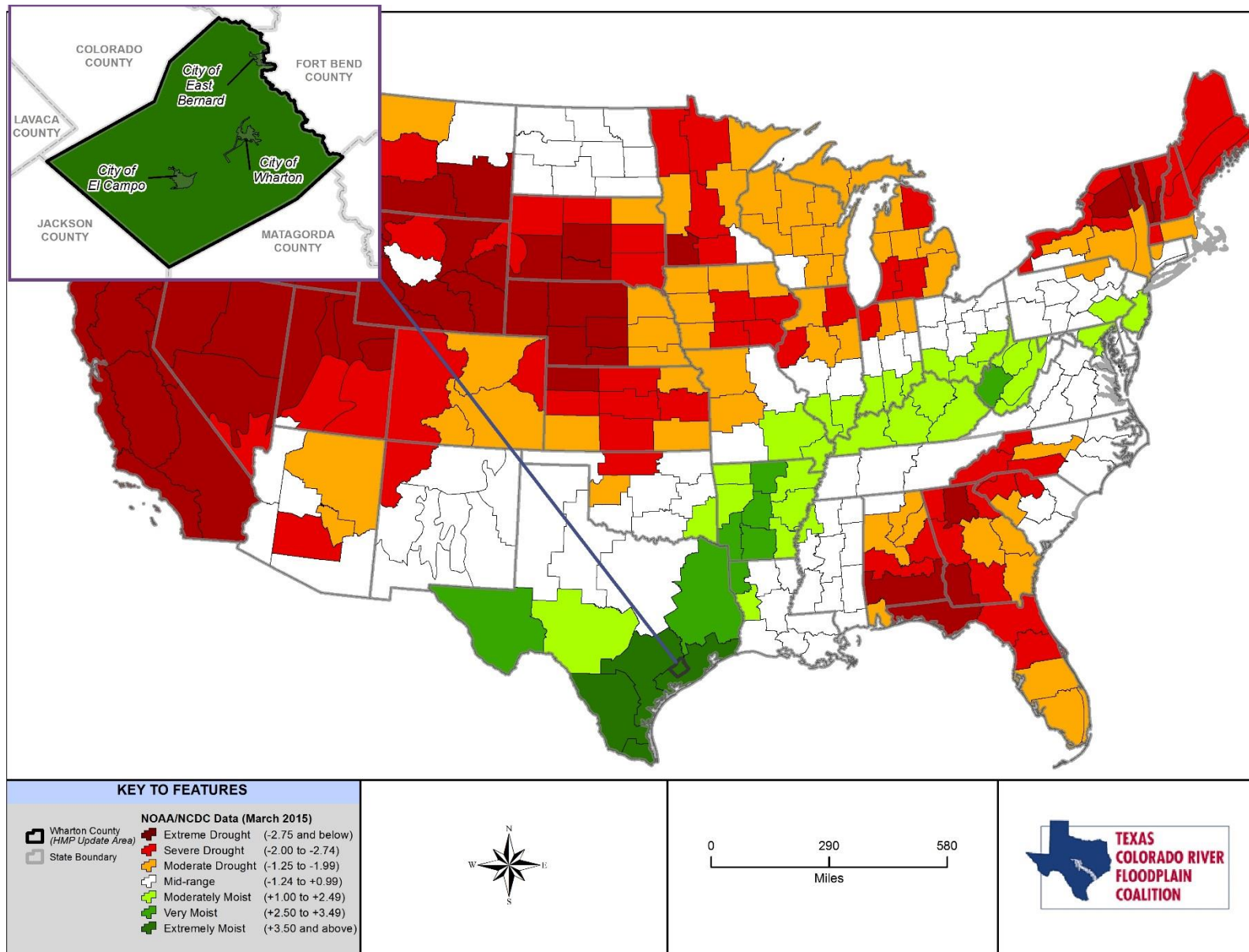


Figure 10-6. Palmer Z Index Short-Term Drought Conditions (March 2015)

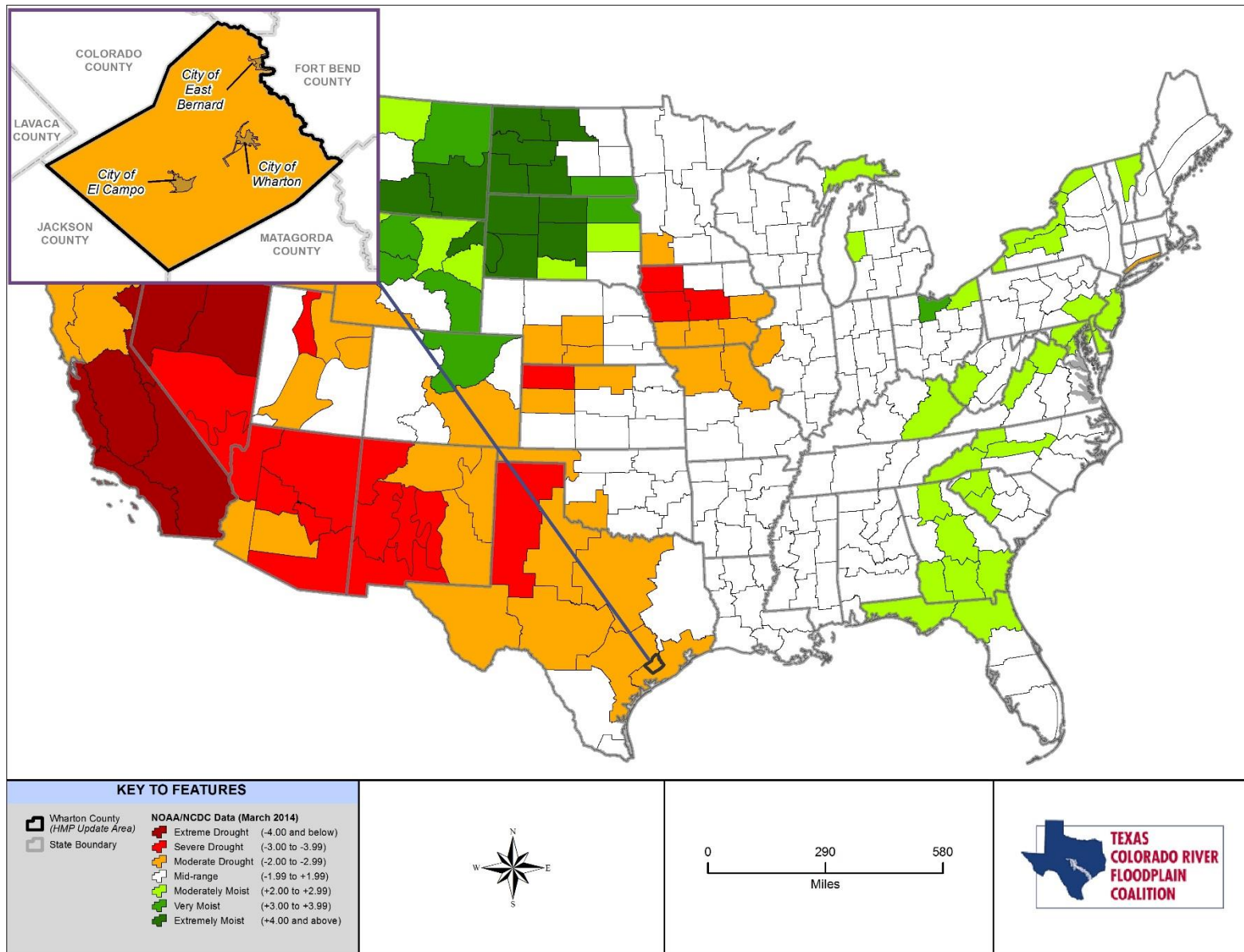


Figure 10-7. Palmer Drought Severity Index (March 2015)

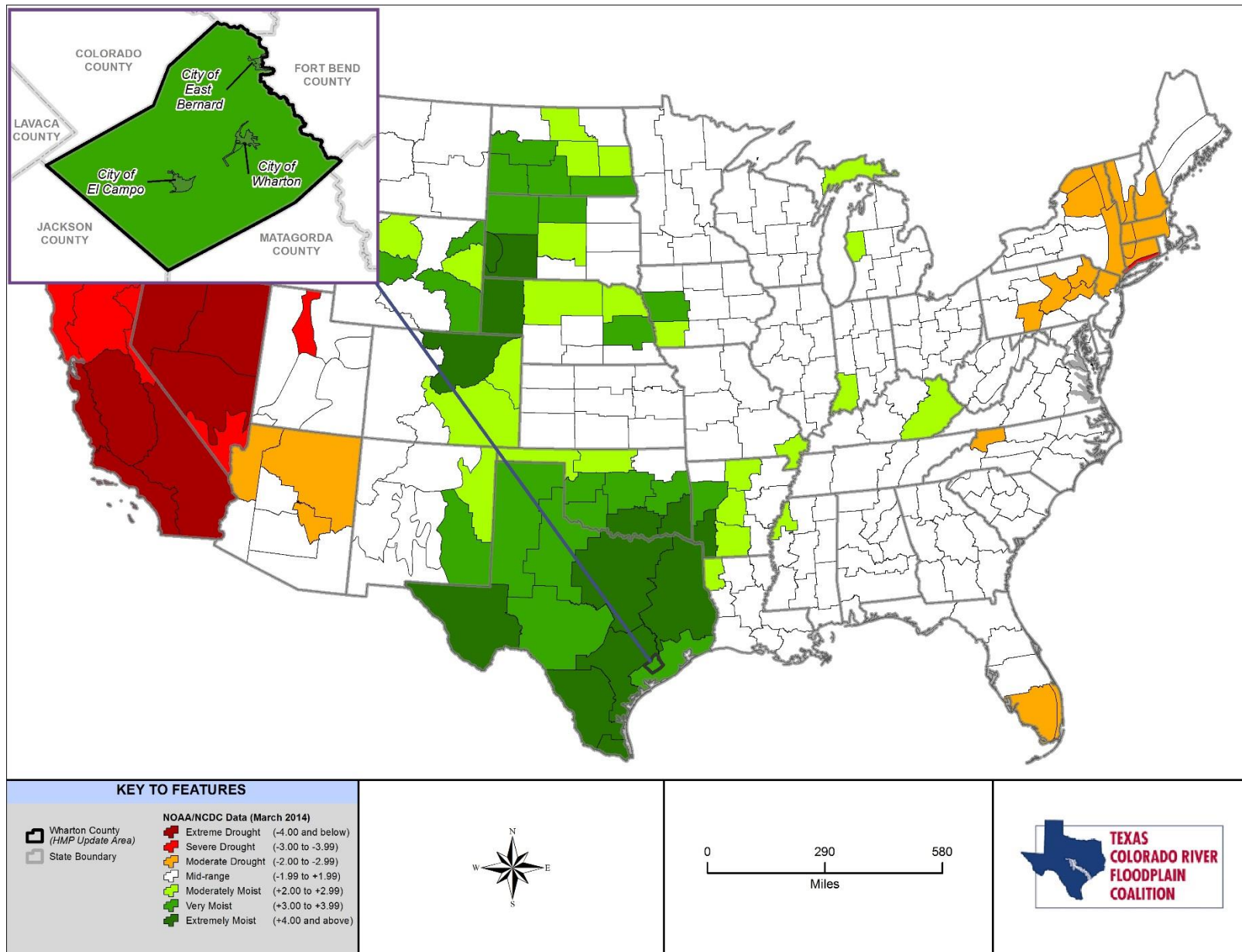


Figure 10-8. Palmer Drought Severity Index (May 2015)

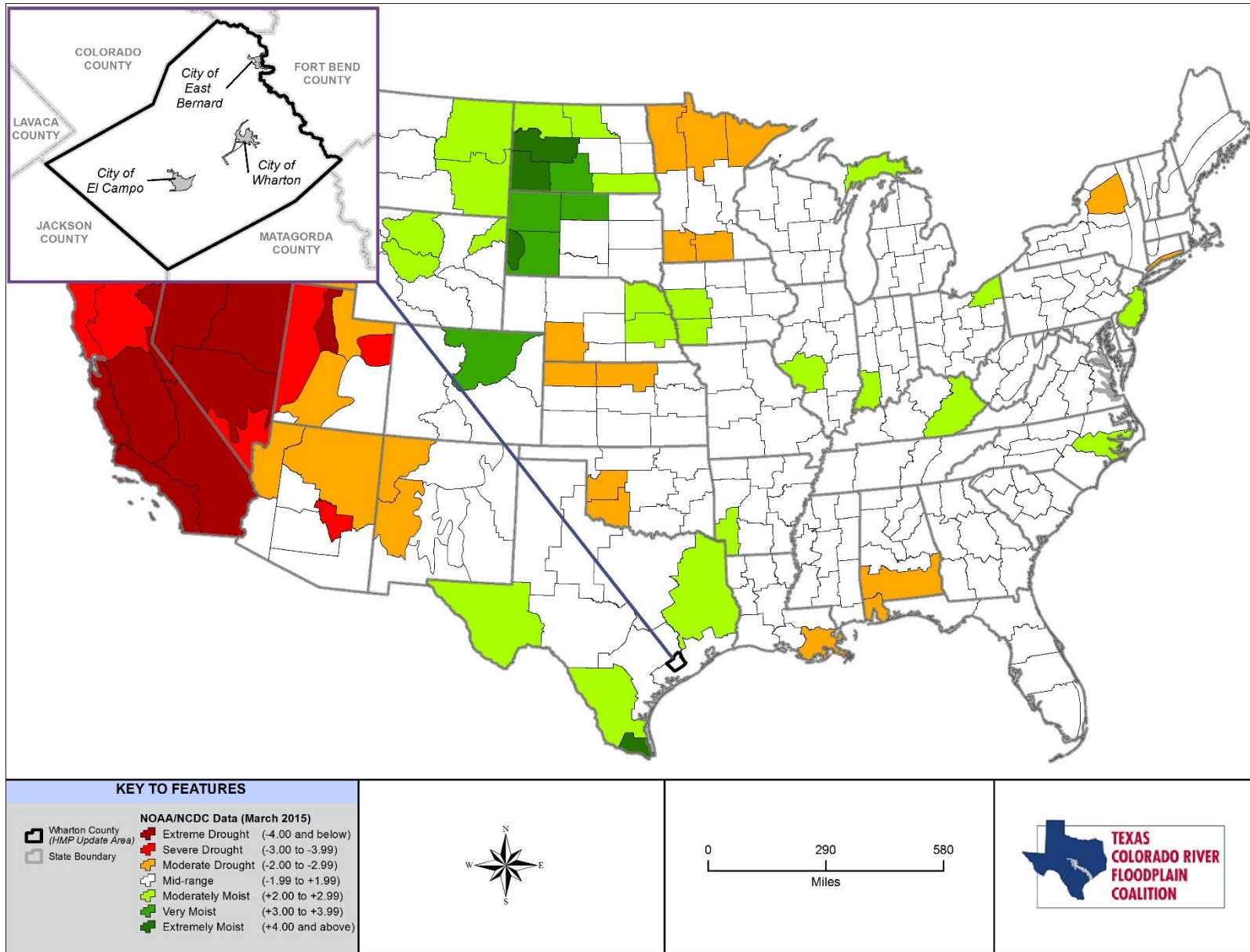


Figure 10-9. Palmer Hydrological Drought Index Long-Term Hydrologic Conditions (March 2015)

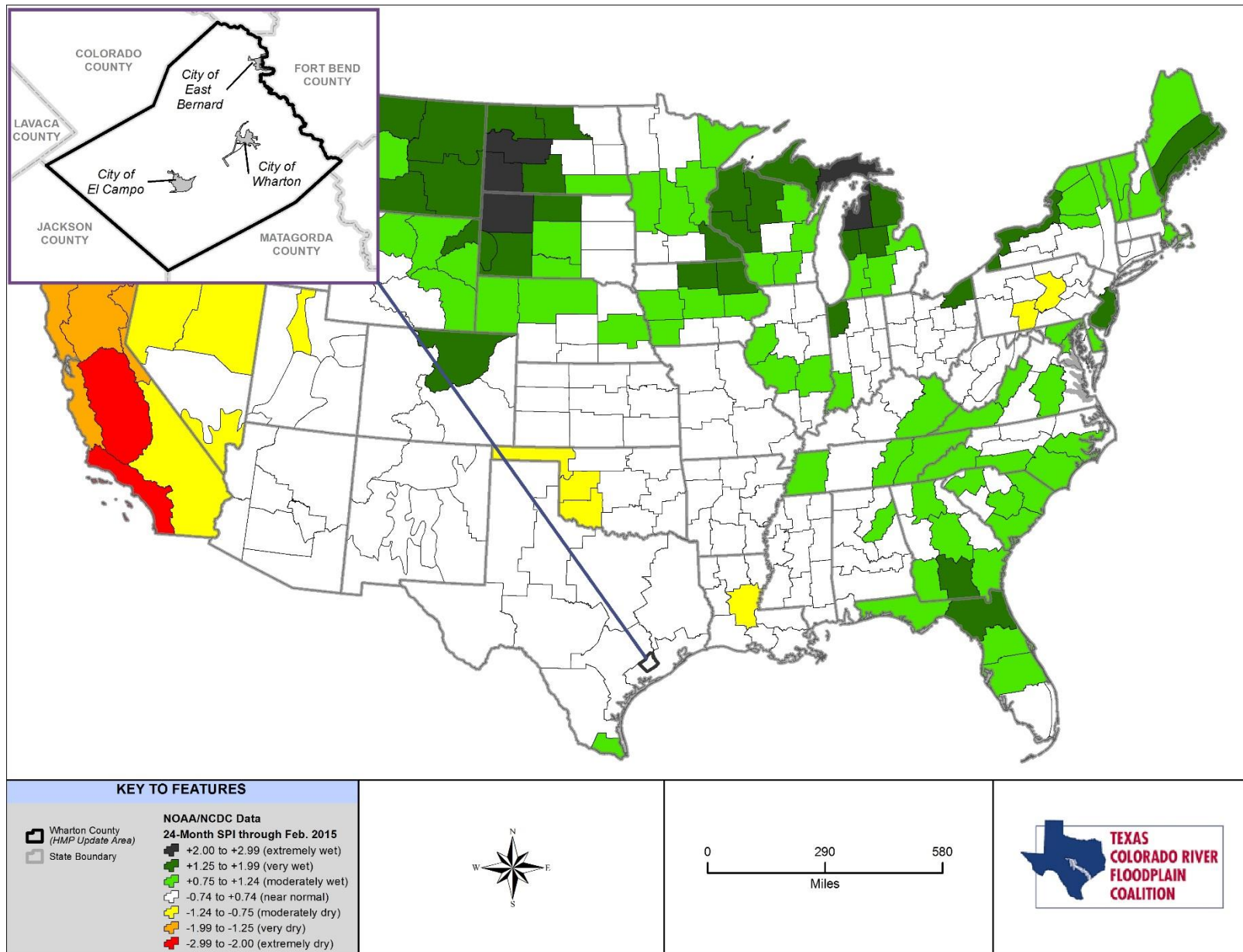


Figure 10-10. 24-Month Standardized Precipitation Index (through February 2015)

Because of Texas’s humid sub-tropical to semi-arid conditions, drought is a regular but unpredictable occurrence in the state. However, because of natural variations in climate and precipitation sources, it is rare for all of Texas to be deficient in moisture at the same time. Single season droughts over some portion of the state are quite common. From 1950 to 1957, Texas experienced the most severe drought in recorded history. By the time the drought ended, 244 of Texas’ 254 counties had been declared federal disaster areas. In 2011, Texas experienced its most intense single-year drought in recorded history.

Droughts occur regularly in South Texas and are a normal condition. However, they can vary greatly in their intensity and duration. The entire HMP update area is at risk to drought conditions. Drought is one of the few hazards that has the potential to directly or indirectly impact every person in the participating communities as well as adversely affect the local economy. Table 10-2 lists past drought events for Wharton County and the participating communities in this HMP update.

<b>TABLE 10-2. HISTORIC DROUGHT EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY (1996-2014)</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Estimated Damage Cost</b>		<b>Injuries</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
	<b>Property</b>	<b>Crops</b>		
April 1996	\$0	\$0	0	0
May 1996	\$20,000,000	\$40,000,000	0	0
June 1996	\$20,000,000	\$40,000,000	0	0
May 1998	\$20,000,000	\$40,000,000	0	0
June 1998	\$20,000,000	\$40,000,000	0	0
July 1998	\$0	\$0	0	0
August 1998	\$0	\$0	0	0
August 2000	\$0	\$0	0	0
September 2000	\$0	\$0	0	0

**Extreme Heat**

The entire planning area is at risk to extreme heat events; however, these events may be exacerbated in urban areas, where reduced air flow, reduced vegetation, and increased generation of waste heat can contribute to temperatures that are several degrees higher than in surrounding rural (Wharton County Unincorporated Areas) or less urbanized areas. This phenomenon is known as urban heat island effect. This can happen in the City of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton.

The record highs for Texas occur during May through October. The Wharton County (and participating communities) area experiences an average of four days with temperatures 100°F and above during these months, according to data recorded by the NWS between 2000 and 2014. During 2011, Texas experienced the hottest summer in U.S. history with an average temperature of 86.8°F. The planning area experienced more than 40 days with temperatures 100°F and above in 2011. Figure 6-3 shows the annual average maximum temperature distribution in Texas.

Even though the NCDC storm events database doesn’t list any documented specific past events for extreme heat, the local participating communities in this HMP update report that extreme heat days do occur a few days in the year during the summer months.

## 10.2.3 Frequency

### **Drought**

The probability of a future drought in Wharton and participating communities is likely, with an event possible in the next 6 years or less. According to information from the National Climatic Data Center, Wharton County had 3 documented drought years between 1996 and 2014. Based on this historical information, the probability of a drought occurring in any given year is 17% (About 1 in 6 years). The same frequency (1 in 6 years) applies to the future probability.

Short duration droughts occur much more frequently. Various studies indicate that drought occurrence in Texas is expected to increase in frequency and will continue to be an inevitable factor in the climate of Texas. Table 10-2 lists historic drought events. Furthermore, since drought effects a large area (more regional than city specific) historical analysis are applied to all participating communities equally.

### **Extreme Heat**

On average, Wharton County and participating communities have experienced 108 days per year where temperatures exceed 90°F so the frequency of extreme heat events is expected to be very likely in any given year (per NOAA's Regional Climate Center data and local records). Wharton County and participating communities can expect similar numbers in the future (108 days per year and highly likely).

## 10.2.4 Severity

### **Drought**

Drought impacts are wide-reaching and may be economic, environmental, or societal. The most significant impacts associated with drought in Texas are those related to water intensive activities such as agriculture, wildfire protection, municipal usage, commerce, tourism, recreation, and wildlife preservation. An ongoing drought may leave an area more prone to wildfires. Drought conditions can also cause soil to compact, increasing an area's susceptibility to flooding, and reduce vegetation cover, which exposes soil to wind and erosion. A reduction of electric power generation and water quality deterioration are also potential problems. Drought impacts increase with the length of a drought, as carry-over supplies in reservoirs are depleted and water levels in streams and groundwater decline.

According to the information in this hazard profile, drought impacts on Wharton County could be considered moderate. Moderate drought typically means less than 25% to 50% of property (mainly agricultural) is severely damaged; injuries/illnesses are treatable or do not result in permanent disability; crop fields become withered; cattle herds are thinned; and for coastal communities, fishermen net light loads. Due to the low probability of severe drought, the overall significance is considered moderate with significant potential impact. Drought can have a widespread impact on the environment and the economy, depending upon its severity, although it typically does not result in loss of life or damage to property, as do other natural disasters. The National Drought Mitigation Center uses three categories to describe likely drought impacts:

- **Agricultural** – Drought threatens crops that rely on natural precipitation.
- **Water supply** – Drought threatens supplies of water for irrigated crops and for communities.
- **Fire hazard** – Drought increases the threat of wildfires from dry conditions in forest and rangelands.

On average, the nationwide annual impacts of drought are greater than the impacts of any other natural hazard. They are estimated to be between \$6 billion and \$8 billion annually in the United States and occur primarily in the agriculture, transportation, recreation and tourism, forestry, and energy sectors. Social and environmental impacts are also significant, although it is difficult to put a precise cost on these impacts.



The severity of a drought depends on the degree of moisture deficiency, the duration, and the size and location of the affected area. The longer the duration of the drought and the larger the area impacted, the more severe the potential impacts. Droughts are not usually associated with direct impacts on people or property, but they can have significant impacts on agriculture, which can impact people indirectly.

When measuring the severity of droughts, analysts typically look at economic impacts on a planning area. A drought directly or indirectly impacts all people in affected areas. All people could pay more for water if utilities increase their rates due to shortages. Agricultural impacts can result in loss of work for farm workers and those in related food processing jobs. Other water- or electricity-dependent industries are commonly forced to shut down all or a portion of their facilities, resulting in further layoffs. A drought can harm recreational companies that use water (e.g., swimming pools, water parks, and river rafting companies) as well as landscape and nursery businesses because people will not invest in new plants if water is not available to sustain them.

Drought generally does not affect groundwater sources as quickly as surface water supplies, but groundwater supplies generally take longer to recover. Reduced precipitation during a drought means that groundwater supplies are not replenished at a normal rate. This can lead to a reduction in groundwater levels and problems such as reduced pumping capacity or wells going dry. Shallow wells are more susceptible than deep wells. Reduced replenishment of groundwater affects streams. Much of the flow in streams comes from groundwater, especially during the summer when there is less precipitation and after snowmelt ends. Reduced groundwater levels mean that even less water will enter streams when stream flows are lowest.

Additionally, there is increased danger of wildfires associated with most droughts. Millions of board feet of timber have been lost due to drought, and in many cases erosion has occurred, which caused serious damage to aquatic life, irrigation, and power production by heavy silting of streams, reservoirs, and rivers.

### ***Extreme Heat***

Drought also is often accompanied by extreme heat. When temperatures reach 90°F and above, people are vulnerable to heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Pets and livestock are also vulnerable to heat-related injuries. Crops can be vulnerable as well.

Based on the information in this hazard profile, the magnitude/severity of extreme temperatures is considered moderate. This is defined as less than 25 to 50% of property (mainly agricultural) is severely damaged, or injuries/illnesses are treatable or do not result in permanent disability. Due to the expansive nature of soils in this area, extreme heat could pose foundation issues. Overall significance is considered minimal: moderate potential impact.

## **10.2.5 Warning Time**

### ***Drought***

Droughts are climatic patterns that occur over long periods of time. Only generalized warnings can take place due to the numerous variables that scientists have not pieced together well enough to make accurate and precise predictions. Empirical studies conducted over the past century have shown that meteorological drought is never the result of a single cause. It is the result of many causes, often synergistic in nature.

Scientists at this time do not know how to predict drought more than a month in advance for most locations. Predicting drought depends on the ability to forecast precipitation and temperature. Anomalies of precipitation and temperature may last from several months to several decades. How long these anomalies last depends on interactions between the atmosphere and the oceans, soil moisture and land surface processes, topography, internal dynamics, and the accumulated influence of weather systems on the global scale.

Texas is semi-arid to humid sub-tropical, thus, drought is a regular and natural occurrence in the state. The main source of water supply in the state is precipitation and much of this occurs in the spring and fall. Some

snowfall does occur in the wintertime. Although drought conditions are difficult to predict, low levels of spring precipitation may act as an indicator that drought conditions are occurring.

### **Extreme Heat**

NOAA issues watch, warning, and advisory information for extreme heat. Extreme heat is a regular and natural occurrence in the state.

## **10.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS**

### **Drought**

The secondary hazard most commonly associated with drought is wildfire. A prolonged lack of precipitation dries out vegetation, which becomes increasingly susceptible to ignition as the duration of the drought extends. According to the *State of Texas 2014 Emergency Management Plan (Drought Annex)*, economic impacts may also occur for industries that are water intensive such as agriculture, wildfire protection, municipal usage, commerce, tourism, recreation and wildfire preservation. Additionally, a reduction of electric power generation and water quality deterioration are also potential effects. Drought conditions can also cause soil to compact, decreasing its ability to absorb water, making an area more susceptible to flash flooding and erosion. A drought may also increase the speed at which dead and fallen trees dry out and become more potent fuel sources for wildfires. Drought may also weaken trees in areas already affected by insect infestations, causing more extensive damage to trees and increasing wildfire risk, at least temporarily. An ongoing drought that severely inhibits natural plant growth cycles may impact critical wildlife habitats. Drought impacts increase with the length of a drought, as carry-over supplies in reservoirs are depleted and water levels in groundwater basins decline.

### **Extreme Heat**

Excessive heat events can cause failure of motorized systems such as ventilation systems used to control temperatures inside buildings. The lack of air conditioning in businesses and homes can exacerbate existing health conditions, particularly in senior citizens.

## **10.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

The long-term effects of climate change on regional water resources are unknown, but global water resources are already experiencing the following stresses without climate change:

- Growing populations
- Increased competition for available water
- Poor water quality
- Environmental claims
- Uncertain reserved water rights
- Groundwater overdraft
- Aging urban water infrastructure

With a warmer climate, droughts could become more frequent, more severe, and longer-lasting. From 1987 to 1989, losses from drought in the U.S. totaled \$39 billion (Congressional Office of Technology Assessment [OTA] 1993). More frequent extreme events such as droughts could end up being more cause for concern than the long-term change in temperature and precipitation averages.

The best advice to water resource managers regarding climate change is to start addressing current stresses on water supplies and build flexibility and robustness into any system. Flexibility helps to ensure a quick response to changing conditions, and robustness helps people prepare for and survive the worst conditions.

With this approach to planning, water system managers will be better able to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

## 10.5 EXPOSURE

Because droughts cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using geographic information system- (GIS) based analysis, historical data (frequency and damage) analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. The primary data source was the HAZUS 2.2 data inventory (updated 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), and 2012 Census of Agriculture augmented with state and federal datasets as well as the National Drought Mitigation Center reports.

All people, property, and environments in the planning area would be exposed to some degree to the impacts of moderate to extreme drought conditions and extreme heat. Populations living in densely populated urban areas are likely to be more exposed to extreme heat events. Furthermore, farms and agriculture will be greatly impacted by drought and extreme temperature. For drought Figure 10-11 (USDA's 2012 Census of Agriculture) profiles the county and participating cities' agriculture use, which could all be potentially impacted by a drought. By applying historical averages on losses and events (probability) to current economic totals, the exposure rate for the entire HMP update area is approximately \$170 million. (See Table 10-5). This number is for the entire planning area. Even though most farmlands are usually outside the city limits, droughts still impact local communities economically.

Table 10-3 lists the structures and populations most exposed to drought and extreme heat.

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	830	10	9	849	2,272
City of El Campo	3,989	83	39	4,111	11,602
City of Wharton	3,021	92	23	3,136	8,832
Unincorporated Area	6,585	29	31	6,645	15,949
<b>Total</b>	14,425	214	102	14,741	38,655

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.



**Wharton County  
Texas**

	2012	2007	% change
<b>Number of Farms</b>	1,553	1,506	+ 3
<b>Land in Farms</b>	660,701 acres	615,851 acres	+ 7
<b>Average Size of Farm</b>	425 acres	409 acres	+ 4
<b>Market Value of Products Sold</b>	\$373,637,000	\$240,197,000	+ 56
Crop Sales \$270,754,000 (72 percent)			
Livestock Sales \$102,882,000 (28 percent)			
Average Per Farm	\$240,590	\$159,493	+ 51
<b>Government Payments</b>	\$13,724,000	\$12,968,000	+ 6
Average Per Farm Receiving Payments	\$16,696	\$19,530	- 15

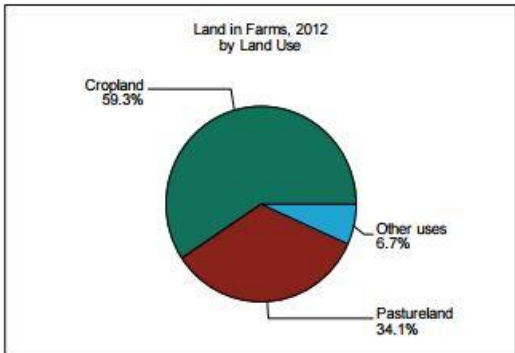
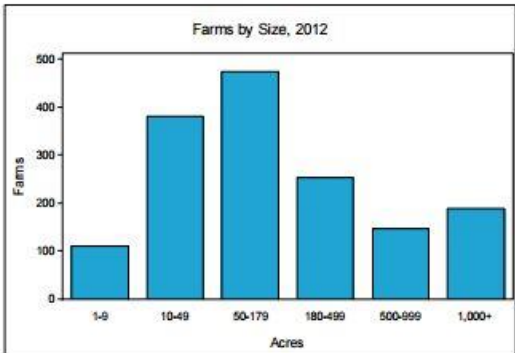


Figure 10-11. USDA Census of Agriculture Wharton County Profile 2012

## 10.6 VULNERABILITY

Drought produces a complex web of impacts that spans many sectors of the economy and reaches well beyond the area experiencing physical drought. This complexity exists because water is integral to the ability to produce goods and provide services. Drought can affect a wide range of economic, environmental, and social activities. The vulnerability of an activity to the effects of drought usually depends on its water demand, how the demand is met, and what water supplies are available to meet the demand. Extreme heat can exacerbate the effects of drought.

Because droughts cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using geographic information system- (GIS) based analysis, historical data (frequency and damage) analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. The primary data source was the HAZUS inventory data (updated with 2010 Census Data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), and the 2012 Census of Agriculture augmented with state and federal data sets as well as the National Drought Mitigation Center reports and local knowledge.

### 10.6.1 Population

#### *Drought*

The planning partnership has the ability to minimize any impacts on residents and water consumers in the county and participating cities should several consecutive dry years occur. No significant life or health impacts are anticipated as a result of drought within the planning area

#### *Extreme Heat*

According to the EPA, the individuals with the following characteristics are typically at greater risk to the adverse effects of excessive heat events: individuals with physical or mobility constraints, cognitive impairments, economic constraints, and social isolation.

See Table 10-4 for populations most vulnerable to extreme heat and drought per jurisdiction.

<b>TABLE 10-4 MOST VULNERABLE POPULATION</b>						
Jurisdiction	Youth Population ( < 16 )	% of Total Population	Elderly Population ( > 65 )	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	638	28.08	342	15.05	129	5.68
City of El Campo	3,400	29.31	1,646	14.19	993	8.56
City of Wharton	2,319	26.26	1,288	14.58	1,252	14.18
Unincorporated Area	3,965	24.86	2,390	14.99	1,304	8.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,322</b>	<b>26.70</b>	<b>5,666</b>	<b>14.66</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>9.51</b>

## 10.6.2 Property

### Drought

No structures will be directly affected by drought conditions, though some structures may become vulnerable to wildfires, which are more likely following years of drought. Droughts can also have significant impacts on landscapes, structure foundation issues (because of soil expansion and contraction) which could cause a financial burden to property owners. However, these impacts are not considered critical in planning for impacts from the drought hazard.

Loss estimations for drought are not based on damage functions, because no such damage functions have been generated. Instead, loss estimates were developed representing projected damages (annualized loss) on historical events, statistical analysis, and probability factors. These were applied to the exposed agriculture values of participating communities to create an annualized loss (Table 10-5).

Jurisdiction	Exposed Value (\$)	Annualized Loss (\$)	Annualized Loss (%)
City of East Bernard	23,769,604	1,137	<0.01
City of El Campo	88,160,701	8,908	0.01
City of Wharton	58,167,989	5,517	0.01
Unincorporated Areas	111,485,050	1,489,369	1.34
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>281,583,344</b>	<b>1,504,931</b>	<b>0.01</b>

### Extreme Heat

Typically the only impact extreme heat has on general building stock is increased demand on air conditioning equipment, which in turn may cause strain on electrical systems. Due to the expansive nature of soils in this area, extreme heat also could pose foundation issues. It costs an average homeowner at least \$5,000 to fix or repair structure foundation issues.

### Vulnerability Narrative

All participating communities are at risk to drought and extreme heat events. In addition to the documented impacts from the Drought Impact Reporter listed in Chapter 10.2.1, the participating communities also experience the following for both drought and extreme heat events:

- **City of East Bernard** - The City will be at a greater risk of rolling blackouts during an extreme heat event due to high usage. This would have a greater effect on the young, elderly and economically disadvantaged that may not have the means to respond to such an event. Lawn watering and other outdoor water activities will have to be scheduled and rationed. Communities who have not developed or implemented a Drought Contingency Plan or Emergency Response Plan are more vulnerable to the effects of drought. Residents who are uninformed of the benefits of water conservation or how to effectively apply it are at an increased risk as well.
- **City of El Campo** - The City of El Campo will be at a greater risk of rolling blackouts during an extreme heat event due to high usage. This would have a greater effect on the young, elderly and economically disadvantaged populations that may not have the means to respond to such an event. Uninformed residents and business owners on the effects of drought on their properties and water

conservation tactics are more vulnerable. Communities who do not have Drought Contingency or Emergency Response Plans increase their risk as well.

- **City of Wharton** - The City of Wharton will be at a greater risk of rolling blackouts during an extreme heat event due to high usage. This would have a greater effect on the young, elderly and economically disadvantaged populations that may not have the means to respond to such an event. Due to the rural landscape of the area and dry climate, during times of drought and extreme heat events, water restrictions could be enforced. Communities who have not identified the areas and facilities of higher risk to the negative impacts of drought increase their vulnerability. Those who do not have mitigation plans in place or techniques to fund them are more at risk as well.
- **Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** - Unincorporated county areas are at a greater risk of rolling blackouts during an extreme heat event due to high usage from other areas of the electrical grid. Due to the rural nature of some of Wharton County's Unincorporated Areas, response times restoring outages caused by a black out could be lengthy. This would have a greater effect on the young, elderly and economically disadvantaged. Communities not implementing wildfire mitigation measures are increasing their risk to potential negative impacts of this hazard as well. Many residents may not know of the risks extreme heat can place on themselves, their families, and homes. Those uninformed on the risks and hazards associated with drought are more vulnerable to its effects.

### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this plan update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

## **10.6.3 Critical Facilities**

### ***Drought***

Critical facilities as defined for this plan will continue to be operational during a drought. Critical facility elements such as landscaping may not be maintained due to limited resources, but the risk to the planning area's critical facilities inventory will be largely aesthetic. For example, when water conservation measures are in place, landscaped areas will not be watered and may die. These aesthetic impacts are not considered significant.

### ***Extreme Heat***

Power outages may occur as a result of extreme heat events. Additionally, transportation systems may experience disruption in services. It is common in Texas for concrete pavements to experience "blowouts or heaves" both on local highway and the higher volume parkway and interstate systems. Blowouts occur when pavements expand and cannot function properly within their allotted spaces. Pavement sections may rise up several inches during such events. These conditions can cause motor vehicle accidents in their initial stages and can shut down traffic lanes or roadways entirely until such times as the conditions are mitigated.

## **10.6.4 Environment**

Environmental losses from drought are associated with damage to plants, animals, wildlife habitat, and air and water quality; forest and range fires; degradation of landscape quality; loss of biodiversity; and soil erosion. Some of the effects are short-term and conditions quickly return to normal following the end of the drought. Other environmental effects linger for some time or may even become permanent. Wildlife habitat, for example, may be degraded through the loss of wetlands, lakes, and vegetation. However, many species will eventually recover from this temporary aberration. The degradation of landscape quality, including increased soil erosion, may lead to a more permanent loss of biological productivity. Although

environmental losses are difficult to quantify, growing public awareness and concern for environmental quality has forced public officials to focus greater attention and resources on these effects.

### **10.6.5 Economic Impact**

Economic impact will be largely associated with industries that use water or depend on water for their business. For example, landscaping businesses were affected in the droughts of the past as the demand for service significantly declined because landscaping was not watered. Agricultural industries will be impacted if water usage is restricted for irrigation. The tourism sector may also be impacted.

## **10.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

Each municipal planning partner in this effort has an established comprehensive plan or policies directing land use and dealing with issues of water supply and the protection of water resources. These plans provide the capability at the local municipal level to protect future development from the impacts of drought. All planning partners reviewed their plans under the capability assessments performed for this effort. Deficiencies identified by these reviews can be identified as mitigation initiatives to increase the capability to deal with future trends in development. Vulnerability to drought will increase as population growth increases, putting more demands on existing water supplies. Future water use planning should consider increases in population as well as potential impacts of climate change.

## **10.8 SCENARIO**

An extreme multi-year drought could impact the region with little warning. Combinations of low precipitation and unusually high temperatures could occur over several consecutive years. Intensified by such conditions, extreme wildfires could break out throughout the planning area, increasing the need for water. Surrounding communities, also in drought conditions, could increase their demand for water supplies relied upon by the planning partnership, causing social and political conflicts. If such conditions persisted for several years, the economy of Wharton County could experience setbacks, especially in water dependent industries.

## **10.9 ISSUES**

The following are extreme heat and drought-related issues:

- Identification and development of alternative water supplies.
- Utilization of groundwater recharge techniques to stabilize the groundwater supply.
- The probability of increased drought frequencies and durations due to climate change.
- The promotion of active water conservation even during non-drought periods.
- Increasing vulnerability to drought over time as demand for water from different sectors increases.
- The effects of climate change may result in an increase in frequency of extreme heat events.
- The effects of recent droughts have exposed the vulnerability of the planning areas economy to drought events.
- Environmental and erosion control impact analysis for transportation projects.
- Wildlife habitat management for landowners.
- Human health impacts from droughts and extreme heat.
- Monitoring and evaluating risks to power supply and water rights.
- Development of mitigation- or response-based state drought plans.



# CHAPTER 11. EARTHQUAKE

EARTHQUAKE RANKING	
Wharton County	Low
City of East Bernard	No Exposure
City of El Campo	No Exposure
City of Wharton	No Exposure

## 11.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 11.1.1 How Earthquakes Happen

An earthquake is a sudden release of energy from the earth's crust that creates seismic waves. Tectonic plates become stuck, putting a strain on the ground. When the strain becomes so great that rocks give way, fault lines occur. At the Earth's surface, earthquakes may manifest themselves by a shaking or displacement of the ground, which may lead to loss of life and destruction of property. Size of an earthquake is expressed quantitatively as magnitude and local strength of shaking as intensity. The inherent size of

an earthquake is commonly expressed using a magnitude. For a more detailed description of seismic/earthquake hazards visit FEMA's web site on hazards, <http://www.fema.gov/hazard>.

Earthquakes tend to reoccur along faults, which are zones of weakness in the crust. Even if a fault zone has recently experienced an earthquake, there is no guarantee that all the stress has been relieved. Another earthquake could still occur.

Geologists classify faults by their relative hazards. Active faults, which represent the highest hazard, are those that have ruptured to the ground surface during the Holocene period (about the last 11,000 years). Potentially active faults are those that displaced layers of rock from the Quaternary period (the last 1,800,000 years). Determining if a fault is "active" or "potentially active" depends on geologic evidence, which may not be available for every fault. Although there are probably still some unrecognized active faults, nearly all the movement between the two plates, and therefore the majority of the seismic hazards, are on the well-known active faults.

Faults are more likely to have earthquakes on them if they have more rapid rates of movement, have had recent earthquakes along them, experience greater total displacements, and are aligned so that movement can relieve accumulating tectonic stresses. A direct relationship exists between a fault's length and location and its ability to generate damaging ground motion at a given site. In some areas, smaller, local faults produce lower magnitude quakes, but ground shaking can be strong, and damage can be significant as a result of the fault's proximity to the area. In contrast, large regional faults can generate great magnitudes but, because of their distance and depth, may result in only moderate shaking in the area.

### DEFINITIONS

**Earthquake** — The shaking of the ground caused by an abrupt shift of rock along a fracture in the earth or a contact zone between tectonic plates.

**Epicenter** — The point on the earth's surface directly above the hypocenter of an earthquake. The location of an earthquake is commonly described by the geographic position of its epicenter and by its focal depth.

**Fault** — A fracture in the earth's crust along which two blocks of the crust have slipped with respect to each other.

**Focal Depth** — The depth from the earth's surface to the hypocenter.

**Hypocenter** — The region underground where an earthquake's energy originates.

**Liquefaction** — Loosely packed, water-logged sediments losing their strength in response to strong shaking, causing major damage during earthquakes.

## 11.1.2 Earthquake Classifications

Earthquakes are typically classified in one of two ways: by the amount of energy released, measured as **magnitude**; or by the impact on people and structures, measured as **intensity**.

### ***Magnitude***

Currently the most commonly used magnitude scale is the moment magnitude ( $M_w$ ) scale, with the following classifications of magnitude:

- Great  $M_w > 8$
- Major  $M_w = 7.0 - 7.9$
- Strong  $M_w = 6.0 - 6.9$
- Moderate  $M_w = 5.0 - 5.9$
- Light  $M_w = 4.0 - 4.9$
- Minor  $M_w = 3.0 - 3.9$
- Micro  $M_w < 3$

Estimates of moment magnitude roughly match the local magnitude scale (ML) commonly called the Richter scale. One advantage of the  $M_w$  scale is that, unlike other magnitude scales, it does not saturate at the upper end. That is, there is no value beyond which all large earthquakes have about the same magnitude. For this reason,  $M_w$  scale is now the most often used estimate of large earthquake magnitudes.

### ***Intensity***

Currently the most commonly used intensity scale is the modified Mercalli intensity scale, with ratings defined as follows (U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] 1989):

- I. Not felt except by a very few under especially favorable conditions.
- II. Felt only by a few persons at rest, especially on upper floors of buildings.
- III. Felt quite noticeably by persons indoors, especially on upper floors of buildings. Many people do not recognize it is an earthquake. Standing cars may rock slightly. Vibrations similar to the passing of a truck. Duration estimated.
- IV. Felt indoors by many, outdoors by few during the day. At night, some awakened. Dishes, windows, doors disturbed; walls make cracking sound. Sensation like a heavy truck striking building. Standing cars rocked noticeably.
- V. Felt by nearly everyone; many awakened. Some dishes, windows broken. Unstable objects overturned. Pendulum clocks may stop.
- VI. Felt by all; many frightened. Some heavy furniture moved; a few instances of fallen plaster. Damage slight.
- VII. Damage negligible in buildings of good design and construction; slight in well-built ordinary structures; considerable in poorly built or badly designed structures. Some chimneys broken.
- VIII. Damage slight in specially designed structures; considerable damage in ordinary buildings with partial collapse. Damage great in poorly built structures. Fall of chimneys, factory stacks, columns, monuments, walls. Heavy furniture overturned.
- IX. Damage considerable in specially designed structures; well-designed frame structures thrown out of plumb. Damage great in substantial buildings, with partial collapse. Buildings shifted off foundations.

- X. Some well-built wooden structures destroyed; most masonry and frame structures destroyed with foundations. Rails bent.
- XI. Few, if any (masonry) structures remain standing. Bridges destroyed. Rails bent greatly.
- XII. Damage total. Lines of sight and level are distorted. Objects thrown into the air.

### 11.1.3 Ground Motion

Earthquake hazard assessment is also based on expected ground motion. This involves determining the annual probability that certain ground motion accelerations will be exceeded, then summing the annual probabilities over the time period of interest. The most commonly mapped ground motion parameters are the horizontal and vertical peak ground accelerations (PGA) for a given soil or rock type. Instruments called accelerographs record levels of ground motion due to earthquakes at stations throughout a region. These readings are recorded by state and federal agencies that monitor and predict seismic activity.

Maps of PGA values form the basis of seismic zone maps that are included in building codes such as the International Building Code. Building codes that include seismic provisions specify the horizontal force due to lateral acceleration that a building should be able to withstand during an earthquake. PGA values are directly related to these lateral forces that could damage “short-period structures” (e.g., single-family dwellings). Longer-period response components create the lateral forces that damage larger structures with longer natural periods (apartment buildings, factories, high-rises, bridges). Table 11-1 lists damage potential and perceived shaking by PGA factors, compared to the Mercalli scale.

Modified Mercalli Scale	Perceived Shaking	Potential Structure Damage		Estimated PGA <sup>a</sup> (% g)
		Resistant Buildings	Vulnerable Buildings	
I	Not Felt	None	None	<0.17%
II to III	Weak	None	None	0.17% - 1.4%
IV	Light	None	None	1.4% - 3.9%
V	Moderate	Very Light	Light	3.9% - 9.2%
VI	Strong	Light	Moderate	9.2% - 18%
VII	Very Strong	Moderate	Moderate/Heavy	18% - 34%
VIII	Severe	Moderate/Heavy	Heavy	34% - 65%
IX	Violent	Heavy	Very Heavy	65% - 124%
X to XII	Extreme	Very Heavy	Very Heavy	>124%

a. PGA measured in percent of g, where g is the acceleration of gravity  
Sources: USGS, 2008; USGS, 2010

### 11.1.4 Effect of Soil Types

The impact of an earthquake on structures and infrastructure is largely a function of ground shaking, distance from the source of the quake, and liquefaction. Liquefaction is a secondary effect of an earthquake in which soils lose their shear strength and flow or behave as liquid, thereby damaging structures that derive their support from the soil. Liquefaction generally occurs in soft, unconsolidated sedimentary soils. A program called the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP) creates maps based on soil characteristics to help identify locations subject to liquefaction. Table 1-2 summarizes NEHRP soil classifications. NEHRP Soils B and C typically can sustain ground shaking without much effect, dependent

on the earthquake magnitude. The areas that are commonly most affected by ground shaking have NEHRP Soils D, E, and F. In general, these areas are also most susceptible to liquefaction.

NEHRP Soil Type	Description	Mean Shear Velocity to 30 meters (meters per second)
A	Hard Rock	1,500
B	Firm to Hard Rock	760-1,500
C	Dense Soil/Soft Rock	360-760
D	Stiff Soil	180-360
E	Soft Clays	< 180
F	Special Study Soils (liquefiable soils, sensitive clays, organic soils, soft clays >36 meters thick)	

## 11.2 HAZARD PROFILE

Earthquakes can last from a few seconds to over five minutes; they may also occur as a series of tremors over several days. The actual movement of the ground in an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of injury or death. Casualties generally result from falling objects and debris, because the shocks shake, damage, or demolish buildings and other structures. Disruption of communications, electrical power supplies and gas, sewer and water lines should be expected. Earthquakes may trigger fires, dam failures, landslides, or releases of hazardous material, compounding their disastrous effects.

Small, local faults produce lower magnitude quakes, but ground shaking can be strong and damage can be significant in areas close to the fault. In contrast, large regional faults can generate earthquakes of great magnitudes but, because of their distance and depth, they may result in only moderate shaking in an area.

The severity of earthquakes is influenced by several factors, including the depth of the quake, the geology in the area, and the soils. The severity of soil liquefaction is dependent on the soils grain size, thickness, compaction, and degree of saturation.

### 11.2.1 Past Events

Most past earthquakes in Texas have been of low magnitude and have mainly occurred in west Texas, or the Panhandle area. Figure 1-1 shows the location of recorded and documented earthquake events in Texas as well as the planning area. As can be seen in Figure 1-2, the probability of a severe earthquake in Wharton County and participating communities is low. According to the State Hazard Mitigation Plan, the probability of an earthquake in the Central Region is considered rare. This includes Wharton County and participating communities. Although a small event is possible, it would pose little to no risk for the area. According to the USGS Earthquake Hazard Program, no earthquakes have been recorded in Wharton County and the participating communities since 1847, (the earliest date data are available).

### 11.2.2 Location

While Texas does face some earthquake hazard, this hazard is very small in comparison to many other states. The biggest threat appears to be from the New Madrid fault system in Missouri, a system powerful enough to pose a risk to the north Texas area. Two regions, near El Paso and in the Panhandle, should expect earthquakes with magnitudes of approximately 5.5 to 6.0 to occur every 50 to 100 years, with even larger earthquakes possible. In Central Texas, the hazard is generally low, but residents should be aware that small earthquakes can occur, including some that are theoretically triggered by oil or gas production.

Elsewhere in Texas, earthquakes are exceedingly rare. However, the hazard level is not zero anywhere in Texas; small earthquakes are possible almost anywhere, and all regions face possible ill effects from very large, distant earthquakes. Figure 1-2 shows earthquake hazard threats in the U.S. Figure 1-1 shows the location of recorded past events and Figure 1-2 shows probability of earthquake hazard threats in the U.S.

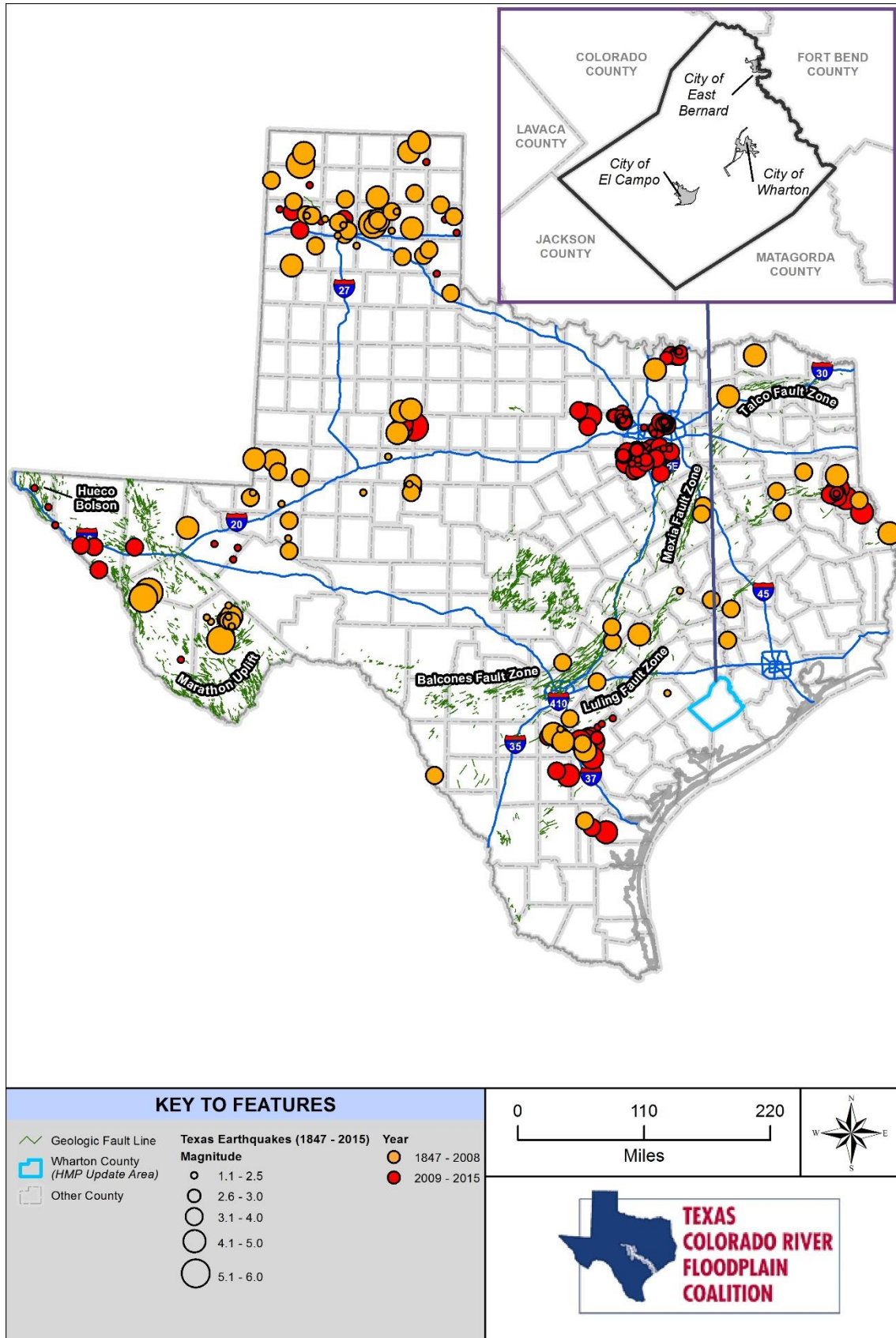


Figure 1-1. Texas Earthquakes (1847-2015)

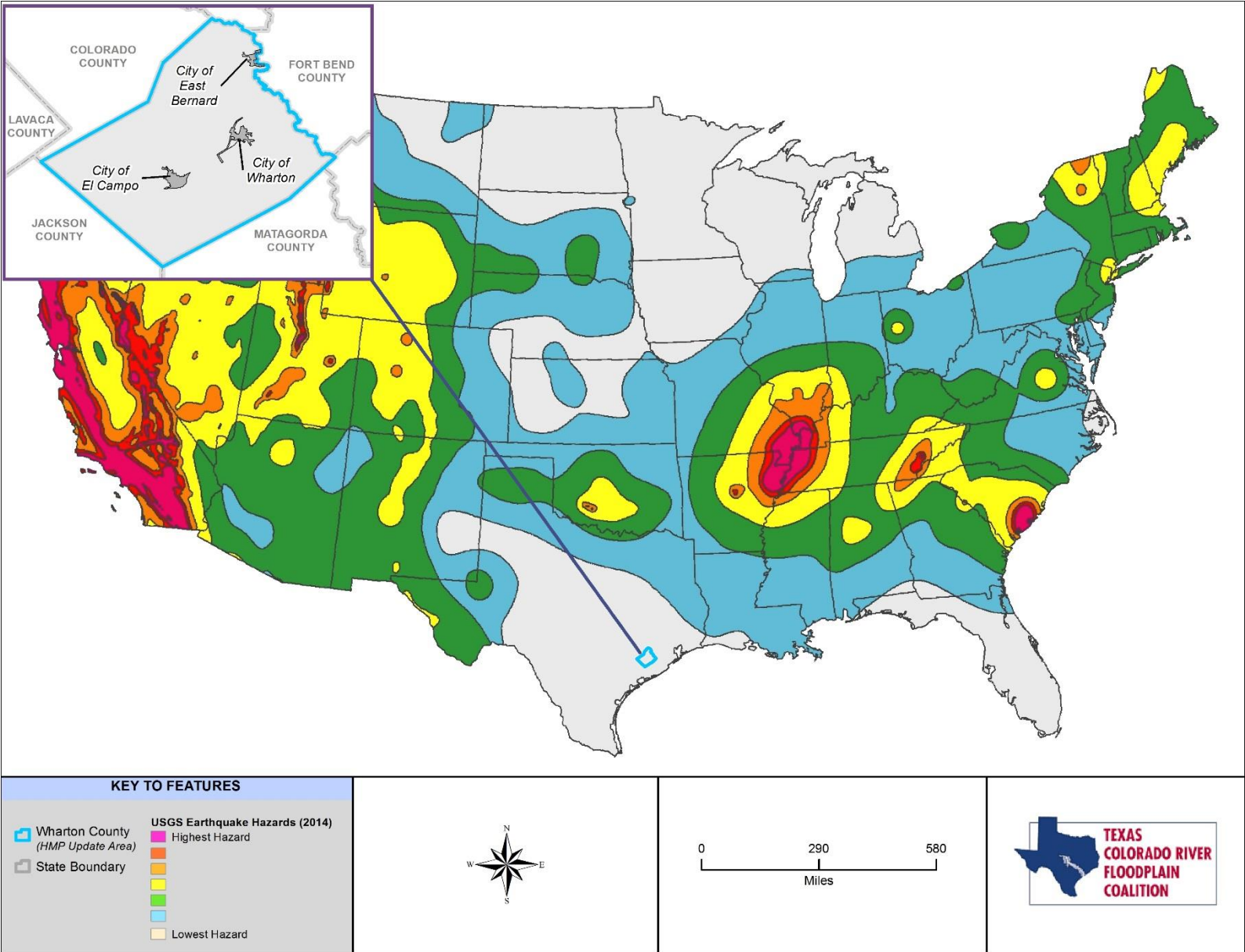


Figure 1-2. Probabilistic Earthquake Hazard Map for the U.S.

Faults have been classified based on the geologic time frame of their latest suspected movement (in order of activity occurrence, most recent is listed first):

- H Holocene (within past 15,000 years)
- LQ Late Quaternary (15,000 to 130,000 years ago)
- MLQ Middle to Late Quaternary (130,000 to 750,000 years ago)
- Q Quaternary (approximately past 2 million years)
- LC Late Cenozoic (approximately past 23.7 million years)

Known named faults in Texas are the Balcones Fault Zone, Mexia Fault Zone, Luling Fault Zone, Hueco Bolson, Marathon Uplift, and Talco Fault Zone.

The impact of an earthquake is largely a function of the following components:

- Ground shaking (ground motion accelerations)
- Liquefaction (soil instability)
- Distance from the source (both horizontally and vertically)

No earthquake scenarios were selected for this plan because an earthquake event for the planning area is rare, according to the *2013 State of Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

### 11.2.3 Frequency

According to the USGS, the probability that a magnitude 5 or greater earthquake will occur in the planning area in the next few years is unlikely (event not probable in next 10 years). The USGS Earthquake Probability Mapping application estimates that the probability that a magnitude 5 or greater earthquake will occur in the next 500 years in Wharton County and the participating community is 2 percent or less. Overall, the probability of a damaging earthquake somewhere in Wharton County and participating community is considered rare. Small earthquakes that cause no or little damage are more likely (see Figure 1-2). The future probability of an earthquake event in Wharton County and the participating communities is unlikely (event not probable in next 10 years).

### 11.2.4 Severity

Earthquakes can cause structural damage, injury, and loss of life, as well as damage to infrastructure networks, such as water, power, communication, and transportation lines. Damage and life loss can be particularly devastating in communities where buildings were not designed to withstand seismic forces (e.g., historic structures). Other damage-causing effects of earthquakes include surface rupture, fissuring, settlement, and permanent horizontal and vertical shifting of the ground. Secondary impacts can include landslides, rock falls, liquefaction, fires, dam failure, and hazardous materials incidents.

There are no known deaths or injuries from earthquakes in Wharton County and the participating communities. Some of the past earthquake events in Texas were severe enough to cause minor property damage such as broken windows or contents falling from shelves. The very low probability of an event suggests that potential for these impacts is minimal.

The severity of an earthquake can be expressed in terms of intensity or magnitude. Intensity represents the observed effects of ground shaking on people, buildings, and natural features. The USGS has created ground motion maps based on current information about several fault zones. These maps show the PGA that has a certain probability (2% or 10%) of being exceeded in a 50-year period, as shown on Figure 1-3. The PGA is measured in numbers of g's (the acceleration associated with gravity). The 500-Year HAZUS-MH probabilistic-event scenario for Wharton County produced a PGA of 0.0148, which is lower than the FEMA PGA minimum requirement (3%g) for earthquake analysis profiling. Figure 1-4. Figure 1-4 shows



the 500-year probability event, which produces only a light ground shaking and is likely to cause no damage. Vibrations feel like those of a heavy truck passing by. This means that during an event of such magnitude, dishes, windows, and doors rattle; walls and frames of structures creak; liquids in open vessels are slightly disturbed; and standing vehicles rock noticeably.

Magnitude is related to the amount of seismic energy released at the hypocenter of an earthquake. It is calculated based on the amplitude of the earthquake waves recorded on instruments. Whereas intensity varies depending on location with respect to the earthquake epicenter, magnitude is represented by a single, instrumentally measured value for each earthquake event.

In simplistic terms, the severity of an earthquake event can be measured in the following terms:

- How hard did the ground shake?
- How did the ground move? (horizontally or vertically)
- How stable was the soil?
- What is the fragility of the built environment in the area of impact?

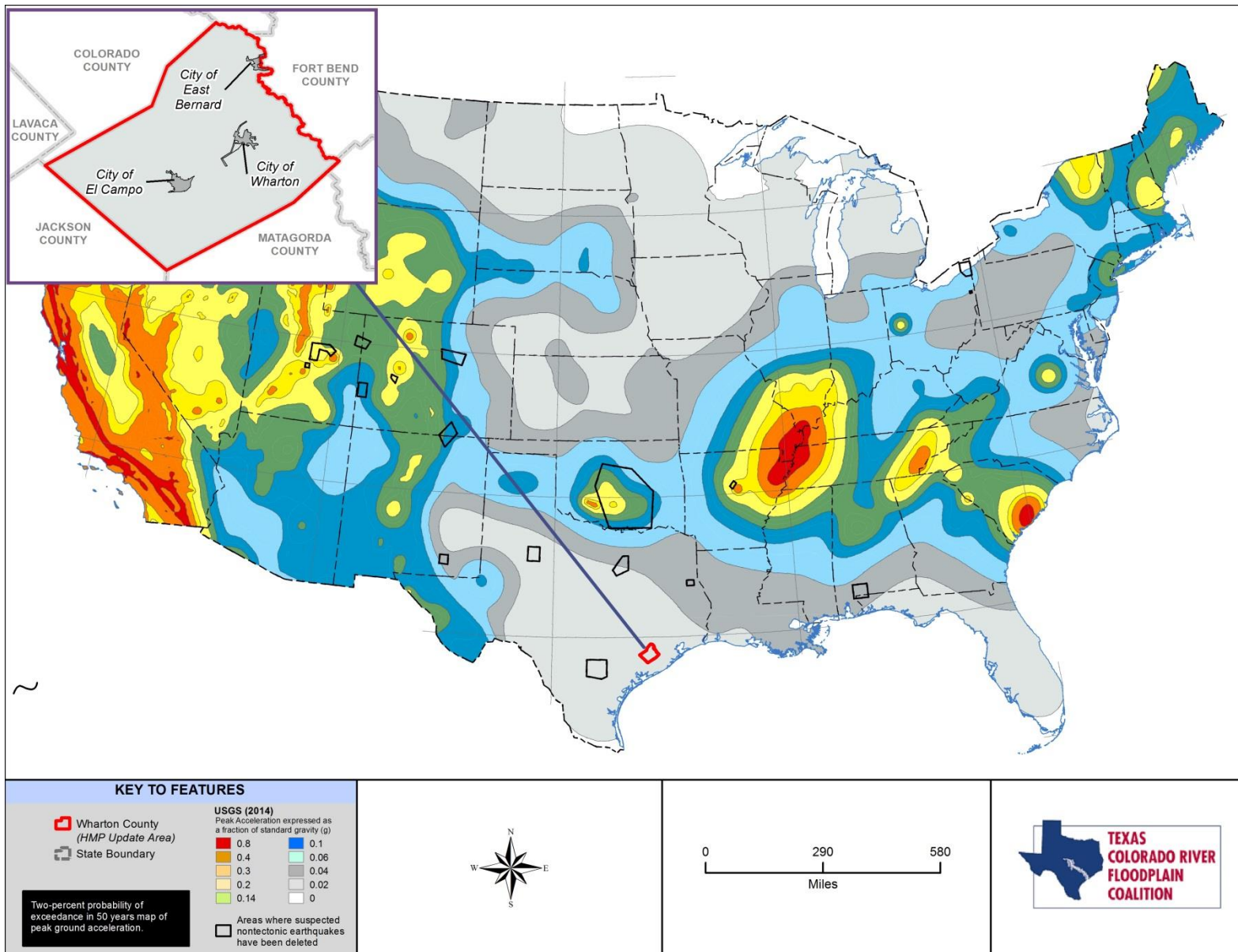


Figure 1-3. Peak Ground Acceleration (10% Probability of Exceedance in 50-Year Map of Peak Ground Acceleration)

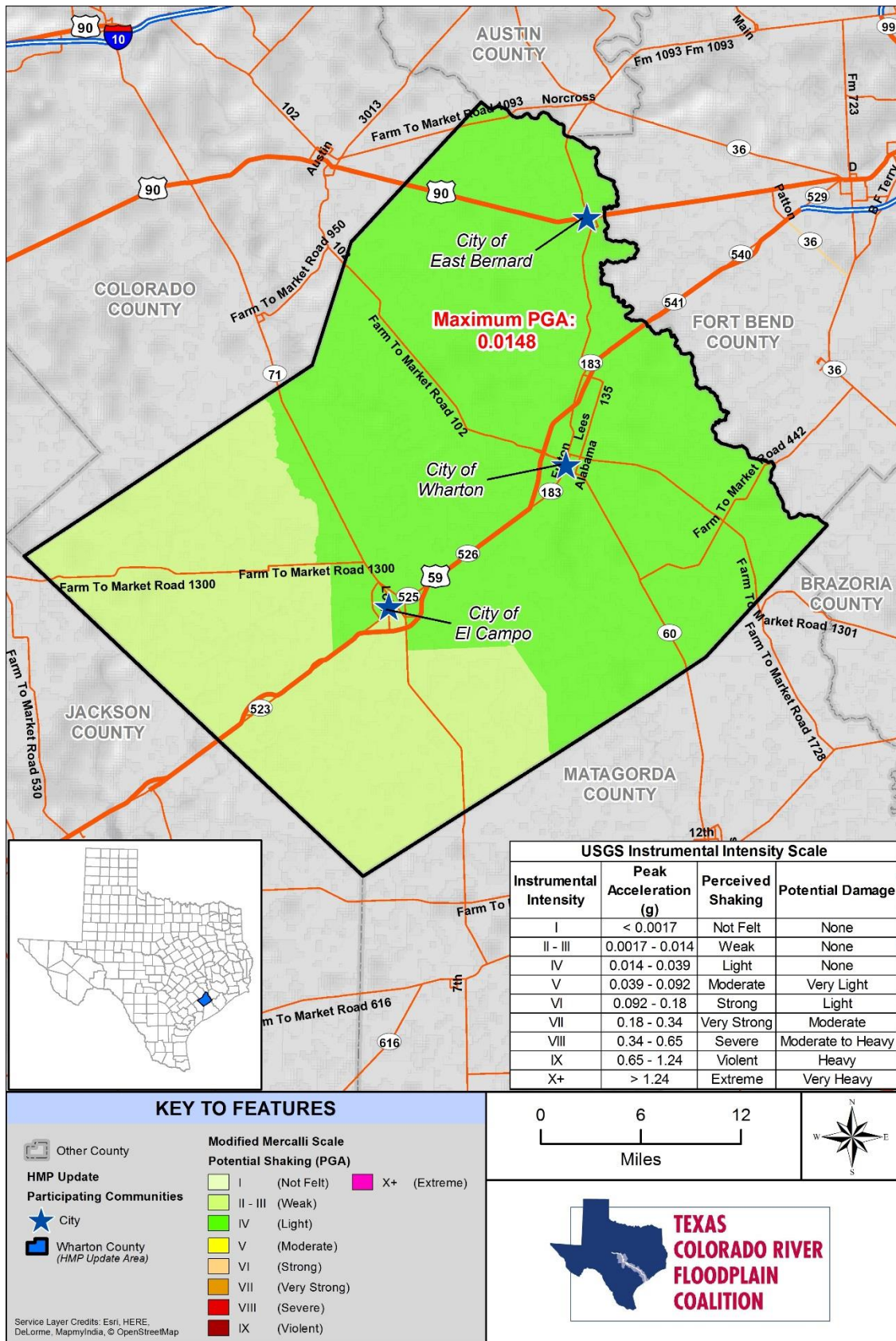


Figure 1-4. 500-Year Probability Event in Wharton County

### **11.2.5 Warning Time**

Part of what makes earthquakes so destructive is that they generally occur without warning. The main shock of an earthquake can usually be measured in seconds, and rarely lasts for more than a minute. Aftershocks can occur within the days, weeks, and even months following a major earthquake.

By studying the geologic characteristics of faults, geoscientists can often estimate when the fault last moved and estimate the magnitude of the earthquake that produced the last movement. Because the occurrence of earthquakes is relatively low to none in the county and participating cities and the historical earthquake record is short, accurate estimations of magnitude, timing, or location of future dangerous earthquakes in Wharton County are difficult to estimate.

There is currently no reliable way to predict the day or month that an earthquake will occur at any given location. Research is being done with warning systems that use the low energy waves that precede major earthquakes. These potential warning systems give approximately 40 seconds notice that a major earthquake is about to occur. The warning time is very short but it could allow for someone to get under a desk, step away from a hazardous material they are working with, or shut down sensitive equipment.

### **11.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS**

Earthquakes can cause large and sometimes disastrous landslides and mudslides. River valleys are vulnerable to slope failure, often as a result of loss of cohesion in clay-rich soils. Soil liquefaction occurs when water-saturated sands, silts, or gravelly soils are shaken so violently that the individual grains lose contact with one another and float freely in the water, turning the ground into a pudding-like liquid. Building and road foundations lose load-bearing strength and may sink into what was previously solid ground. Unless properly secured, hazardous materials can be released, causing significant damage to the environment and people. Earthen dams and levees are highly susceptible to seismic events and the impacts of their eventual failures can be considered secondary risks for earthquakes.

### **11.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

The impacts of global climate change on earthquake probability are unknown. Some scientists say that melting glaciers could induce tectonic activity. As ice melts and water runs off, tremendous amounts of weight are shifted on the earth's crust. As newly freed crust returns to its original, pre-glacier shape, it could cause seismic plates to slip and stimulate volcanic activity according to research into prehistoric earthquakes and volcanic activity. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and USGS scientists found that retreating glaciers in southern Alaska may be opening the way for future earthquakes (NASA 2004).

Secondary impacts of earthquakes could be magnified by climate change. Soils saturated by repetitive storms could experience liquefaction during seismic activity due to the increased saturation. Dams storing increased volumes of water due to changes in the hydrograph could fail during seismic events. There are currently no models available to estimate these impacts.

### **11.5 EXPOSURE**

All structures, people, and infrastructure within the participating communities are vulnerable to earthquake damages. The *FEMA How-To Guidance, Understanding Your Risks* (FEMA 386-2, page 1-7), suggests the earthquake hazard should be profiled if the PGA is greater than 3%g. Wharton County and all participating communities PGA is less than 2%g (.02) and there have been no recorded earthquakes in or near the HMP update area. Furthermore, Wharton County and participating communities do not have any geologic fault lines running through their jurisdiction (See Figure 1-1). Therefore, only a minimum level-1 HAZUS analysis was profiled using the 500-year probability event scenario.

### 11.5.1 Population

The populations along the major geologic fault lines are the most potentially exposed to direct and indirect impacts from earthquakes. There are no fault lines within the HMP update area (See Figure 1-1). Therefore the entire county population is at an extremely minimal risk. The degree of exposure is dependent on many factors, including the age and construction type of the structures people live in, the soil type their homes are constructed on, their proximity to fault location, and other factors. Whether impacted directly or indirectly, the entire population will have to deal with the consequences of earthquakes to some degree. Business interruption could keep people from working, road closures could isolate populations, and functional loss of utilities could impact populations that suffered no direct damage from an event itself.

### 11.5.2 Property

According to the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), there are 15,781 buildings within the census blocks that define the planning area with an asset replaceable value of over \$4 million (excluding contents). About 98% of these buildings (and 78% of the building value) are associated with residential housing. Within the participating communities in the HMP update area, there are an estimated 14,741 buildings (residential, commercial, and other) with a total asset inventory (excluding contents) value of over \$3.7 million. Other types of buildings in this report include agricultural, education, religious, and governmental structures. All the structures along the major geologic fault lines in the planning area are susceptible to earthquake impacts to varying degrees. There are no fault lines within the HMP update area (See Figure 1-1), therefore the HMP Area is at an extremely minimal risk.

### 11.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

All critical facilities and infrastructure in the planning area are exposed to the earthquake hazard. Table 6-3 and Table 6-4 list the number of each type of facility by jurisdiction. Hazardous material releases can occur during an earthquake from fixed facilities or transportation-related incidents. Transportation corridors can be disrupted during an earthquake, leading to the release of materials to the surrounding environment. Facilities holding hazardous materials are of particular concern because of possible isolation of neighborhoods surrounding them. During an earthquake, structures storing these materials could rupture and leak into the surrounding area or an adjacent waterway, having a disastrous effect on the environment.

### 11.5.4 Environment

Secondary hazards associated with earthquakes will likely have some of the most damaging effects on the environment. Earthquake-induced landslides can significantly impact surrounding habitat. It is also possible for streams to be rerouted after an earthquake. This can change the water quality, possibly damaging habitat and feeding areas. There is a possibility of streams fed by groundwater drying up because of changes in underlying geology.

## 11.6 VULNERABILITY

All structures, people, and infrastructure within the participating communities are vulnerable to earthquake damage, however due to the low risk of occurrence, only a minimum level-1 HAZUS 500-year probability event analysis was conducted. The 500-Year HAZUS modeled event for Wharton County and the participating communities produced a maximum PGA of 1.48%g (Figure 1-4), which is lower than the FEMA PGA minimum requirement for earthquake analysis (3%g). The potential shaking (0.0148 PGA) of the 500-year event in Wharton County (and all participating communities) creates a ‘weak’ perceived shaking with no potential damage on the USGS Instrumental Intensity Scale. While the probability of an event is rare, if an event were to occur, it would be of minimal magnitude with no damage.

Due to no previous earthquake events in the planning area and the rare likelihood that such an earthquake event may occur for Wharton County and the participating communities, annualized economic losses from the HAZUS 500-Year modeled event produced \$0. Wharton County and participating communities can expect no loss of functionality for critical facilities and infrastructures, utility, transportation, and other essential services.

### ***Vulnerability Narrative***

- **City of East Bernard** - The City of East Bernard is classified as ‘No Exposure’ due to a PGA of less than 2%, the number of previous events (0), probability of future events (minimal), and local knowledge.
- **City of El Campo** - The City of El Campo is classified as ‘No Exposure’ due to a PGA of less than 2%, the number of previous events (0), probability of future events (minimal), and local knowledge.
- **City of Wharton** – The City of Wharton is classified as ‘No Exposure’ due to a PGA of less than 2%, the number of previous events (0), probability of future events (minimal), and local knowledge.
- **Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** - There are no fault lines throughout the Unincorporated Areas of Wharton County. The closest fault lines are located approximately 55 miles to the west in Fayette and Gonzales counties. However, if an earthquake were to occur in the Unincorporated Areas of Wharton County, damages to critical facilities and major thoroughfares (such as US 59 or US 90) could delay emergency service support from neighboring communities. Rural residents and property are more vulnerable as response times could be limited. Rural roadways with single lane crossings or crossings currently in need of improvements increase the risk and vulnerability to these residents as emergency response efforts would be further compromised.

### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this plan update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

## **11.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

Land use in the planning area will be directed by master plans adopted by the county and its planning partners as well as local permitting departments and zoning maps. The information in this plan provides the participating partners a tool to ensure that there is no increase in exposure in areas of high seismic risk. Development in the planning area will be regulated through building standards and performance measures so that the degree of risk will be reduced. The International Building Code also establishes provisions to address seismic risk.

## **11.8 SCENARIO**

An earthquake does not have to occur within the planning area to have a significant impact on the people, property and economy of the county and participating cities. However, any seismic activity of 6.0 or greater on faults within the planning area would have significant impacts throughout the county. Earthquakes of this magnitude or higher would lead to massive structural failure of property on highly liquefiable soils. Levees and revetments built on these poor soils would likely fail, representing a loss of critical infrastructure. These events could cause secondary hazards, including landslides and mudslides that would further damage structures. River valley hydraulic-fill sediment areas are also vulnerable to slope failure, often as a result of loss of cohesion in clay-rich soils.

## **11.9 ISSUES**

Important issues associated with an earthquake include but are not limited to the following:

- Many structures within the planning area were built prior to 1994, when seismic provisions became uniformly applied through building code applications.
- Critical facility owners should be encouraged to create or enhance continuity of operations plans using the information on risk and vulnerability contained in this plan.
- Geotechnical standards should be established that take into account the probable impacts from earthquakes in the design and construction of new or enhanced facilities.
- Earthquakes could trigger other natural hazard events such as dam failures and landslides, which could severely impact the county and participating cities.
- A worst-case scenario would be the occurrence of a large seismic event during a flood or high-water event. Failures could happen at multiple locations, increasing the impacts of the individual events.
- The cost of retrofitting buildings to meet earthquake seismicity standards may be cost-prohibitive.
- Dams located in the county and participating cities may not have been engineered to withstand probable seismic events.
- Information regarding liquefaction susceptibility of soils in the planning area is lacking.

# CHAPTER 12. FLOOD

FLOOD RANKING	
Wharton County	Medium
City of East Bernard	Medium
City of El Campo	Medium
City of Wharton	Medium

**DEFINITIONS**

**Flood** — The inundation of normally dry land resulting from the rising and overflowing of a body of water.

**Floodplain** — The land area along the sides of a river that becomes inundated with water during a flood.

**100-Year Floodplain** — The area flooded by a flood that has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded each year. This is a statistical average only; a 100-year flood can occur more than once in a short period of time. The 1% annual chance flood is the standard used by most federal and state agencies.

**Riparian Zone** — The area along the banks of a natural watercourse.

## 12.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 12.1.1 Flood

The following description of flooding is an excerpt from the *2013 State of Texas Flood Mitigation Plan*.

A flood is a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of normally dry land areas from:

- The overflow of stream banks
- The unusual and rapid accumulation of runoff of surface waters from any source
- Mudflows or the sudden collapse of shoreline land

Flooding results when the flow of water is greater than the normal carrying capacity of the stream channel. Rate of rise, magnitude (or peak discharge), duration, and frequency of floods are a function of specific physiographic characteristics. Generally, the rise in water surface elevation is quite rapid on small (and steep gradient) streams and slow in large (and flat sloped) streams.

The causes of floods relate directly to the accumulation of water from precipitation, or the failure of man-made structures, such as dams or levees. Floods caused by precipitation are further classified as coming from: rain in a general storm system, rain in a localized intense thunderstorm, melting snow and ice, and hurricane/tropical storms. Floods may also be caused by structural or hydrologic failures of dams or levees. A hydrologic failure occurs when the volume of water behind the dam or levee exceeds the structure's capacity resulting in overtopping. Structural failure arises when the physical stability of the dam or levee is compromised due to age, poor construction and maintenance, seismic activity, rodent tunneling, or myriad other causes. For more information on floods resulting from dam and levee failure refer to Chapter 9 of this plan.

#### **General Rain Floods**

General rain floods can result from moderate to heavy rainfall occurring over a wide geographic area lasting several days. They are characterized by a slow steady rise in stream stage and a peak flood of long duration. As various minor streams empty into larger and larger channels, the peak discharge on the mainstream channel may progress upstream or downstream (or remain stationary) over a considerable length of river. General rain floods can result in considerably large volumes of water. Because the rate of rise is slow and the time available for warning is great, few lives are usually lost, but millions of dollars in valuable public and private property are at risk.

#### **Thunderstorm Floods**

Damaging thunderstorm floods are caused by intense rain over basins of relatively small area. They are characterized by a sudden rise in stream level, short duration, and a relatively small volume of runoff.



Because there is little or no warning time, the term “flash flood” is often used to describe thunderstorm floods. Texas is known as the “Flash Flood Alley” and the area along the Balcones Escarpment (from Austin south to San Antonio, then west to Del Rio) is one of the nation's three most flash flood-prone regions. Figure 12-1 and Figure 12-2 show the number of flash floods and storm centers in each county. Wharton County lies just south of the “Flash Flood Alley”.

Thunderstorm floods occur in every month of the year in Texas but are most common in the spring and summer. The mean annual number of thunderstorm flood days varies from 40 in eastern Texas to 60 in western Texas. Most flash flooding is caused by slow-moving thunderstorms, thunderstorms repeatedly moving over the same area, or heavy rains from hurricanes and tropical storms.

Flash floods can occur within a few minutes or after hours of excessive rainfall. Flash floods can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings and bridges, and carve out new channels. Rapidly rising water can reach heights of thirty feet or more. Flash flood-producing rains can also trigger catastrophic mudslides. Often there is no warning that flash floods are coming. Hill Country flash floods devastated the river basin and are a major reason why the LCRA located Mansfield Dam and Lake Travis (the flood control components of the Highland Lake chain) upstream of Austin. Flash flooding poses a deadly danger to residents of the Lower Colorado River Basin. A number of roads run through low-lying areas that are prone to sudden and frequent flooding during heavy rains. Motorists often attempt to drive through barricaded or flooded roadways. It takes only 18 to 24 inches of water moving across a roadway to carry away most vehicles. Floating cars easily get swept downstream, making rescues difficult and dangerous.

### ***Rain on Snowmelt Floods***

Winter is the driest time of the year in Texas. Snowfall occurs at least once every winter in the northern half of Texas, although accumulations rarely are substantial except in the High Plains. Snow is not uncommon in the mountainous areas of the Trans-Pecos, though heavy snows (five inches or more) come only once every two or three winters. More often than not, snow falling in the southern half of the state melts and does not stick to the surface; snow stays on the ground only once or twice in every decade. Snowfall rarely is observed before early November and hardly ever occurs after mid-April. Where it is not uncommon, snow is almost always heaviest in either January or February. Mean seasonal snowfall is 15 to 18 inches in the Texas Panhandle and 4 to 8 inches elsewhere in the High and Low Rolling Plains.

### ***Hurricanes and Tropical Storms***

The United States has a significant hurricane problem. More than 60% of the U.S. population live in coastal states from Maine to Texas, Washington to California, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. In the United States, the Atlantic and Gulf Coast coastlines are densely populated and many regions lie less than 3 meters (10 feet) above mean sea level.

Wharton County, being a Texas Coastal Bend County, is exposed to flooding from hurricanes and tropical storms. Coastal flooding triggered by hurricanes is as destructive as wind but can be even more deadly, and is by far the greatest threat to life and property along the coastline. Storm surge, wave, and tides are the greatest contributors to coastal flooding, while precipitation and river flow also contribute during some storms. Hurricanes produce soaking rain, high winds, flying debris, storm surges, tornadoes, and often the most deadly of all, inland flooding. Rain-triggered flooding is not just limited to coastlines as the reach of a large hurricane can cause deadly flooding well inland to communities hundreds of miles from the coast as intense rain falls from these huge tropical air masses. Increased flooding and erosion rates may cause landslides in some areas, especially mountainous regions

Besides causing extensive damage in coastal areas, hurricanes and tropical storms can often cause extensive damages to communities several miles inland. Just a few inches of water from a flood can cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage. Examples include Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Ike, and Tropical Storm Allison. For more information on floods resulting from hurricanes and tropical storms, refer to Chapter 13 of this plan.

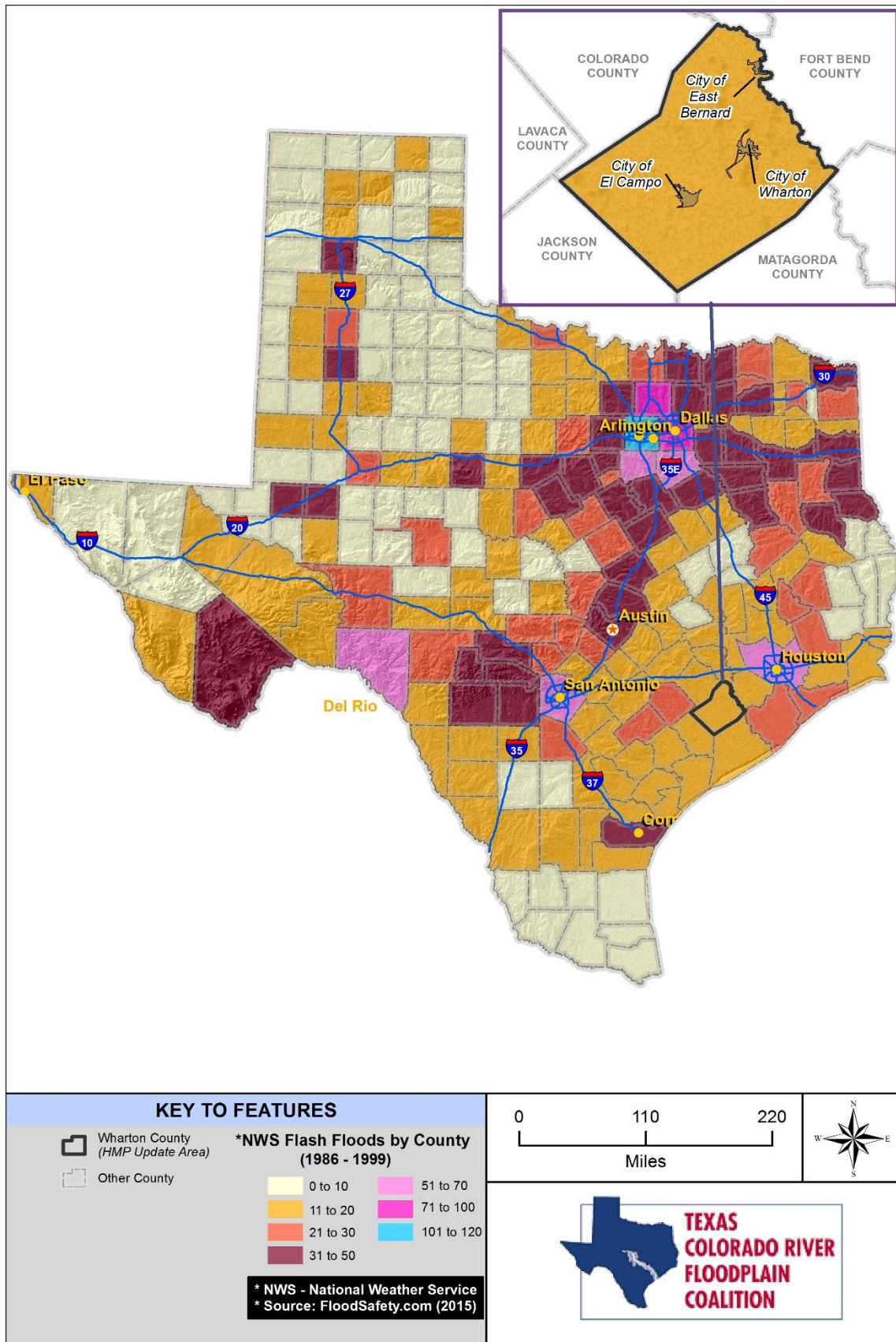


Figure 12-1. Number of Flash Floods in Texas per County (1986-1999)

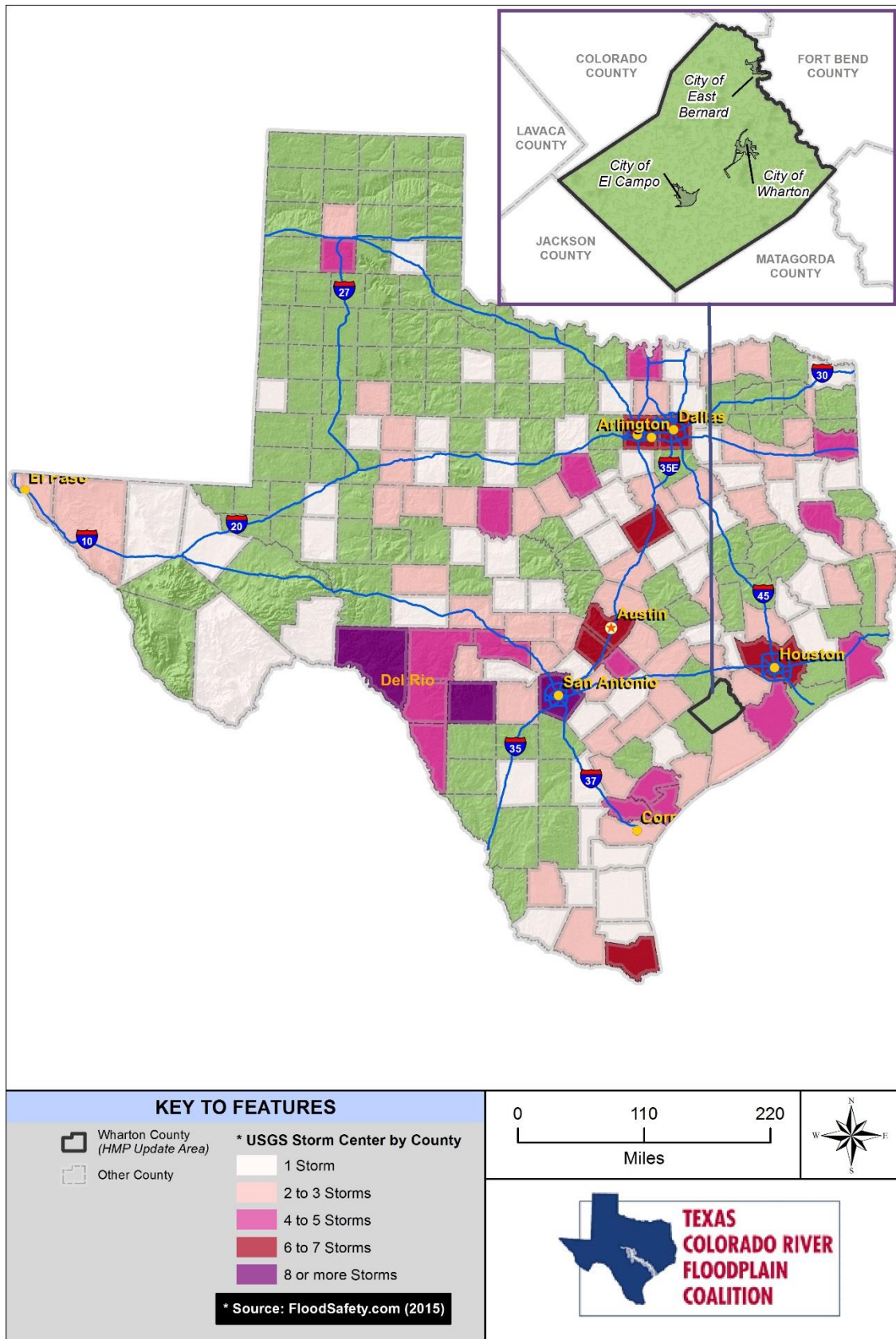


Figure 12-2. Number of Storm Centers by County

## 12.1.2 Floodplain

A floodplain is the area adjacent to a river, creek, or lake that becomes inundated during a flood. Floodplains may be broad, as when a river crosses an extensive flat landscape, or narrow, as when a river is confined in a canyon.

When floodwaters recede after a flood event, they leave behind layers of rock and mud. These gradually build up to create a new floor of the floodplain. Floodplains generally contain unconsolidated sediments (accumulations of sand, gravel, loam, silt, or clay), often extending below the bed of the stream. These sediments provide a natural filtering system, with water percolating back into the ground and replenishing groundwater. These are often important aquifers, the water drawn from them being filtered compared to the water in the stream. Fertile, flat reclaimed floodplain lands are commonly used for agriculture, commerce, and residential development.

Connections between a river and its floodplain are most apparent during and after major flood events. These areas form a complex physical and biological system that not only supports a variety of natural resources but also provides natural flood and erosion control. When a river is separated from its floodplain with levees and other flood control facilities, natural, built-in benefits can be lost, altered, or significantly reduced.

## 12.1.3 Measuring Floods and Floodplains

The frequency and severity of flooding are measured using a discharge probability, which is the probability that a certain river discharge (flow) level will be equaled or exceeded in a given year. Flood studies use historical records to estimate the probability of occurrence for the different discharge levels. The flood frequency equals 100 divided by the discharge probability. For example, the 100-year discharge has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. These measurements reflect statistical averages only; it is possible for two or more floods with a 100-year or higher recurrence interval to occur in a short time period. The same flood can have different recurrence intervals at different points on a river.

The extent of flooding associated with a 1% annual probability of occurrence (the base flood or 100-year flood) is used as the regulatory boundary by FEMA and many agencies. Also referred to as the special flood hazard area (SFHA), this boundary is a convenient tool for assessing vulnerability and risk in flood-prone communities. Many communities have maps that show the extent and likely depth of flooding for the base flood. Corresponding water surface elevations describe the elevation of water that will result from a given discharge level, which is one of the most important factors used in estimating flood damage.

## 12.1.4 Floodplain Ecosystems

Floodplains can support ecosystems that are rich in plant and animal species. A floodplain can contain 100 or even 1,000 times as many species as a river. Wetting of the floodplain soil releases an immediate surge of nutrients: those left over from the last flood, and those that result from the rapid decomposition of organic matter that has accumulated since then. Microscopic organisms thrive and larger species enter a rapid breeding cycle. Opportunistic feeders (particularly birds) move in to take advantage. The production of nutrients peaks and falls away quickly, but the surge of new growth endures for some time. This makes floodplains valuable for agriculture. Species growing in floodplains are markedly different from those that grow outside floodplains. For instance, riparian trees (trees that grow in floodplains) tend to be very tolerant of root disturbance and very quick-growing compared to non-riparian trees.

## 12.1.5 Effects of Human Activities

Because they border water bodies, floodplains have historically been popular sites to establish settlements. Human activities tend to concentrate in floodplains for a number of reasons: water is readily available; land is fertile and suitable for farming; transportation by water is easily accessible; and land is flatter and easier to develop. However, human activity in floodplains frequently interferes with the natural function of floodplains. It can affect the distribution and timing of drainage, thereby increasing flood problems. Human

development can create local flooding problems by altering or confining drainage channels. This increases flood potential in two ways: it reduces the stream’s capacity to contain flows, and it increases flow rates or velocities downstream during all stages of a flood event. Human activities can interface effectively with a floodplain as long as steps are taken to mitigate the activities’ adverse impacts on floodplain functions.

### 12.1.6 Community Rating System

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary program within the NFIP that encourages floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. Flood insurance premiums are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from community actions meeting the following three goals of the CRS:

- Reduce flood losses
- Facilitate accurate insurance rating
- Promote awareness of flood insurance

For participating communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted in increments of 5%. For example, a Class 1 community would receive a 45% premium discount, and a Class 9 community would receive a 5% discount. (Class 10 communities are those that do not participate in the CRS; they receive no discount.) The CRS classes for local communities are based on 18 creditable activities in the following categories:

- Public information
- Mapping and regulations
- Flood damage reduction
- Flood preparedness.

Figure 12-3 shows the nationwide number of CRS communities by class as of May 2014, when there were 1,211 communities receiving flood insurance premium discounts under the CRS program.

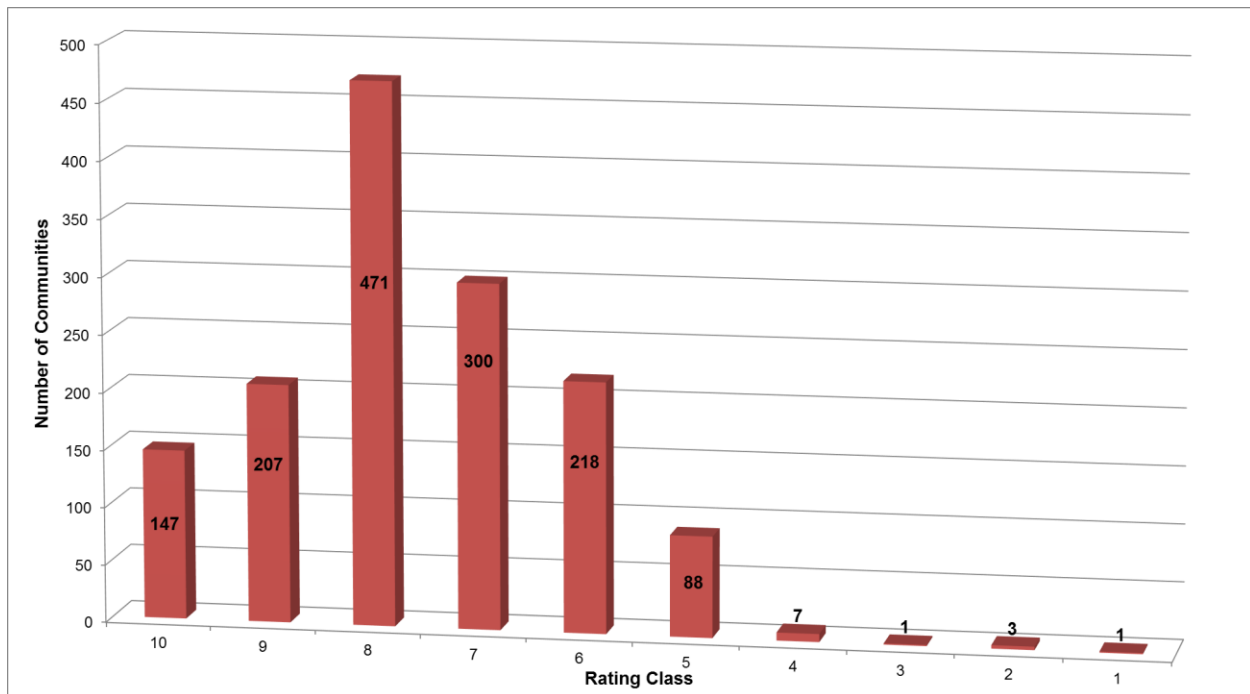


Figure 12-3. CRS Communities by Class Nationwide as of May 2014

CRS activities can help to save lives and reduce property damage. Communities participating in the CRS represent a significant portion of the nation's flood risk; over 66% of the NFIP's policy base is located in these communities. Communities receiving premium discounts through the CRS range from small to large and represent a broad mixture of flood risks.

Figure 12-4 shows the communities in the hazard mitigation plan update area participating in the CRS program and their CRS status classification. At this time, only the City of Wharton participates in the CRS program.

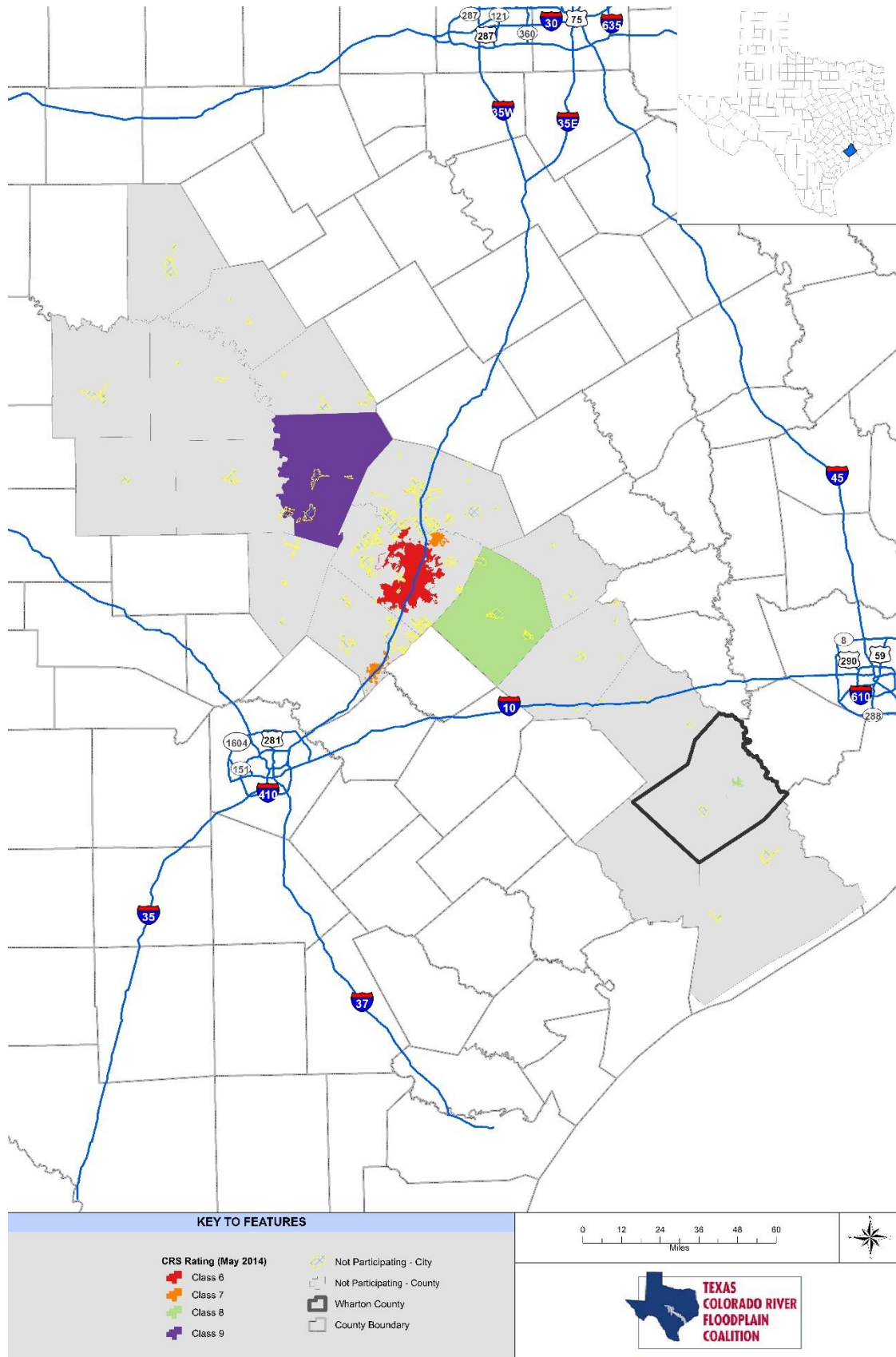


Figure 12-4. CRS Communities by Class as of May 2014

## 12.2 HAZARD PROFILE

Texas has the most flash flood deaths of any state in the country. Although Wharton County and participating communities does not fall in the “Flash Flood Alley” area of Texas, it is still susceptible flash flood events every year. The terrain is punctuated by a large portion of clay, silt, and mud of low permeability, which makes the region very dry and prone to flash flooding. Other factors contributing to flash floods in the area include its location between the Rocky Mountains and the moisture laden Gulf of Mexico. As weather systems stall and dissipate over Texas, and they drop intense rains over small areas. In the past, Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update have had significant seasonal floods along the Colorado and San Bernard Rivers; however, these floods have been greatly reduced by the construction of large reservoirs along the Colorado River. This has also helped to reduce the impacts of seasonal floods in the planning area.

Flooding in the county and participating cities is mostly caused by slow-moving thunderstorms, thunderstorms repeatedly moving over the same area, or heavy rains from hurricanes and tropical storms. Flash floods can occur within a few minutes or after hours of excessive rainfall. These rain events are most often microbursts, which produce a large amount of rainfall in a short amount of time. Flash floods, by their nature, occur suddenly but usually dissipate within hours. Despite their sudden nature, the NWS is usually able to issue advisories, watches, and warnings in advance of a flood.

The potential for flooding can change and increase through various land use changes and changes to land surface. A change in environment can create localized flooding problems inside and outside of natural floodplains by altering or confining watersheds or natural drainage channels. These changes are commonly created by human activities (e.g., development). These changes can also be created by other events such as wildfires. Wildfires create hydrophobic soils, a hardening or “glazing” of the earth’s surface that prevents rainfall from being absorbed into the ground, thereby increasing runoff, erosion, and downstream sedimentation of channels.

Potential flood impacts include loss of life, injuries, and property damage. Floods can also affect infrastructure (water, gas, sewer, and power utilities), transportation, jobs, tourism, the environment, and ultimately local and regional economies.

### 12.2.1 Past Events

The National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database includes flood events that occurred in Wharton County and participating communities between 1996 and 2015, as listed in Table 12-1 and shown on Figure 12-7, as well as other events from local resources and experts. Events listed as Wharton County and participating communities in the table below affected large portions of the HMP update area and can include City of Edna, Ganado, and the Wharton County unincorporated areas. Specific events described for each participating community is counted and described below. Large flood storms may have effected additional jurisdictions.

Location	Date	Estimated Damage Cost			
		Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Lane City	12/29/1996	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	04/04/1997	\$50,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	04/11/1997	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	04/11/1997	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	10/13/1997	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	09/07/1998	\$100,000	\$0	0	0



**TABLE 12-1.  
HISTORIC FLOOD EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES  
(1996-2015)**

Location	Date	Estimated Damage Cost			
		Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Wharton County	10/06/1998	\$2,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	10/17/1998	\$50,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	10/17/1998	\$0	\$0	0	0
Countywide	10/18/1998	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	10/18/1998	\$0	\$0	0	0
Countywide	11/12/1998	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	11/12/1998	\$0	\$0	0	0
Countywide	11/13/1998	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	11/14/1998	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	08/30/2001	\$75,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County West Portion	09/01/2001	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	07/13/2002	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	07/15/2002	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	09/05/2002	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	09/07/2002	\$95,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	10/28/2002	\$7,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/17/2003	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	06/23/2004	\$70,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	06/24/2004	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	11/21/2004	\$2,100,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	11/22/2004	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	09/12/2008	\$2,000,000	\$0	0	0
Central Texas Area	5/25/2015	*	*	*	24

Source: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov> and local resources

\*Ongoing

Table may list more events than are shown on related figures since some recorded events do not include specific geographic coordinates (GIS-enabled data) for precise graphical representation.

Notable incidents from the NDCD Storm Events Database (and confirmed by local data) in Wharton County and participating communities are described below:

- April 4, 1997 – Intense rainfall rates of 3 to 4 inches per hour caused street flooding throughout the county and led to many inundated homes in El Campo. In total, the associated property damage was \$50,000, but no injuries or fatalities were reported.
- April 11, 1997 – Heavy rains led to flooding throughout Wharton County, where numerous streets were reported to be flooded. In the City of Wharton, one house was flooded. No injuries or fatalities were associated with the storm, but the event resulted in \$15,000 in property damage.
- October 17, 1998 – Major flooding occurred across the northwest part of Wharton County, inundating homes along FM 102. Some Elm Grove subdivision homes in northern Wharton County were inundated with up to one foot of water. No injuries or property damage were associated with the event, but the storm did cause \$50,000 in property damage.
- August 30, 2001 – A series of upper level disturbances produced heavy and rain and some severe weather across the southern portions of southeast Texas. Rainfall rates of one inch per hour up to

---

6 hours at a time were recorded in multiple counties, including Wharton County. Heavy rainfall caused numerous road closures throughout the county and led to \$75,000 in property damage. No injuries or fatalities were associated with the storm.

- September 1, 2001 – Widespread flooding occurred throughout southeastern Texas, including the western portion of Wharton County. The sheriff’s office reported secondary roads flooded as a result of the storm. The event caused \$20,000 in property damage, but no injuries or fatalities were reported.
- July 14, 2002 – In the Town of Hungerford, intense rains caused several roads to be flooded and inundated two homes. No injuries or fatalities were reported, but property damage totaled \$25,000.
- September 7, 2002 – Flash flooding occurred in Wharton, leading to inundated homes within the city. The storm caused \$95,000 in property damages, but no injuries or fatalities were reported.
- November 17, 2003 – Severe weather occurred throughout southeastern Texas as a nearly stationary group of thunderstorms repeatedly developed in the area. Neighboring counties were significantly affected by tornadoes and thunderstorms, causing over 300 homes to be flooded. Property damage for the City of Wharton totaled \$15,000, as flooding occurred in and around the city limits. No injuries or fatalities were associated with the event.
- June 23, 2004 – Heavy rains led to flash flooding in Wharton and caused several rescues from inundated homes. The storm caused \$70,000 in property damage, but no injuries or fatalities were recorded.
- June 24, 2004 – Flash flooding in the City of Wharton led to several roads being inundated throughout the city. No injuries or fatalities were associated with the storm, but property damage totaled \$15,000.
- November 21, 2004 - Major widespread flooding occurred throughout the county, with evacuations in Louise and over 200 El Campo residents rescued by boat or high-water vehicles. Numerous roads and bridges were flooded and impassable, including two sections of Highway 59 between Wharton and El Campo and between El Campo and the Jackson County line. The event resulted in \$2.1 million of property damage, with 59 homes sustaining major damage and another 225 receiving minor damage. No injuries or fatalities were reported.
- May 23-25, 2015 – An extreme precipitation event occurred throughout the Central and South Texas regions over Memorial Day weekend. A large volume of precipitation fell within a relatively short period of time, resulting in damaging flood waters throughout the region. According to NWS, observed rainfalls in Comal, Guadalupe, Hays, Comal, Travis, and Kerr Counties exceeded 6 inches within a 48-hour period. Areas within Blanco, Comal, and Kendall Counties received at least 8 inches within 48 hours, and a Blanco County rain gauge managed by LCRA recorded 9.41 inches of rain over the same time period. Wharton County received an average of 3 to 4 inches of precipitation throughout the county, according to NWS. On May 26, the Colorado River reached a peak flow of approximately 50,000 cubic feet per second (Figure 12-5), and reached an elevation of approximately 40 feet, exceeding its flood stage by approximately 40 feet (Figure 12-6). No flood damages were reported. There were no injuries or fatalities in Wharton County.

Source: NWS

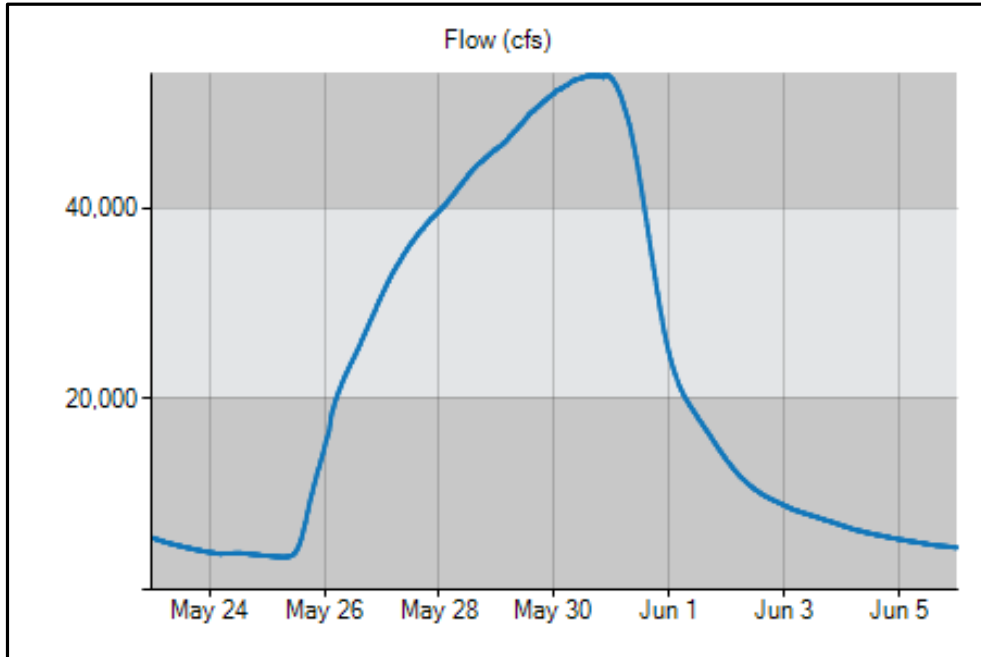


Figure 12-5. Colorado River Flow Near the City of Wharton During the May 2015 Flood Event

Source: NWS

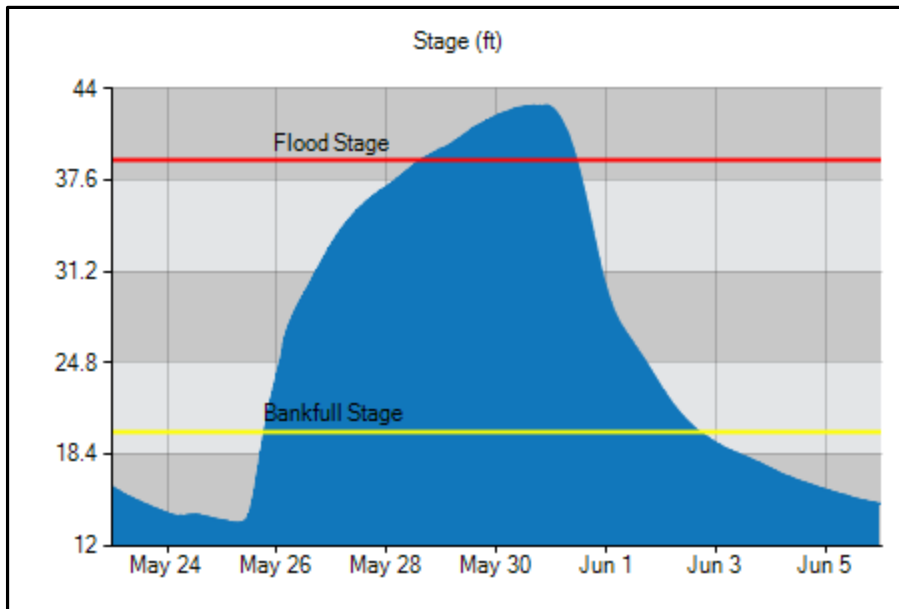


Figure 12-6. Colorado River Flood Stage Near the City of Wharton During the May 2015 Flood Event

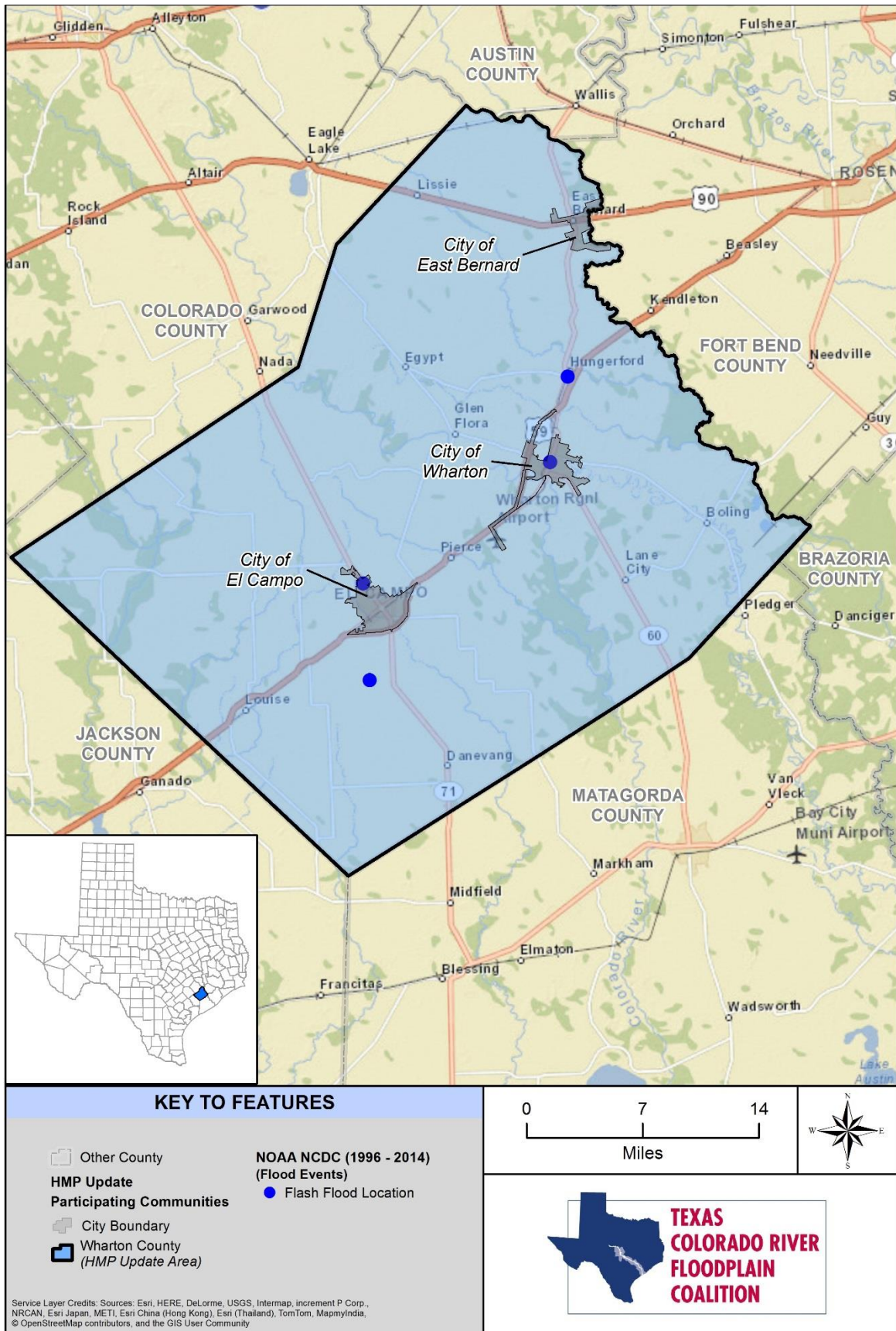


Figure 12-7. Flash Flood Events in Wharton County and Participating Communities

### 12.2.2 Location

The Lower Colorado Watershed runs centrally through the middle of Wharton County. Most of the eastern half of the county is covered by the San Bernard Watershed. The Navidad Watershed covers the north western section while the East Matagorda Bay Watershed covers the southwestern, and eastern sections of Wharton County. Due to its relatively flat topography, few substantial waterways contribute to the Colorado River or Tres Palacios River, and instead empty into Matagorda Bay or the Gulf of Mexico. The San Bernard River and other significant creeks, including Jones Creek, Caney Creek, East Mustang, and West Mustang serve as conduits for many bayous and sloughs throughout Wharton County.

Runoff is captured to fill several lakes and reservoirs in the county. Many small, private dams exist throughout the county and participating cities for water supply and flood mitigation functions.

In addition to the riverine flooding, the HMP update area also may experience urban flooding caused by urbanization which can increase the run-off potential of an area. Due to its relatively small urban development, urban flooding is limited. Coastal flooding is typically a result of storm surge, wind-driven waves and heavy rainfall produced by hurricanes, tropical storms, and other large coastal storms that migrate northward from the Gulf of Mexico.

The floodplain boundary extents for most of the creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes in Wharton County and the participating communities have been mapped by FEMA during its Map Modernization Program. Current FIRMs are available countywide and have an effective date of April 5, 2006. The resulting FIRMs provide an official depiction of flood hazard risks and risk premium zones for each community and for properties located within it. While the FEMA digital flood data is recognized as best available data for planning purposes, it does not always reflect the most accurate and up-to-date flood risk. Riverine flooding, stormwater flooding, and flood-related losses often do occur outside of delineated SFHAs.

Wharton County and the participating communities has 223,700 acres in the 100-year floodplain, and 260,080 acres in 500-year floodplain. Table 12-2 shows the distribution of the acreage across the participating jurisdictions in the planning area.

Jurisdiction	Area (acres)	
	100-Year	500-Year
City of East Bernard	662	1,090
City of El Campo	2,316	2,462
City of Wharton	2,888	4,131
Unincorporated Area	217,834	252,397
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>223,700</b>	<b>260,080</b>

Figure 12-8 shows the SFHAs in Wharton County. Figure 12-9 through Figure 12-11 show the SFHAs for each participating communities.

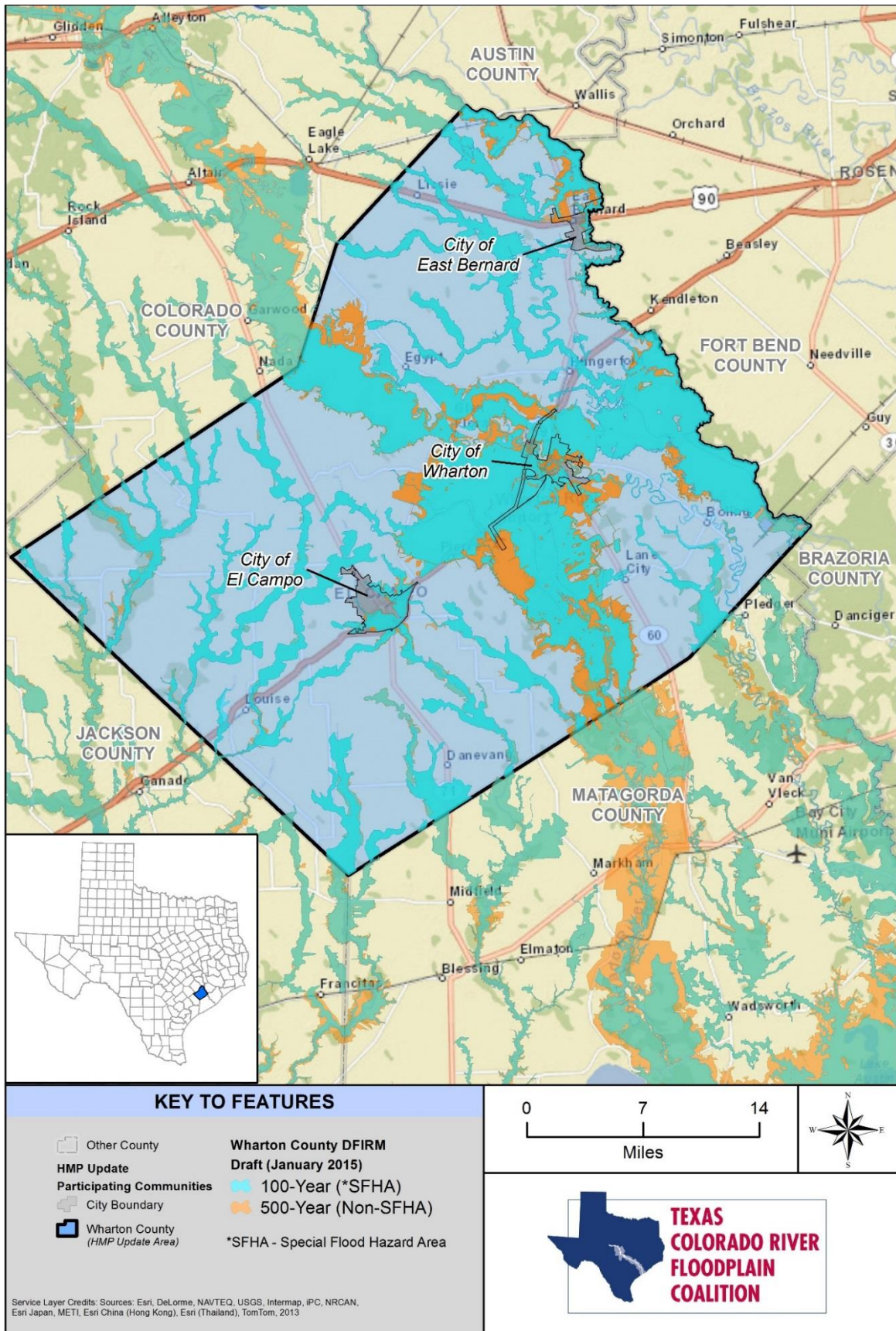


Figure 12-8. Special Flood Hazard Areas in Wharton County and Participating Communities

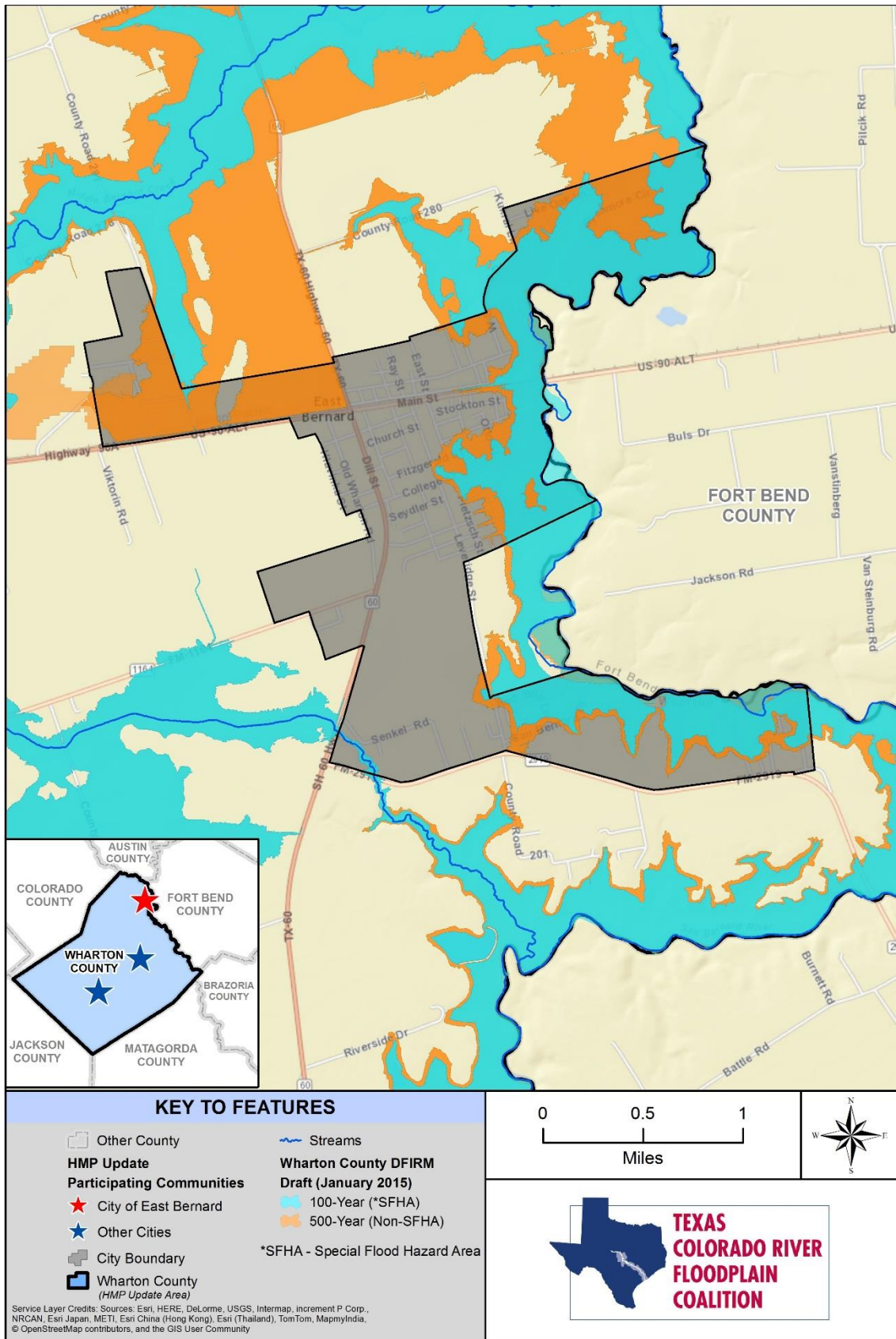


Figure 12-9. Special Flood Hazard Areas in the City of East Bernard

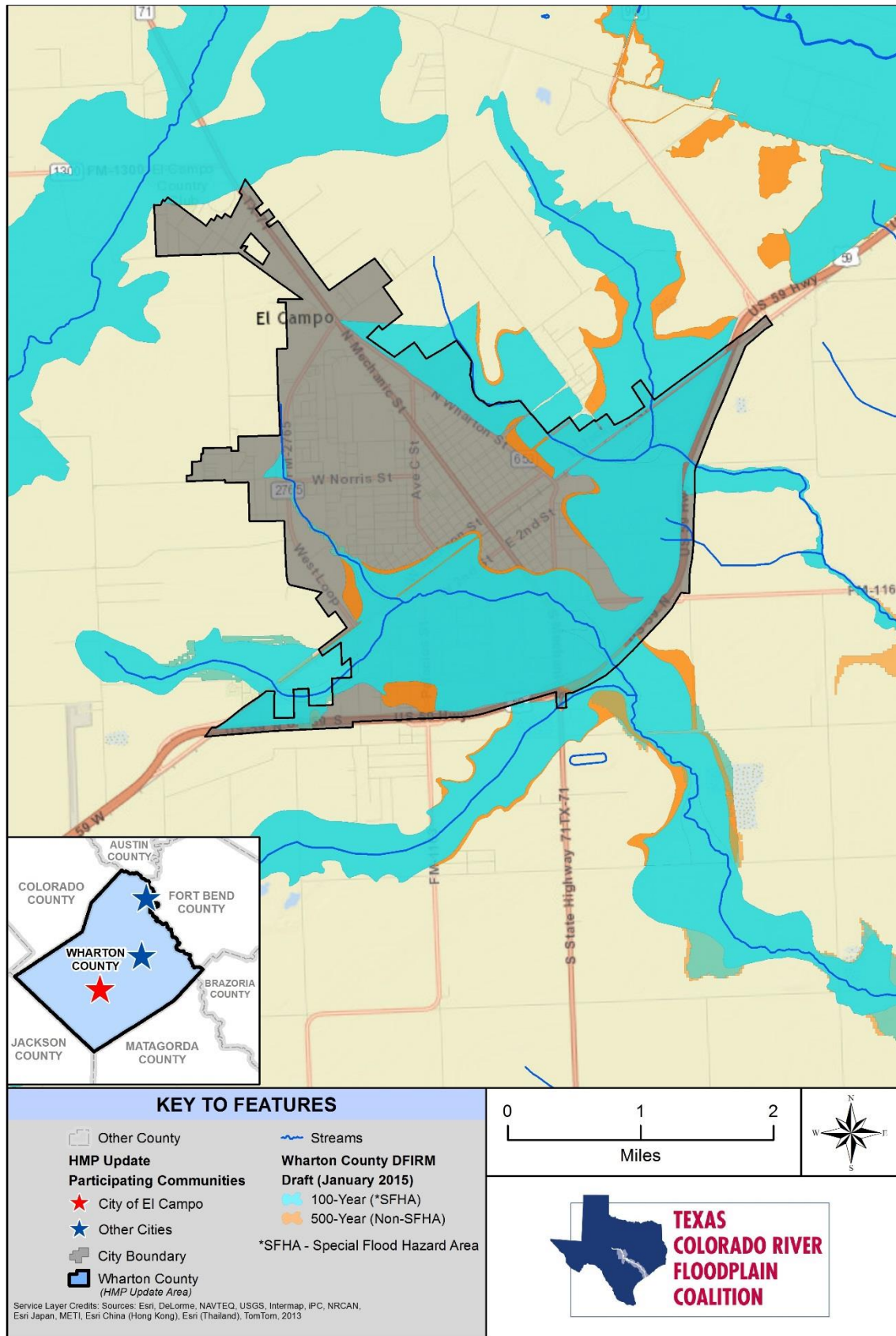


Figure 12-10. Special Flood Hazard Areas in the City of El Campo



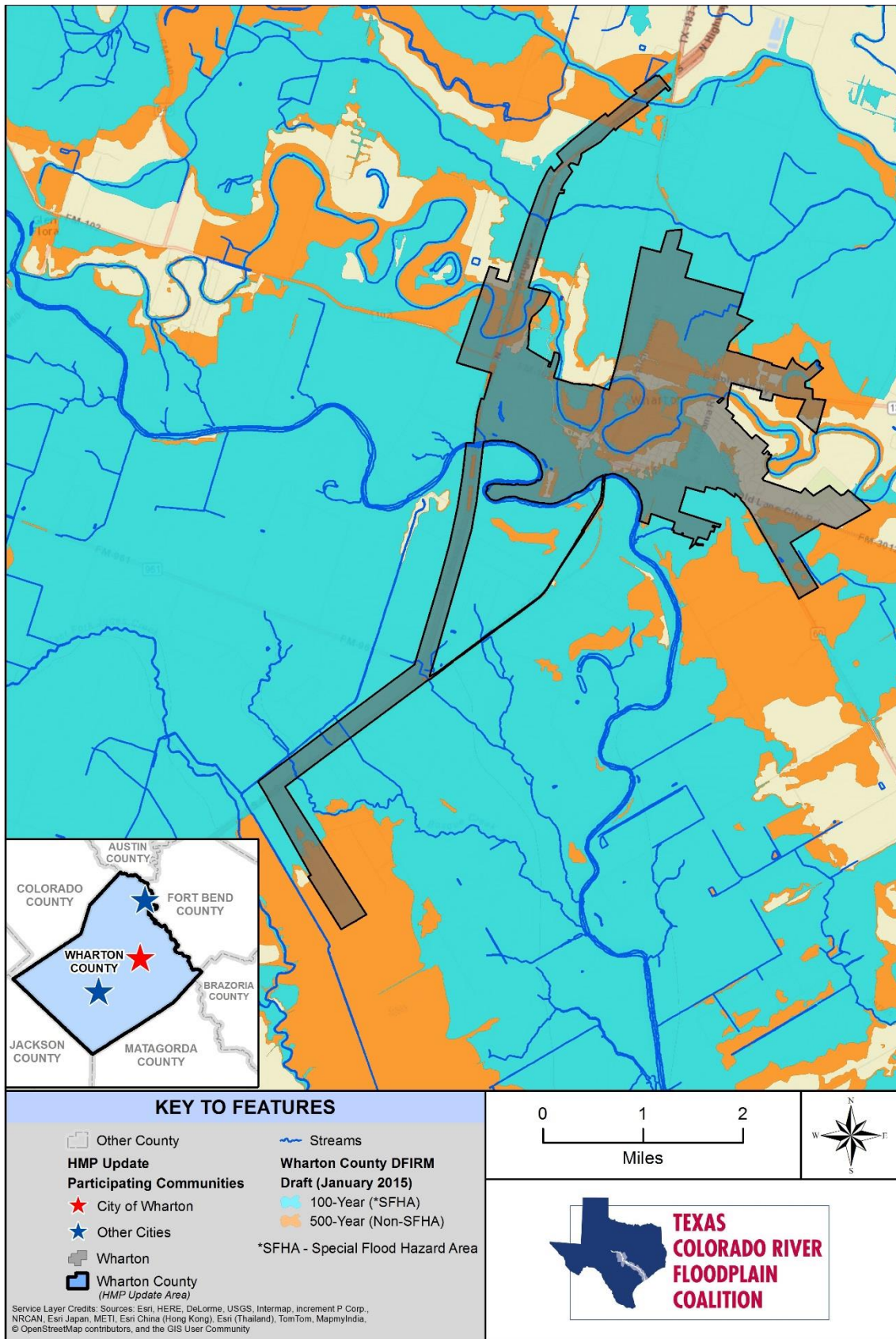


Figure 12-11. Special Flood Hazard Areas in the City of Wharton

### 12.2.3 Frequency

Seasonal flooding on the Colorado River and San Bernard River have increased over time due to increase rainfall events and weather patterns. Flash floods are still considered to be highly likely to occur with nearly a 45% chance of occurrence in any given year. This probability is based on the 29 events over 67 years reported in the National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database and other historical records (local knowledge and news sources). Based on a historical analysis, Wharton County unincorporated area can expect an event every 3-4 years year and has the same frequency and probability for future events. The City of El Camp, East Bernard, and Wharton can expect an event every 10 years. These communities also have the same frequency and probability for future events.

### 12.2.4 Severity

Based on the 100-Year HAZUS-MH probabilistic event scenario for Wharton County and participating communities, the magnitude/severity of flooding is severe. Approximately 28% of structures will be moderately (11 – 25%) damaged, and over 26,000 tons of debris will be generated requiring more than 1,000 truckloads (at 25 tons/truck) to remove the debris generated by the flood. The 100-Year HAZUS-MH flood scenario estimates more than 2,500 households will be displaced and will seek temporary lodging in public shelters. Overall significance is considered severe.

The intensity and magnitude of a flood event is also determined by the depth of flood waters. Table 12-3 describes the type of risk and potential magnitude of an event in relation to water depth. The water depths shown in Table 12-3 are estimated based on elevation data above mean sea level.

<b>SEVERITY</b>	<b>WATER DEPTH (feet)</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
BELOW FLOOD STAGE	0 to 5	Water begins to exceed the low sections of banks and the lowest sections of the floodplain.
ACTION STAGE	5 to 10	Flow is well into the floodplain. Minor low-land flooding reaches low areas of the floodplain. Livestock should be moved from low- lying areas.
FLOOD STAGE	10 to 15	Homes are threatened and properties downstream of river flows or in low-lying areas begin to flood.
MODERATE FLOOD STAGE	15 to 20	At this stage, the lowest homes downstream flood. Roads and bridges in the floodplain flood severely and are dangerous to motorists.
MAJOR FLOOD STAGE	20 and Above	Major flooding approaches homes in the floodplain. Primary and Secondary roads and bridges are severely flooded and very dangerous. Major flooding extents well into the floodplain, destroying property, equipment, and livestock.

The range of flood intensity that Wharton County and the participating communities experience is high, even for the 100-Year flood events. This ranges from 0 feet to 10 feet in most areas. Even though most of the depths place the participating communities at the ‘action stage’ as shown in Table 12-3, the Colorado and San Bernard River can experience flooding past the flood stage with over 40 feet as shown in Figure 12-6. Based on historical occurrences, the planning area could experience an average of 5-10 inches of water within a 24 hour period. Figure 12-12 to Figure 12-15 shows the flood depths for the area.

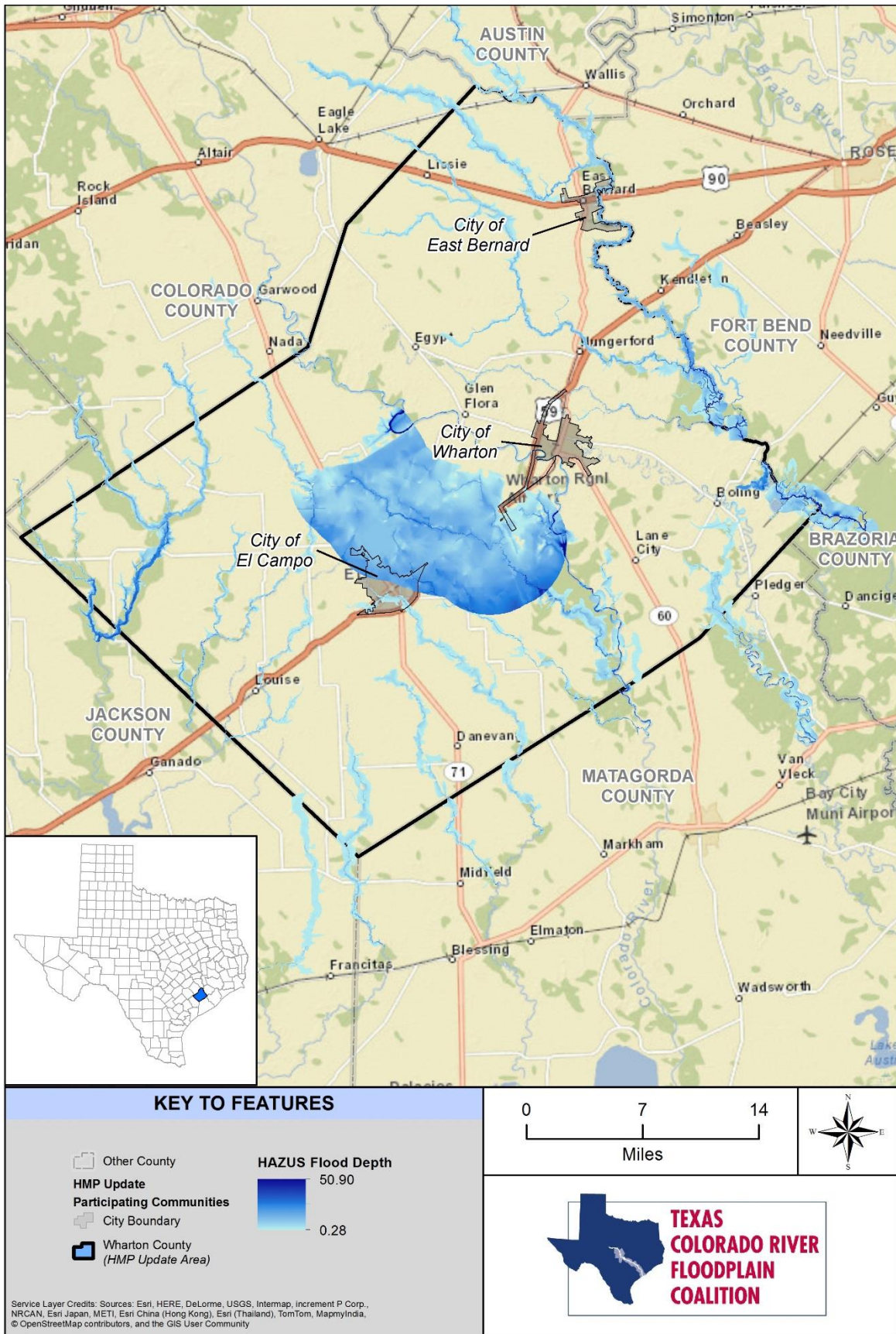


Figure 12-12. Flood Depths in Wharton County and Participating Communities

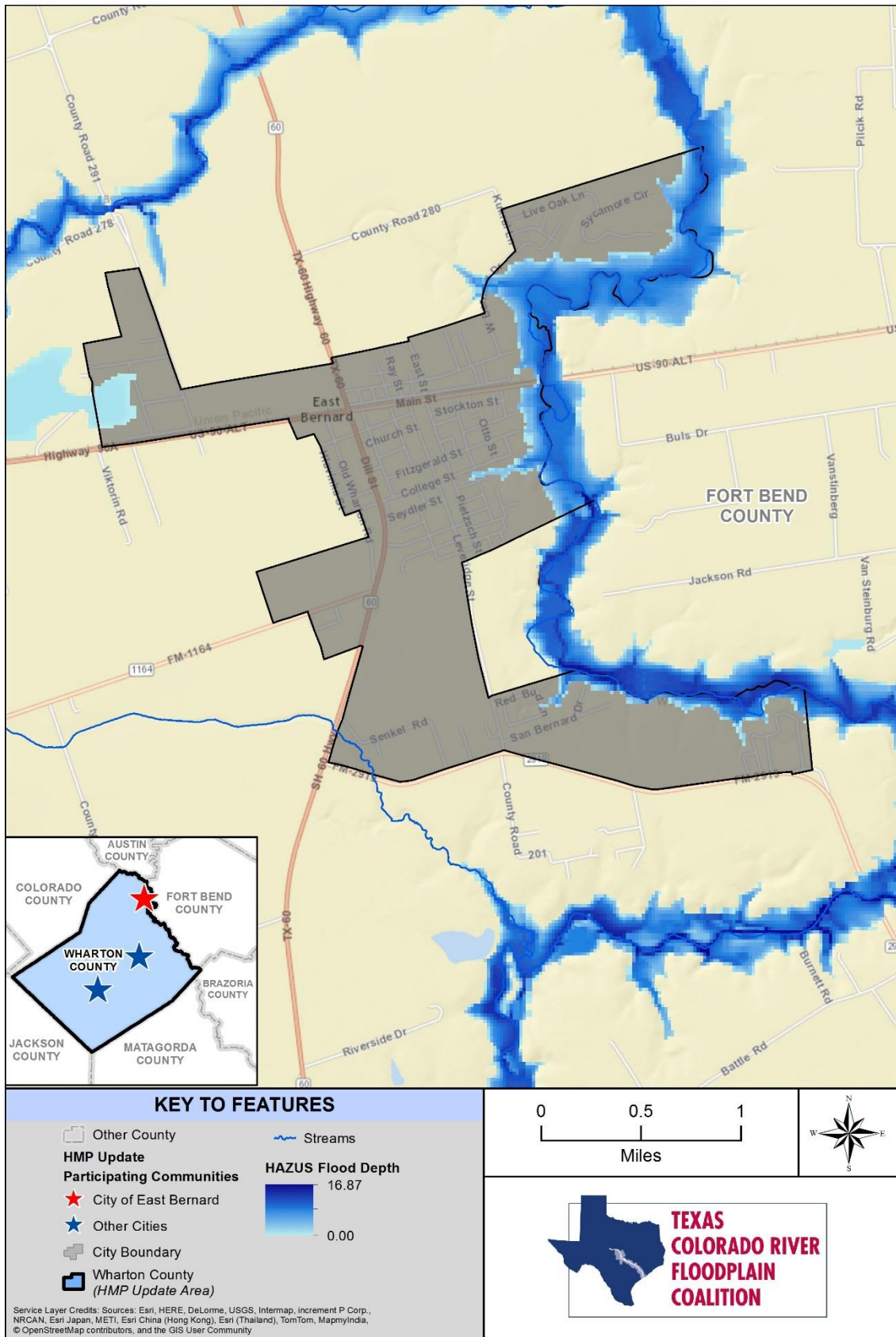


Figure 12-13. Flood Depths in the City of East Bernard

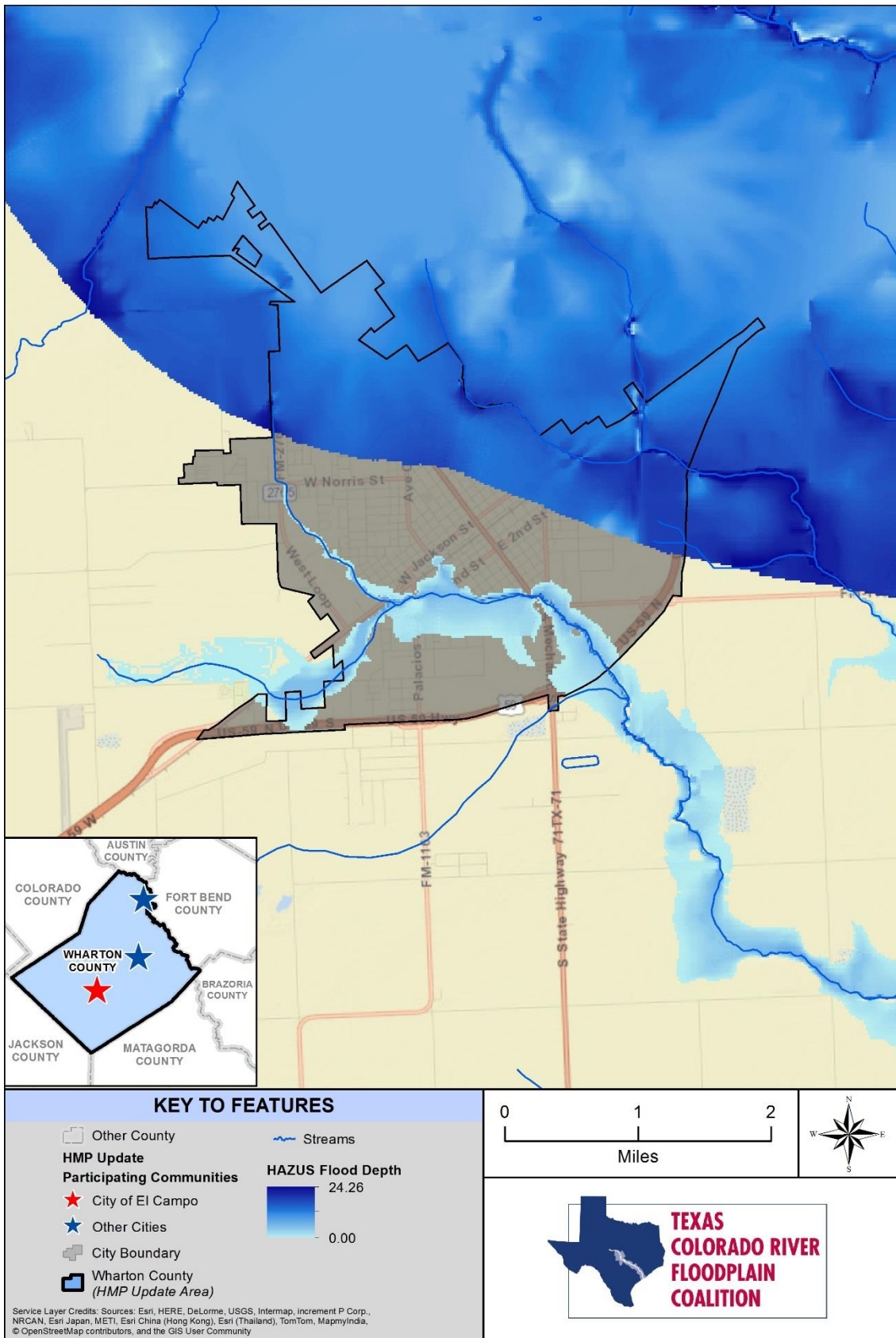


Figure 12-14. Flood Depths in the City of El Campo

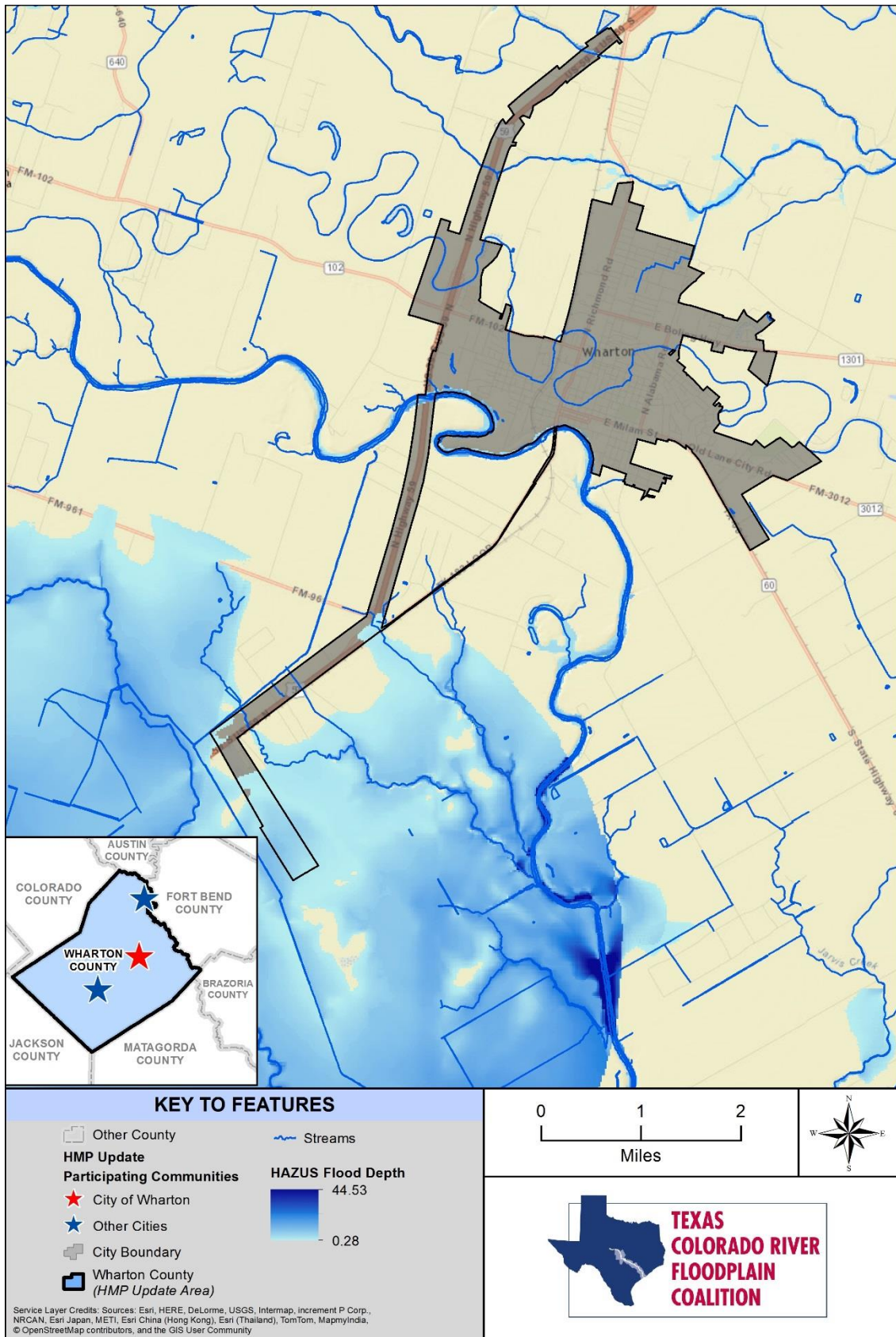


Figure 12-15. Flood Depths in the City of Wharton

## 12.2.5 Warning Time

Due to the sequential pattern of meteorological conditions needed to cause serious flooding, it is unusual for a flood to occur without warning. Warning times for floods can be between 24 and 48 hours. Flash flooding can be less predictable, but potential hazard areas can be warned in advanced of potential flash flooding danger.

## 12.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS

The most problematic secondary hazard for flooding is bank erosion, which in some cases can be more harmful than actual flooding. This is especially true in the upper courses of rivers with steep gradients, where floodwaters may pass quickly and without much damage, but scour the banks, edging properties closer to the floodplain or causing them to fall in. Flooding is also responsible for hazards such as landslides when high flows over-saturate soils on steep slopes, causing them to fail. Hazardous materials spills are also a secondary hazard of flooding if storage tanks rupture and spill into streams, rivers, or storm sewers.

## 12.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Use of historical hydrologic data has long been the standard of practice for designing and operating water supply and flood protection projects. For example, historical data are used for flood forecasting models. This method of forecasting assumes that the climate of the future will be similar to that of the period of historical record. However, the hydrologic record cannot be used to predict changes in frequency and severity of extreme climate events such as floods. Going forward, model calibration or statistical relation development must happen more frequently, new forecast-based tools must be developed, and a standard of practice that explicitly considers climate change must be adopted. Climate change is already impacting water resources, and resource managers have observed the following:

- Historical hydrologic patterns can no longer be solely relied upon to forecast the water future.
- Precipitation and runoff patterns are changing, increasing the uncertainty for water supply and quality, flood management, and ecosystem functions.
- Extreme climatic events will become more frequent, necessitating improvement in flood protection, drought preparedness, and emergency response.

High frequency flood events (e.g., 10-year floods) in particular will likely increase with a changing climate. Along with reductions in the amount of the snowpack and accelerated snowmelt, scientists project greater storm intensity, resulting in more direct runoff and flooding. Changes in watershed vegetation and soil moisture conditions will likewise change runoff and recharge patterns. As stream flows and velocities change, erosion patterns will also change, altering channel shapes and depths, possibly increasing sedimentation behind dams, and affecting habitat and water quality. With potential increases in the frequency and intensity of wildfires due to climate change, there is potential for more floods following fire, which increase sediment loads and water quality impacts.

As hydrology changes, what is currently considered a 100-year flood may strike more often, leaving many communities at greater risk. Planners will need to factor a new level of safety into the design, operation, and regulation of flood protection facilities such as dams, floodways, bypass channels, and levees, as well as the design of local sewers and storm drains.

## 12.5 EXPOSURE

The Level 2 HAZUS-MH protocol was used to assess the risk and vulnerability to flooding in the planning area. The model used U.S. Census data at the block level and calculated floodplain data, which has a level of accuracy acceptable for planning purposes. Where possible, the generated HAZUS-MH flood depth data was enhanced using revised FEMA flood depth grids for the area. The HAZUS 2.2 default inventory (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs) data was used.

## 12.5.1 Population

Population counts of those living in the floodplain in the planning area were generated by census block demographic data (2010 U.S. Census data) that intersect with the 100-year and 500-year floodplains identified on FIRMs. The methodology used to generate population estimates intersected census block demographic data with the identified floodplains and then aggregating the resulting data to the community boundaries. Using this approach, it was estimated that the exposed population for the planning area within the 100-year floodplain or SFHA is 13,428 (36.6% of the total county population). In the 500-year floodplain it is estimated that 17,933 people countywide live within the mapped non-SFHA areas (48.90% of the total county population).

## 12.5.2 Property

### *Present Land Use*

Table 12-4 and Table 12-5 show the present land uses in the 100-year and 500-year floodplains for the entire planning area.

### *Structures in the Floodplain*

Table 12-6 and Table 12-7 summarize the total area and number of structures in the floodplain by participating community. The updated HAZUS-MH model inventory data estimated that there are 5,030 structures within the 100-year floodplain and 6,797 structures within the 500-year floodplain. In the 100-year floodplain, 46% of these structures are in unincorporated areas and 99% are residential.

**TABLE 12-4.  
PRESENT LAND USE IN THE 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Present Use Classification	Area (acres)				Wharton County Total	% of Total
	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton	Unincorporated Area		
Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	0	3	12	722	<b>737</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Cultivated Crops	4	417	436	81,607	<b>82,464</b>	<b>36.9</b>
Deciduous Forest	79	32	189	18,577	<b>18,877</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Developed High Intensity	0	62	83	20	<b>165</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Developed, Low Intensity	18	345	512	726	<b>1,601</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Developed, Medium Intensity	3	178	229	129	<b>539</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Developed, Open Space	67	908	894	7,761	<b>9,630</b>	<b>4.3</b>
Evergreen Forest	2	0	5	1,498	<b>1,505</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Emergent Wetlands	35	0	16	6,120	<b>6,171</b>	<b>2.8</b>
Grassland/Herbaceous	10	97	84	1,890	<b>2,081</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Mixed Forest	30	0	6	3,593	<b>3,629</b>	<b>1.6</b>



<b>TABLE 12-4. PRESENT LAND USE IN THE 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN</b>						
Present Use Classification	Area (acres)					% of Total
	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton	Unincorporated Area	Wharton County Total	
Open Water	0	0	33	2,973	<b>3,006</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Pasture/Hay	105	177	252	55,513	<b>56,047</b>	<b>25.1</b>
Shrub/Scrub	23	94	109	12,461	<b>12,687</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Woody Wetlands	286	2	27	24,244	<b>24,559</b>	<b>11.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>2315</b>	<b>2887</b>	<b>217,834</b>	<b>223,698</b>	<b>100100</b>

<b>TABLE 12-5. PRESENT LAND USE IN THE 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN</b>						
Present Use Classification	Area (acres)					% of Total
	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton	Unincorporated Area	Wharton County Total	
Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	0	3	12	752	767	<b>0.3</b>
Cultivated Crops	98	418	539	99,092	100,147	<b>38.5</b>
Deciduous Forest	96	32	202	20,285	20,615	<b>7.9</b>
Developed High Intensity	6	70	155	31	262	<b>0.1</b>
Developed, Low Intensity	55	387	799	883	2,124	<b>0.8</b>
Developed, Medium Intensity	19	194	406	167	786	<b>0.3</b>
Developed, Open Space	144	971	1,310	9,490	11,915	<b>4.6</b>
Evergreen Forest	2	0	7	1,646	1,655	<b>0.6</b>
Emergent Wetlands	58	0	16	7,129	7,203	<b>2.8</b>
Grassland/Herbaceous	14	101	120	2,155	2,390	<b>0.9</b>
Mixed Forest	33	0	6	3,947	3,986	<b>1.5</b>
Open Water	0	0	35	3,075	3,110	<b>1.2</b>
Pasture/Hay	228	181	353	64,368	65,130	<b>25.0</b>
Shrub/Scrub	48	103	134	13,954	14,239	<b>5.5</b>

**TABLE 12-5.  
PRESENT LAND USE IN THE 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Present Use Classification	Area (acres)					% of Total
	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton	Unincorporated Area	Wharton County Total	
Woody Wetlands	287	2	39	25,422	25,750	9.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>2,462</b>	<b>4,133</b>	<b>252,396</b>	<b>260,080</b>	<b>100</b>

**TABLE 12-6.  
STRUCTURES AND POPULATION IN THE 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Jurisdiction	Structures and Population Affected			Total Structures Affected	Total Population Affected
	Residential	Commercial	Other*		
City of East Bernard	156	0	1	157	424
City of El Campo	1,005	10	13	1,028	3,013
City of Wharton	1,484	42	9	1,535	4,591
Unincorporated Area	2,292	12	7	2,311	5,400
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>4,937</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5,031</b>	<b>13,428</b>

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

**TABLE 12-7.  
STRUCTURES AND POPULATION IN THE 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Jurisdiction	Structures and Population Affected			Total Structures Affected	Total Population Affected
	Residential	Commercial	Other*		
City of East Bernard	265	2	2	269	697
City of El Campo	1,186	13	13	1,212	3,584
City of Wharton	2,418	75	18	2,511	7,003
Unincorporated Area	2,781	16	7	2,804	6,649
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>6,650</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6,796</b>	<b>17,933</b>

**TABLE 12-7.  
STRUCTURES AND POPULATION IN THE 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Jurisdiction	Structures and Population Affected			Total Structures Affected	Total Population Affected
	Residential	Commercial	Other*		
*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.					

**Exposed Value**

Table 12-8 and Table 12-9 summarize the estimated value of exposed buildings in the planning area in the 100-year and 500-year floodplains. The updated HAZUS-MH model inventory data estimated \$1.0 billion worth of building and contents exposure to the 100-year flood. This represents 31% of the total assessed value of the planning area. Approximately \$2.7 billion worth of building-and-contents exposure was estimated to be exposed to the 500-year flood. This represents 44% of the total assessed value of the planning area.

**TABLE 12-8.  
VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Jurisdiction	Value Exposed (\$)			Total Assessed Value (\$)	% of Total Assessed Value
	Structure	Contents	Total		
City of East Bernard	40,546,726	21,486,236	<b>62,032,962</b>	391,249,566	15.86
City of El Campo	297,095,174	218,030,715	<b>515,125,889</b>	2,159,712,947	23.85
City of Wharton	370,138,227	242,997,269	<b>613,135,496</b>	1,416,664,643	43.28
Unincorporated Area	469,481,051	263,669,742	<b>733,150,793</b>	2,255,940,086	32.50
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>1,177,261,178</b>	<b>746,183,962</b>	<b>1,923,445,139</b>	<b>6,223,568,242</b>	<b>30.91</b>

**TABLE 12-9.  
VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Jurisdiction	Value Exposed (\$)			Total Assessed Value (\$)	% of Total Assessed Value
	Structure	Contents	Total		
City of East Bernard	77,436,770	43,094,936	<b>120,531,706</b>	391,249,566	30.81
City of El Campo	337,600,260	241,928,249	<b>579,528,509</b>	2,159,712,947	26.83

**TABLE 12-9.  
VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

Jurisdiction	Value Exposed (\$)			Total Assessed Value (\$)	% of Total Assessed Value
	Structure	Contents	Total		
City of Wharton	666,220,876	448,484,133	<b>1,114,705,009</b>	1,416,664,643	78.69
Unincorporated Area	574,230,421	328,519,884	<b>902,750,305</b>	2,255,940,086	40.02
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>1,655,488,327.00</b>	<b>1,062,027,202.00</b>	<b>2,717,515,529.00</b>	<b>6,223,567,242.00</b>	<b>43.66</b>

### 12.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

Table 12-10 and Table 12-11 summarize the critical facilities and infrastructure in the 100-year and 500-year floodplains of the planning area. Details are provided in the following sections.

**TABLE 12-10.  
CRITICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton	Unincorporated Area	<b>Wharton County Total</b>
Medical and Health	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Government Functions	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Protective Functions	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Schools	0	1	2	0	<b>3</b>
Hazardous Materials	0	2	2	0	<b>4</b>
Bridges	0	15	11	220	<b>246</b>
Water Storage	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Wastewater	1	1	0	1	<b>3</b>
Power	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Communications	0	0	0	2	<b>2</b>
Transportation	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Dams	0	0	0	5	<b>5</b>

**TABLE 12-11.  
CRITICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton	Unincorporated Area	Wharton County Total
Medical and Health	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functions	0	0	1	0	1
Protective Functions	0	0	2	0	2
Schools	0	1	4	0	5
Hazardous Materials	2	2	2	0	6
Bridges	0	15	13	227	255
Water Storage	1	0	0	0	1
Wastewater	1	1	0	1	3
Power	0	0	0	0	0
Communications	0	0	0	2	2
Transportation	0	0	3	0	3
Dams	0	0	0	6	6

***Utilities and Infrastructure***

It is important to identify who may be at risk if infrastructure is damaged by flooding. Roads or railroads that are blocked or damaged can isolate residents and can prevent access throughout the county, including emergency service providers needing to get to vulnerable populations or to make repairs. Bridges washed out or blocked by floods or debris also can cause isolation. Water and sewer systems can be flooded or backed up, causing health problems. Underground utilities can be damaged. Levees can fail or be overtopped, inundating the land that they protect. The following sections describe specific types of critical infrastructure.

***Roads***

The major roads in the planning area that pass through the 100-year floodplain and thus are exposed to flooding are U.S. Highway 59 and State Highways 60 and 71. In severe flood events, these roads can be blocked or damaged, preventing access to some areas.

***Bridges***

Flooding events can significantly impact road bridges. These are important because often they provide the only ingress and egress to some neighborhoods. Countywide, there are more than 300 bridges that are in or cross over the 100-year floodplain.

***Water and Sewer Infrastructure***

Water and sewer systems can be affected by flooding. Floodwaters can back up drainage systems, causing localized flooding. Culverts can be blocked by debris from flood events, also causing localized urban

flooding. Floodwaters can get into drinking water supplies, causing contamination. Sewer systems can be backed up, causing wastewater to spill into homes, neighborhoods, rivers, and streams.

### 12.5.4 Environment

Flooding is a natural event, and floodplains provide many natural and beneficial functions. Nonetheless, with human development factored in, flooding can impact the environment in negative ways. Migrating fish can wash into roads or over levees into flooded fields, with no possibility of escape. Pollution from roads, such as oil, and hazardous materials can wash into rivers and streams. During floods, these can settle onto normally dry soils, polluting them for agricultural uses. Human development such as bridge abutments and levees, and logjams from timber harvesting can increase stream bank erosion, causing rivers and streams to migrate into non-natural courses.

## 12.6 VULNERABILITY

Many of the areas exposed to flooding may not experience serious flooding or flood damage. This section describes vulnerabilities in terms of population, property, infrastructure, and environment. The vulnerability analysis was performed at the census-block level. This methodology is likely to overestimate impacts from both the modeled 100-year and 500-year flood events as it is assumed that both structures and the population are evenly spread throughout census blocks.

### 12.6.1 Population

A geographic analysis of demographics (countywide) using the default HAZUS-MH model data (2010 U.S. Census demographics) identified populations vulnerable to the flood hazard as follows. These numbers are calculated assuming that the population/households are evenly distributed over the census blocks.

- Economically Disadvantaged Populations—It is estimated that approximately 1% of the population within the 100-year floodplain are economically disadvantaged. Economically disadvantaged is defined as having household incomes of \$20,000 or less.
- Population over 65 Years Old—It is estimated that approximately 2.1% of the population in the 100-year floodplain are over 65 years old.
- Population under 16 Years Old—It is estimated that approximately 3% of the population in the 100-year floodplain are under 16 years of age.

The following impacts on persons and households in Wharton County were estimated for the 100-year and 500-year flood events through the Level 2 HAZUS-MH analysis:

- During an 100-year flood event
  - Displaced population = 2,742
  - Persons requiring short-term shelter = 5,976
- During a 500-year flood event
  - Displaced population = 2,875
  - Persons requiring short-term shelter = 6,250

### 12.6.2 Property

HAZUS-MH calculates losses to structures from flooding by looking at depth of flooding and type of structure. Using historical flood insurance claim data, HAZUS-MH estimates the percentage of damage to structures and their contents by applying established damage functions to an inventory. For this analysis, the default inventory data provided with HAZUS-MH was used. The analysis is summarized in Table 12-12 for the 100-year flood event. It is estimated that there would be up to \$477 million of flood loss from a 100-year flood event in the planning area. This represents 24.8% of the total exposure to the 100-year flood and

7.7% of the exposed replacement value for the county. Losses are estimated to be \$561 million from a 500-year flood event, representing 20.7% of the exposure to the 500-year event and 9.0% of the total replacement value for the county (Table 12-13).

<b>TABLE 12-12. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR THE 100-YEAR FLOOD EVENT</b>					
Jurisdiction	Loss (\$)			Exposed Value (\$)	% of Total Exposed Value
	Structure	Contents	Total		
City of East Bernard	3,240,922	2,115,684	<b>5,356,606</b>	62,032,963	8.6
City of El Campo	176,530,905	191,632,152	<b>368,163,057</b>	515,125,889	71.5
City of Wharton	765,560	801,381	<b>1,566,941</b>	613,135,495	0.3
Unincorporated Area	59,394,603	42,459,091	<b>101,853,694</b>	733,150,792	13.9
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>239,931,990</b>	<b>237,008,308</b>	<b>476,940,298</b>	<b>1,923,445,139</b>	<b>24.8</b>

<b>TABLE 12-13. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR THE 500-YEAR FLOOD EVENT</b>					
Jurisdiction	Loss (\$)			Exposed Value (\$)	% of Total Exposed Value
	Structure	Contents	Total		
City of East Bernard	4,207,332	2,785,280	<b>6,992,612</b>	120,531,707	5.8
City of El Campo	201,499,965	213,783,073	<b>415,283,038</b>	579,528,509	71.7
City of Wharton	1,142,318	1,085,173	<b>2,227,491</b>	1,114,705,009	0.2
Unincorporated Area	79,326,013	57,377,525	<b>136,703,538</b>	902,750,305	15.4
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>286,175,628</b>	<b>275,031,051</b>	<b>561,206,679</b>	<b>2,717,515,530</b>	<b>20.7</b>

**National Flood Insurance Program**

Table 12-14 lists flood insurance statistics (from 1971 to May 2012) that help identify vulnerability in the planning area. Wharton County and the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton participate in the NFIP.

**TABLE 12-14.  
NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM STATISTICS**

Jurisdiction	Initial FIRM Effective Date	Claims	Value of Claims Paid
City of East Bernard	4/5/2006	0	\$0
City of El Campo	6/4/1980	171	\$2,895,379
City of Wharton	9/19/1982	140	\$2,128,198
Unincorporated Area	4/18/1983	189	\$3,734,128
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>04/05/2006 *</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>\$8,757,705.00</b>

Source: <http://bsa.nfipstat.fema.gov/>  
Notes:  
FIRM Flood Insurance Rate Map  
\* Effective date of initial countywide Flood Insurance Study

Properties constructed after a FIRM has been adopted are eligible for reduced flood insurance rates. Such structures are less vulnerable to flooding since they were constructed after regulations and codes were adopted to decrease vulnerability. Properties built before a FIRM is adopted are more vulnerable to flooding because they do not meet code or are located in hazardous areas. The first Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) for the City of El Campo was available in 1974, the City of Wharton in 1976, and Wharton County in 1974.

The following information from flood insurance statistics is relevant to reducing flood risk:

- The use of flood insurance in the planning area is less than the national average
- The average claim paid in Wharton County (1978 to June 2015) is approximately \$17,515, well below the national average

Wharton County's continued NFIP compliance is detailed in their floodplain management program and the Flood Prevention Order, (2001 as amended) that is enforced by the County's Permitting and Inspection Department. The Floodplain Administrator is a CFM. The County has instituted the following higher floodplain management standards: 1) Detention ponds are required in new subdivision, 2) Elevation certificate is required prior to pouring the lowest floor and when structure is complete, 3) Floodplain permits are cross referenced to 911 Addresses, and 4) One foot of freeboard is required above existing BFE. The County has several mitigation actions such as install a bridge and improvement culvert drainage; update and adopt new Flood Insurance Study and FIRM; adopt higher standard for riverine flood damage ordinances; and join the CRS program as listed in Table 19-2. These measures are intended to reduce the future flood risks in the SFHA and continue the County's good standing with NFIP.

The City of East Bernard's floodplain management program is detailed in the Standard for Floodplain Management and it is enforced by the City Secretary. The City has contracted with Wharton County to manage their floodplain management. The City requires one foot of freeboard above existing the BFE for construction in the 100-year floodplain. The City plans to initiate mitigation actions such as adopt a stormwater drainage plan and improve drainage throughout the City as listed in Table 19-2.

The City of El Campo's floodplain management program is part of the Chapter 10, Buildings and it is enforced by the Public Works Department. The Floodplain Administrator is a CFM. The City has instituted the following higher floodplain management standards: 1) In Zone X, new development must be 18 inches above the natural grade or 12 inches above the crown of the nearest street, 2) Elevation certificate is required before framing/pouring the lowest floor and after construction is complete, and prior to certificate of occupancy, and 3) No development is permitted in the floodway. The mitigation actions in Table 19-2 state



that the City intends to construct regional detention ponds and adopt new freeboard ordinance to reduce the flood risk to structures.

The City of Wharton's floodplain management program is the Standard for Floodplain Management and is enforced by the Code Enforcement Department. The Floodplain Administrator is a CFM. The City has instituted the following higher floodplain management standards: 1) In Zone X, new construction must be one foot above the curb or adjacent grade whichever is higher, 2) Detention is required to mitigate fill/development, 3) Drainage plan is required for new development that meets Wharton County Drainage Criteria, and 4) Elevation certificate is required prior to forming, when construction is complete, and prior to certificate of occupancy. The mitigation actions in Table 19-2 state that the City intends to implement a watershed ordinance for new development and acquire, reuse, and preserve open spaces in flood prone areas.

All the municipal planning partners are informed of the training schedule for their Floodplain Administrators through the TCRFC and the TWDB and attend continuing education seminars and classes on a yearly basis.

### **Repetitive Loss**

A repetitive loss property is defined by FEMA as an NFIP-insured property that has experienced any of the following since 1978, regardless of any changes in ownership:

- Four or more paid losses in excess of \$1,000
- Two paid losses in excess of \$1,000 within any rolling 10-year period
- Three or more paid losses that equal or exceed the current value of the insured property

Repetitive loss properties make up only 1% to 2% of flood insurance policies in force nationally, yet they account for 40% of the nation's flood insurance claim payments. In 1998, FEMA reported that the NFIP's 75,000 repetitive loss structures have already cost \$2.8 billion in flood insurance payments and that numerous other flood-prone structures remain in the floodplain at high risk. The government has instituted programs encouraging communities to identify and mitigate the causes of repetitive losses. A recent report on repetitive losses by the National Wildlife Federation found that 20% of these properties are outside any mapped 100-year floodplain. The key identifiers for repetitive loss properties are the existence of flood insurance policies and claims paid by the policies.

FEMA-sponsored programs, require participating communities to identify repetitive loss areas. A repetitive loss area is the portion of a floodplain holding structures that FEMA has identified as meeting the definition of repetitive loss. Identifying repetitive loss areas helps to identify structures that are at risk but are not on FEMA's list of repetitive loss structures because no flood insurance policy was in force at the time of loss. Figure 12-16 shows the location of repetitive loss properties in Wharton County and the participating communities.

The City of East Bernard has 1 residential repetitive loss property. The City of El Campo has 9 residential repetitive loss properties. The City of Wharton has 12 residential repetitive loss properties. Wharton County unincorporated area has 11 residential repetitive loss properties.

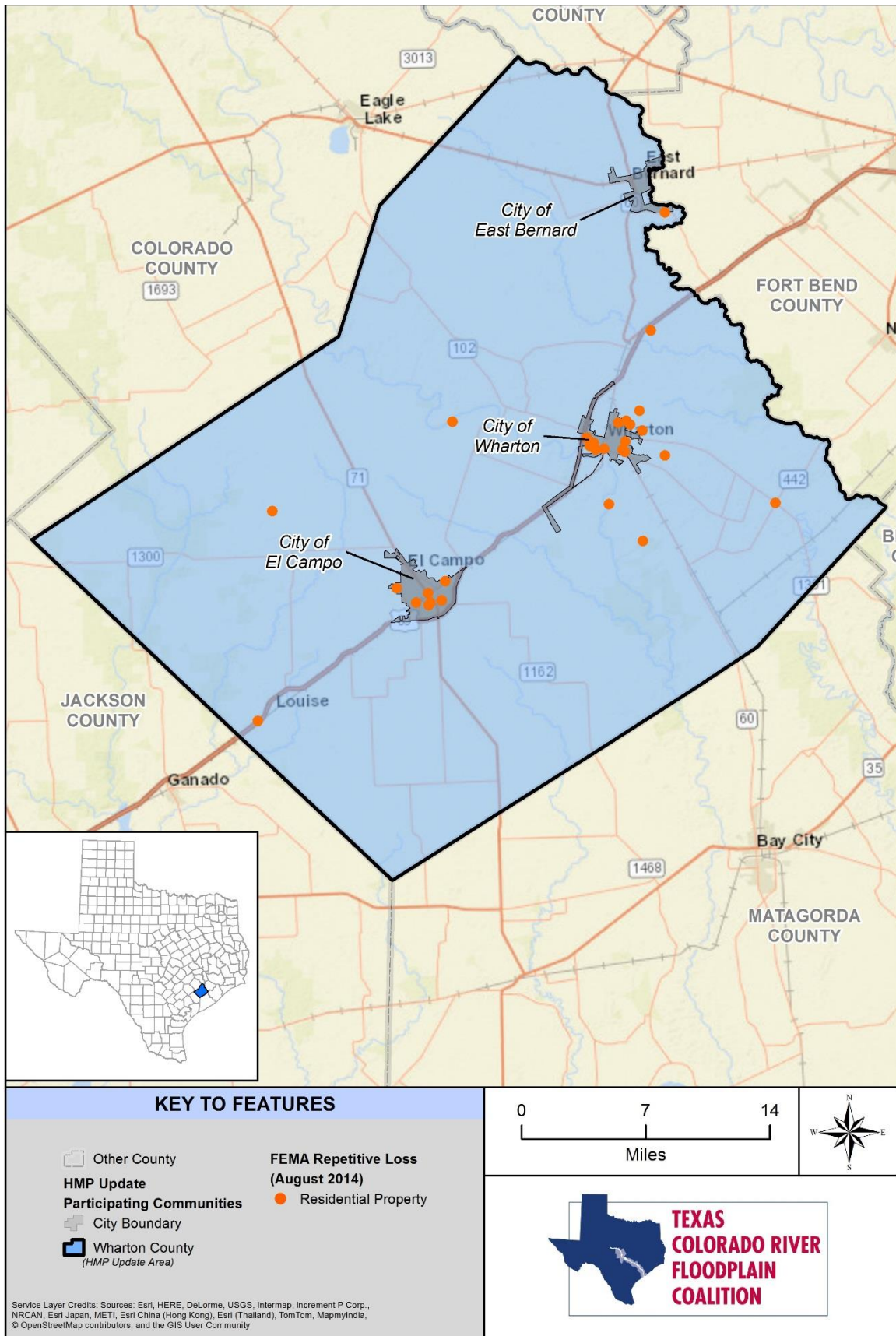


Figure 12-16. Repetitive Loss Properties in Wharton County

### **12.6.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

HAZUS-MH was used to estimate the flood loss potential to critical facilities exposed to the flood risk. Using depth/damage function curves to estimate the percent of damage to the building and contents of critical facilities, HAZUS-MH correlates these estimates into an estimate of functional down-time (the estimated time it will take to restore a facility to 100% of its functionality). This helps to gauge how long the planning area could have limited usage of facilities deemed critical to flood response and recovery.

The HAZUS critical facility analysis found that, on average, critical facilities would receive some damage to structure and contents during a 100-year or 500-year flood event. Countywide, both the 100-year and 500-year flood scenarios would result in moderate damage (10 to 50%) to one police station, one hospital, and two schools. Significant functionality would be lost during these events.

### **12.6.4 Environment**

The environment vulnerable to flood hazard is the same as the environment exposed to the hazard. Loss estimation platforms such as HAZUS-MH are not currently equipped to measure environmental impacts of flood hazards. The best gauge of vulnerability of the environment would be a review of damage from past flood events. Loss data that segregates damage to the environment was not available at the time of this plan. Capturing this data from future events could be beneficial in measuring the vulnerability of the environment for future updates.

## **12.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

Wharton County and its planning partners are equipped to handle future growth within flood hazard areas. All municipal planning partners have plans and policies that address frequently flooded areas. All partners have committed to linking their plans to this hazard mitigation plan update. This will create an opportunity for sound watershed-wide land use decisions and floodplain management practices as future growth impacts flood hazard areas.

Additionally, all municipal planning partners are participants in the NFIP and have adopted flood damage prevention ordinances in response to its requirements. All municipal planning partners have committed to maintaining their good standing under the NFIP through initiatives identified in Section 6.9, Chapter 7, Section 12.6.2, and Table 19-2.

Urban flooding issues that contribute to flash floods are also a concern in more highly developed areas in Wharton County. Jurisdictions in the county are required to develop a stormwater permitting program as mandated by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. This program will help jurisdictions apply effective mitigation measures for stormwater runoff.

The recent dam modernization program on LCRA's dams meet required design safety standards to resist the water load and pressure of the PMF is a step in the right direction. There is, however, always some residual risk and it is expected that the emergency action plans for the dams will be maintained so the appropriate responses can be exercised in case of a dam failure.

## **12.8 SCENARIO**

An intense, short-duration storm could move slowly across the planning area creating significant flash floods with little or no warning. Injuries or fatalities may result if residents are caught off guard by the flood event. Stormwater systems could be overwhelmed and significant flooding could impact a substantial portion of structures within the planning area. Transportation routes could be cut off due to floodwaters, isolating portions of the planning area. These impacts may last after the floodwater recedes as flash floods in the area have been known to cause extensive damage to roadway infrastructure. Areas that have recently experienced wildfires would contribute to the extent of flooding impacts.

## 12.9 ISSUES

The major issues for flooding are the following:

- Flash flooding that occurs with little or no warning will continue to impact the planning area.
- The duration and intensity of storms contributing to flooding issues may increase due to climate change.
- Flooding may be exacerbated by other hazards, such as wildfires.
- Damages resulting from flood may impact tourism, which may have significant impacts on the local economy.
- The promotion of flood insurance as a means of protecting private property owners from the economic impacts of frequent flood events should continue.

# CHAPTER 13. HURRICANES AND TROPICAL STORMS

HURRICANE AND TROPICAL STORM RANKING	
Wharton County	High
City of East Bernard	High
City of El Campo	High
City of Wharton	High

**DEFINITIONS**

**Hurricane**— A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained surface winds (using the U.S. 1-minute average) of 64 knot (kt) (74 miles per hour [mph]) or more.

**Tropical Storm** — A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained surface wind speed (using the U.S. 1-minute average) ranges from 34 kt (39 mph) to 63 kt (73 mph).

**Tropical Depression**— A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained surface wind speed (using the U.S. 1-minute average) ranges from 4 kt (39 mph) to 63 kt (73 mph).

## 13.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 13.1.1 Hurricanes and Tropical Storms

The following description of hurricanes and tropical storms was summarized from the *2013 State of Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

According to NOAA, tropical cyclones are classified into three main categories (per intensity): hurricanes, tropical storms, and tropical depressions.

The term hurricane is used for Northern Hemisphere tropical cyclones east of the International Dateline to the Greenwich Meridian. Hurricanes are any closed circulation developed around a low-pressure center in which the winds rotate counter-clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere (or clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere) and whose diameter averages 10 to 30 miles across. A tropical cyclone refers to any such circulation that develops over tropical waters. The key energy source for a tropical cyclone is the release of latent heat from the condensation of warm water. Their formation requires a low-pressure disturbance, warm sea surface temperature, rotational force from the spinning of the earth, and the absence of wind shear in the lowest 50,000 feet of the atmosphere.

Hurricanes are areas of disturbed weather in the tropics with closed isobars and strong and very pronounced rotary circulation. An area of clear weather called an “eye” is present in the center of the circulation. To qualify as a hurricane, the wind speed is 74 miles per hour (mph) or more. Hurricanes are classified into categories based on wind speed and the potential damage they cause. Thunderstorm rain resulting in urban flooding, battering wave action, intense sea level rise, localized coastal erosion, and significant winds are associated with hurricanes.

A tropical storm is a tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface wind speeds range from 39 to 73 mph. At this time the tropical cyclone is assigned a name. During this time, the storm itself becomes more organized and begins to become more circular in shape, resembling a hurricane. Figure 13-1 illustrates historical hurricane paths affecting the entire study area.

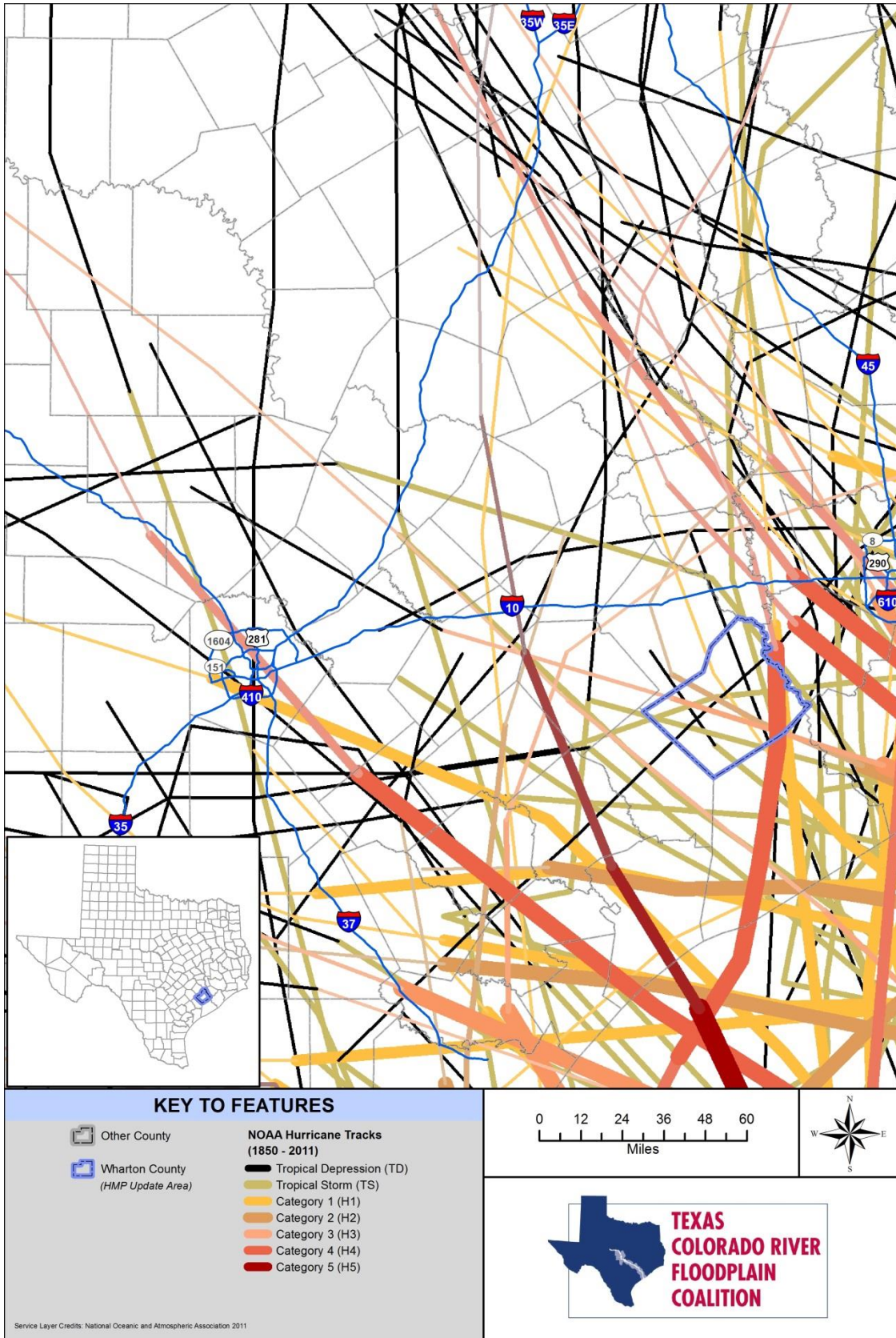


Figure 13-1. Historical Hurricane Paths Affecting Wharton County

### 13.1.2 Hurricane and Tropical Storm Classifications

Hurricanes are classified according to the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale from a Category 1 to Category 5 by sustained wind intensity. Table 13-1 lists a description of each category.

<b>TABLE 13-1. SAFFIR-SIMPSON HURRICANE WIND SCALE</b>		
Category	Sustained Winds (miles per hour)	Types of Damage Due to Hurricane Winds
1	74-95	Very dangerous winds will produce some damage: Well-constructed frame homes could have damage to roof, shingles, vinyl siding, and gutters. Large branches of trees will snap and shallowly rooted trees may be toppled. Extensive damage to power lines and poles likely will result in power outages that could last a few to several days.
2	96-110	Extremely dangerous winds will cause extensive damage: Well-constructed frame homes could sustain major roof and siding damage. Many shallowly rooted trees will be snapped or uprooted and block numerous roads. Near-total power loss is expected with outages that could last from several days to weeks.
3 (Major)	111-129	Devastating damage will occur: Well-built framed homes may incur major damage or removal of roof decking and gable ends. Many trees will be snapped or uprooted, blocking numerous roads. Electricity and water will be unavailable for several days to weeks after the storm passes.
4 (Major)	130-156	Catastrophic damage will occur: Well-built framed homes can sustain severe damage with loss of most of the roof structure and/or some exterior walls. Most trees will be snapped or uprooted and power poles downed. Fallen trees and power poles will isolate residential areas. Power outages will last weeks to possibly months. Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months.
5 (Major)	157 or higher	Catastrophic damage will occur: A high percentage of framed homes will be destroyed, with total roof failure and wall collapse. Fallen trees and power poles will isolate residential areas. Power outages will last for weeks to possibly months. Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months.
Other non-hurricane classifications are tropical storms (39-73 miles per hour) and tropical depressions (0-38 miles per hour)		
Source: <a href="http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php">http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php</a>		

## 13.2 HAZARD PROFILE

While hurricanes pose the greatest threat to life and property, tropical storms and depressions also can be devastating. Floods from heavy rains and severe weather, such as tornadoes, can cause extensive damage and loss of life. For example, Tropical Storm Allison produced over 40 inches of rain in the Houston area in 2001, causing approximately \$5 billion in damage and multiple fatalities.

### 13.2.1 Past Events

Due to Wharton County and participating communities' interior location (approximately 60 miles inland), it is not exposed directly to hurricanes. The hurricanes usually fade and downgrade to tropical storms or tropical depressions as they move away from the coast. According to NOAA, Wharton County participating communities have been impacted by more than 13 Atlantic Hurricanes between 1851 and 2011. A record count of the seven different hurricane categories within this time period shows four measured Category 1 hurricane conditions, one Category 2 hurricane condition, one Category 4 hurricane condition, five tropical

depression conditions, and 8 tropical storm conditions. Notable hurricane, tropical storm, and depression landfalls documented by NOAA between 1851 and 2015 for Wharton County are described below:

- September 19, 1854 (Unnamed Category 1 Hurricane) – Maximum wind speeds were approximately 80 mph.
- June 24, 1880 (Unnamed Tropical Storm) – Maximum wind speeds were approximately 46 mph.
- October 17, 1938 (Unnamed Tropical Storm) – Maximum wind speeds were approximately 40 mph.
- September 19, 1963 (Hurricane Cindy) – Maximum wind speeds were approximately 29 mph. Hurricane Cindy impacted Wharton County as a tropical depression.
- September 6, 1973 (Tropical Storm Delia) – Maximum wind speeds were approximately 46 mph.
- September 6, 1980 (Tropical Storm Danielle) – Maximum wind speeds were approximately 46 mph.
- June 16 to 17, 2015 (Tropical Storm Bill) – Tropical Storm Bill made landfall on Matagorda Island, Matagorda County, Texas at 11:45 am. Its maximum sustained wind speed at landfall was 60 mph. Tropical Storm Bill moved inland and was downgraded to a tropical depression at 1:00 am on June 17. After spending three days over land as a tropical depression, Bill finally transitioned into a post-tropical cyclone on the afternoon of June 20 over eastern Kentucky. Although Bill brought coastal flooding and gusty winds to the Texas Coast at landfall, its primary impact was rainfall flooding. Peak rainfall totals from Bill were: 13.28 inches near El Campo, Texas; 12.53 inches near Healdton, Oklahoma; and 11.77 inches near Ganado, Texas. A Flash Flood Watch was issued for Wharton County. Approximately 11.59 inches of rain was recorded in areas west of El Campo. Approximately 10 to 15 inches of rain fell in 24 hours in several areas of the county. Several flooding problems were reported.

### **13.2.2 Location**

A recorded event can occur anywhere in the HMP update area, moving inland from the Gulf of Mexico. Figure 13-2 illustrates historical hurricane paths effecting Wharton County and participating communities. Most of these hurricane events become tropical depressions or tropical storms by the time they reach the participating communities. Some however make landfall as major hurricanes.



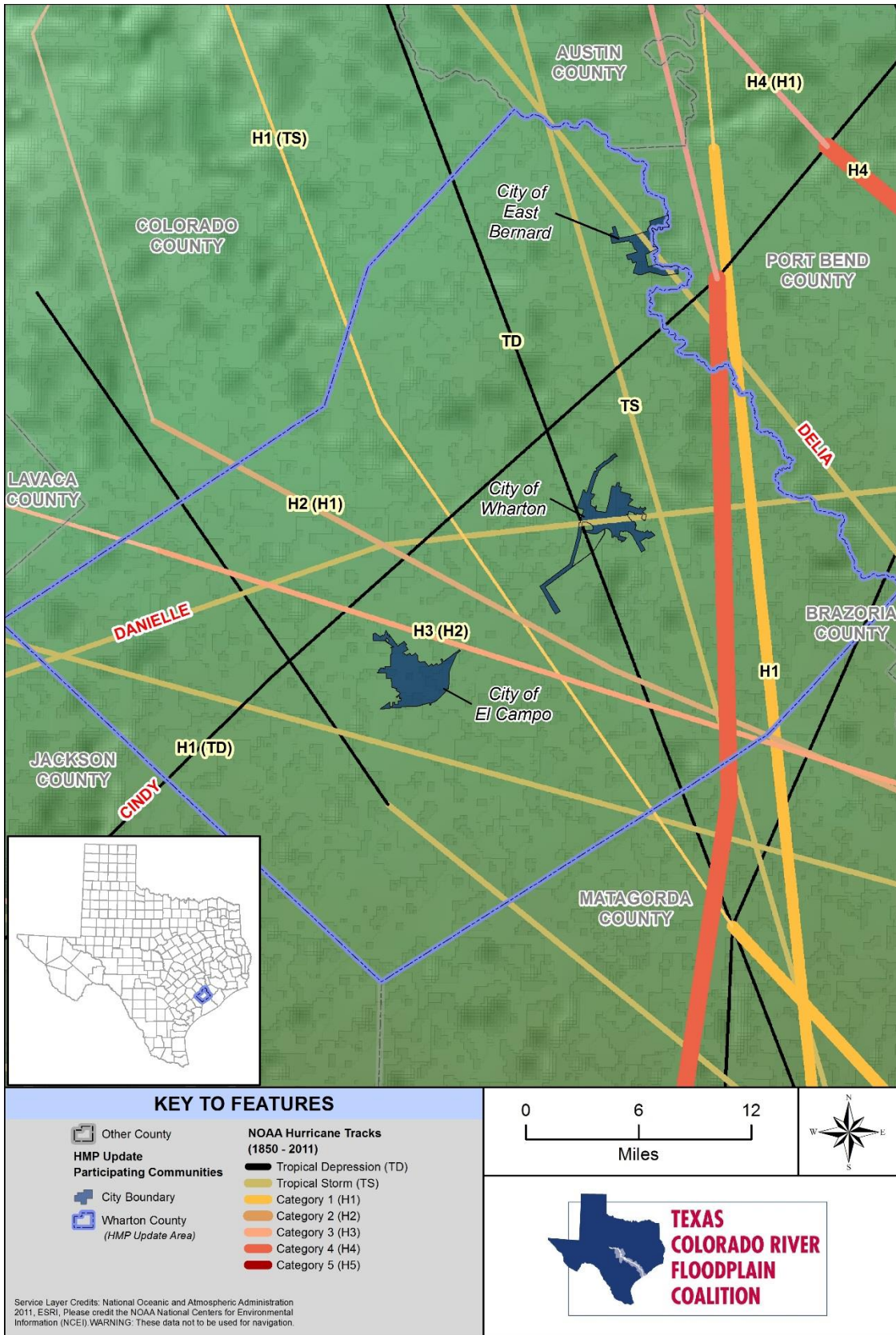


Figure 13-2. Historical Tropical Storms and Hurricanes Affecting Wharton County

### 13.2.3 Frequency

Tropical storms are an annual event occurring from May through November in either the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean. The peak of the Atlantic hurricane season is in early- to mid-September. On average, approximately six storms reach hurricane intensity each year. Hurricanes appear to be less frequent during La Niña periods and more prevalent during strong El Niño periods. El Niño, and La Niña, its counterpart, refer to climate conditions in the Pacific Ocean that influence weather patterns in Texas. El Niño is associated with warmer sea surface temperatures and high air pressure systems, while La Niña is associated with cooler ocean temperatures and low air pressure systems. These changes in water temperature and air pressure systems occur in somewhat regular intervals, with El Niño periods having longer durations. Figure 13-3 illustrates the probability of a named tropical storm event throughout the U.S. Between 1851 and 2015, Wharton County and participating communities experienced 20 tropical events. This relates to a frequency occurrence of approximately 0.12 events per year (an unlikely event; event possible in the next 10 years).

#### Future Probability

Wharton County and participating experienced the effects of 20 tropical events. An event is unlikely (~0.12 events per year) for Wharton County and participating communities.

Source: <http://www.prh.noaa.gov/cphc/pages/FAQ/Climatology.php>

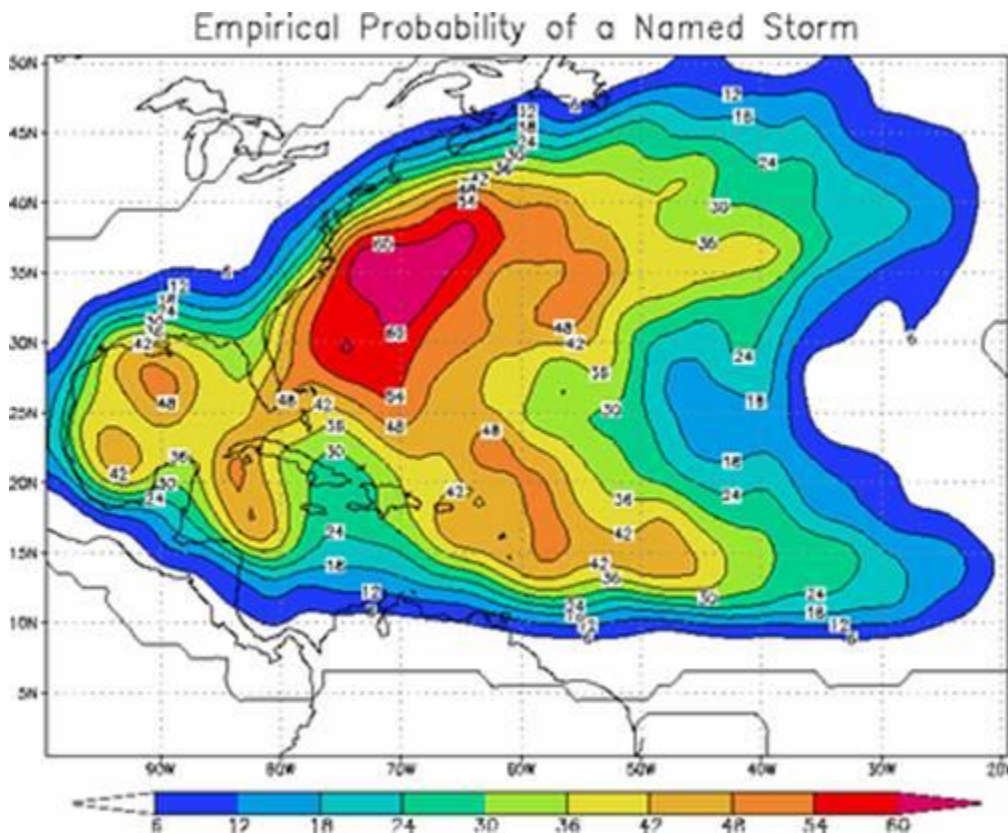


Figure 13-3. Probability of Named Tropical Storm Event

### 13.2.4 Severity

Historic events indicate that a hurricane will affect Wharton County and participating communities as a lower category hurricane, thunderstorm, tropical depression, or related weather event (high winds, hail). These hazards are discussed in more detail in Chapter 14.

### **13.2.5 Warning Time**

Meteorologists can often predict the likelihood and path of a hurricane or tropical storm. Meteorologists can give several days of warning before a storm. However, meteorologists cannot predict the exact time of onset or severity of the storm. At times, warning for the onset of severe weather may be limited. People generally rely on weather forecasts from the City of Wharton.

### **13.3 SECONDARY EVENTS**

Secondary events associated with a hurricane reaching Wharton County and participating communities are similar to that of a tropical storm, depression, or related weather event (such as wind, hail, or lightning). By the time a hurricane reaches Wharton County and participating communities it will be more closely classified as a secondary weather thunderstorm event (such as wind, hail, or lightning). These are the secondary events of a hurricane or tropical event. Even after the high winds subside, floods brought on by the heavy rainfalls can be dangerous. As a hurricane or tropical storm moves inland and begins to break up, the storm remnants can drop 6 to 12 or more inches of rain, resulting in extensive damage and loss of life. The most significant secondary hazards associated with severe local storms are floods, falling and downed trees, and downed power lines. Landslides occur when the soil on slopes becomes oversaturated and fails. Fires can occur as a result of lightning strikes. High winds from the storm can turn debris into flying projectiles. Debris carried by high winds can also result in injury or damage to property. The lack of proper management of trees may exacerbate damage from high winds. The damage to the infrastructure and land of Wharton County and participating communities may impact tourism; for example, damage may impact the Polka Festival hosted by the City of El Campo each year.

### **13.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

It's unclear whether climate change will increase or decrease the frequency of hurricanes and tropical storms, but warmer ocean surface temperatures and higher sea levels are expected to intensify their impacts. Hurricanes are subject to various climate change-related influences. Warmer sea surface temperatures could intensify tropical storms wind speeds, potentially delivering more damage if they make landfall. Based on sophisticated computer modeling, scientists expect a 2 to 11% increase in average maximum wind speed, with increased frequency of intense storms. Rainfall rates during these storms are also projected to increase by approximately 20%.

In addition, sea level rise is likely to make future coastal storms, including hurricanes, more damaging. Globally averaged, sea level is expected to rise by 1 to 4 feet during the next century, which will amplify coastal storm surge. For example, sea level rise intensified the impact of Hurricane Sandy, which caused an estimated \$65 billion in damages in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut in 2012. Much of this damage was related to coastal flooding (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions no date).

### **13.5 EXPOSURE**

Property, population, and the natural environment are all exposed to hurricanes and tropical storms, however by the time such an event reaches Wharton County it will be more closely classified as a tropical storm, depression, or related event (such as hail, high winds, or lightning). The entire population of the planning area would be affected by the tropical storm or tropical depression to some degree. Business interruption could keep people from working, road closures could isolate populations, and loss of functions of utilities could impact populations that suffered no direct damage from an event. Table 13-2 lists the exposed structures and population to hurricanes, tropical storms, and tropical depressions per participating community.

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	830	10	9	849	2,272
City of El Campo	3,989	83	39	4,111	11,602
City of Wharton	3,021	92	23	3,136	8,832
Unincorporated Area	6,585	29	31	6,645	15,949
<b>Total</b>	14,425	214	102	14,741	38,655

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

### 13.6 VULNERABILITY

The Level 1 HAZUS-MH protocol was used to assess the vulnerability of the planning area to hurricanes and tropical storms. The model used U.S. Census data at the tract level and modeled storms initiated in the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and eastern and central Pacific Ocean. The HAZUS-MH default data (updated with 2010 Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs) were used.

HAZUS-MH calculates losses to structures from hurricanes by looking at wind speeds, winds tracks, and amount of precipitation. Using historical storm data, HAZUS-MH estimates probabilistic storm scenarios. The historic storm database contains precomputed wind fields and storm track for Category 3, 4, and 5 land falling hurricanes from 1900 to 2010. For this analysis, a probabilistic HAZUS-MH hurricane scenario was selected. Table 13-4 lists annualized loss estimates for the 100-year probabilistic event scenario. Peak gust wind speeds for the 100-year probabilistic scenario are between 97 mph to 115 mph (Figure 13-4). Approximately 13% of the buildings (mostly residential) are expected to sustain moderate damages for this scenario. The annualized economic loss estimated for this probabilistic hurricane scenario is approximately \$285 million, which represents approximately 4.6% of the total replacement value of the building value for each participating community.

Table 13-3 lists the vulnerable population per participating community. Table 13-4. list the impact in terms of dollar losses.

Jurisdiction	Youth Population (< 16)	% of Total Population	Elderly Population (> 65)	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	638	28.08	342	15.05	129	5.68
City of El Campo	3,400	29.31	1,646	14.19	993	8.56

City of Wharton	2,319	26.26	1,288	14.58	1,252	14.18
Unincorporated Area	3,965	24.86	2,390	14.99	1,304	8.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,322</b>	<b>26.70</b>	<b>5,666</b>	<b>14.66</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>9.51</b>

**TABLE 13-4.  
LOSS ESTIMATES FOR HURRICANE EVENT**

	Annualized Loss (\$)			Exposed Value (\$)	% of Total Exposed Value
	Structure	Contents	Total		
City of East Bernard	10,992	3,191	<b>14,183</b>	391,249,566	<0.01
City of El Campo	89,689	29,962	<b>119,651</b>	2,159,712,947	0.01
City of Wharton	192,693	61,461	<b>254,154</b>	1,416,664,643	0.02
Unincorporated Area	6,607,163	2,179,499	<b>8,786,662</b>	2,255,940,086	0.39
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>6,900,537</b>	<b>2,274,113</b>	<b>9,174,650</b>	<b>6,223,567,242</b>	<b>0.15</b>

**Vulnerability Narrative**

All participating communities are equally at risk to hurricanes, tropical storms, and tropical depressions. The extent of an hurricane event for each jurisdiction is described below.

- **City of East Bernard** - Probabilistic Peak Wind Gusts for the City of East Bernard are approximately 95–110 mph. Approximately 12% of the City of Wharton’s housing is manufactured homes. These are more vulnerable to high winds from an event. Property along drainage areas that have not been cleaned out are more prone to flooding. Communities who do not implement Emergency Response Plans or identify and educate vulnerable areas increase their risk. Residents unaware of their risk or the hazards associated with hurricanes are less able to effectively prepare or respond.
- **City of El Campo** - Probabilistic Peak Wind Gusts for the City of El Campo are approximately 95–110 mph. Approximately 8% of the City of El Campo’s housing is manufactured homes. These are more vulnerable to high winds from an event. Any ungrounded structures or property could become flying debris causing further damage to properties in the area. Residents unable to receive notification (those in communities without emergency alert systems), are more at risk. Structures built without the benefit of building requirements designed to minimize the risk of property damage are more vulnerable as well.
- **City of Wharton** - Probabilistic Peak Wind Gusts for the City of Wharton are approximately 95–110 mph. Approximately 10% of the of the City of Wharton’s housing is manufactured homes. These are more vulnerable to high winds from an event. If an event were to impact critical facilities (such as emergency response facilities and schools) many residents could be negatively affected and response times could increase. Property along drainage areas that have not been

cleaned out are more prone to flooding. Communities who do not have mitigation measures and funding sources in place increase their risk as well.

- **Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** - Probabilistic Peak Wind Gusts for Wharton County Unincorporated Areas range between approximately 95-125 mph. Approximately 17% of the of the County's Unincorporated Area's housing is manufactured homes. These are more vulnerable to high winds from an event. Properties throughout the HMP update area located along the Colorado River are vulnerable to wave action erosion and flooding caused by high winds and intense rainfall. Communities who do not provide shelters for vulnerable residents increase their risk. Critical facilities such as emergency response and medical facilities could be impacted by an event increasing response times. These response times would be longer for rural residents, especially if major thoroughfares such as US 59 were impacted. Communities who do not monitor and implement improvements needed to roadways increase their vulnerability to these impacts.

### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

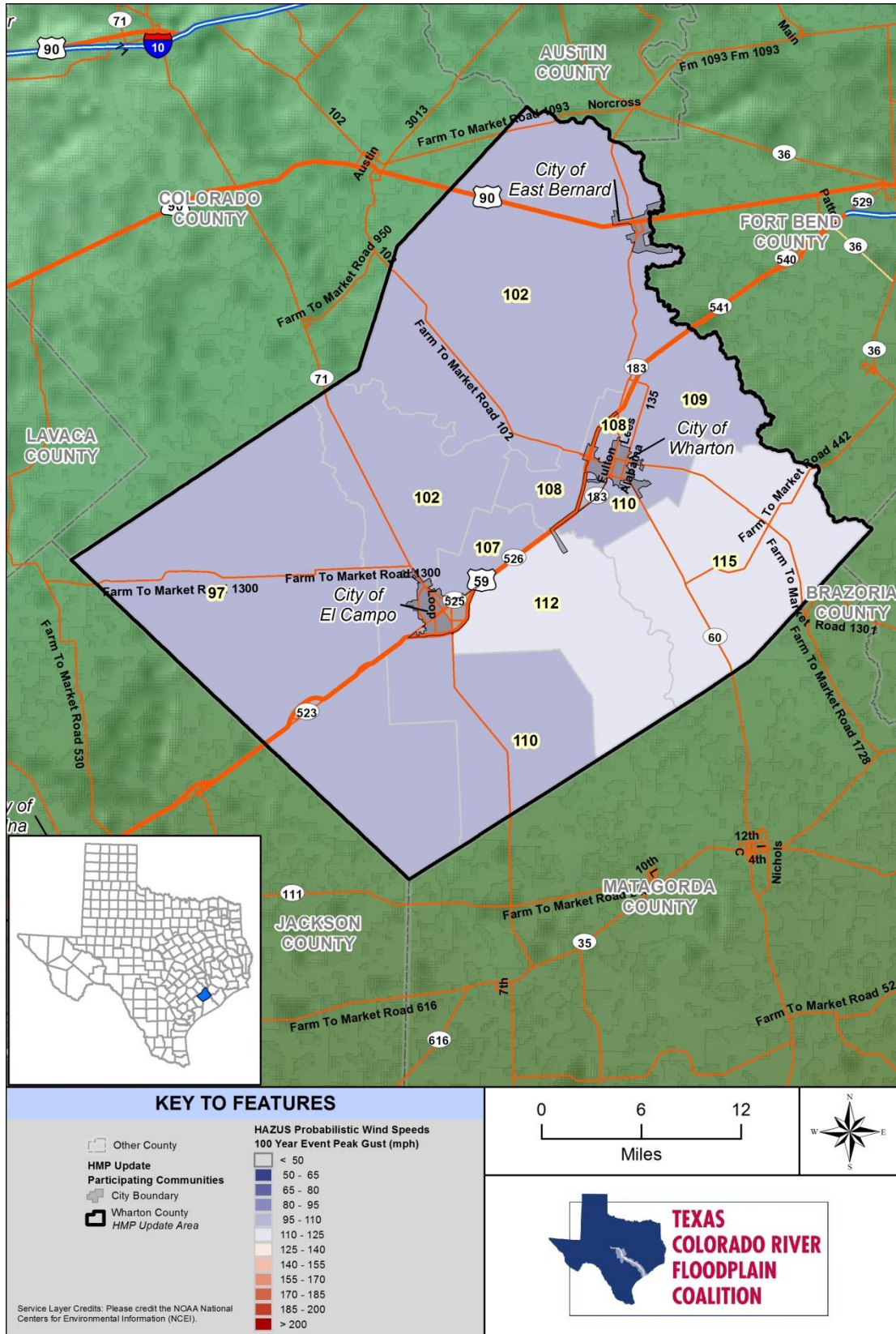


Figure 13-4. 100-Year Probabilistic Peak Wind Gusts for Wharton County

## **13.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

The threat of tropical storms is constant in Texas. From the Gulf of Mexico coastline to Central Texas, the adverse effects of tropical storms and hurricanes will be felt. Tropical storms and hurricanes may cause billions of dollars in damages. Hurricane trends change yearly and with the unclear effects of climate change on tropical developments, future trends are difficult to predict. NOAA's 2015 hurricane season outlook predicted that a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season is likely. This outlook called for a 70% chance of a below-normal season, a 25% chance of a near-normal season, and only a 5% chance of an above-normal season. However, Global Weather Oscillations Inc., a leading hurricane cycle prediction company, says "The 2015 Atlantic Basin hurricane season will be the most active and dangerous in at least 3 years, and the next 3 seasons will be the most dangerous in 10 years." Therefore it is important for communities and community leaders to remain alert and informed of seasonal predictions and developments.

## **13.8 SCENARIO**

A worst case scenario would be for a very large and severe hurricane to make landfall at the Texas Gulf Coast of Matagorda County and move inland through Wharton County. Such a powerful storm at landfall would have significant impacts in Wharton County and beyond. This storm could cause severe flooding, tornadoes, and wind damage to infrastructure throughout the county. This could significantly slow emergency response time and cause public utilities to be offline for weeks. A large storm would leave a large path of damage across South and Central Texas, straining resources throughout the county and state.

## **13.9 ISSUES**

Important issues associated with a tropical storm in Wharton County and the participating communities include the following:

- Older building stock in the planning area is built to low code standards or none at all. These structures could be highly vulnerable to severe weather events such as hurricanes and tropical storms.
- Redundancy of power supply must be evaluated.
- The potential for isolation after a severe storm event is high.
- Flash flooding that occurs with little or no warning will continue to impact the planning area.
- The promotion of flood insurance as a means of protecting private property owners from the economic impacts of frequent flood events should continue.
- Roads and bridges blocked by debris or otherwise damaged might isolate populations.
- Warning time may not be adequate for residents to seek appropriate shelter or such shelter may not be widespread throughout the planning area.
- The impacts of climate change on the frequency and severity of hurricanes and tropical storms are not well understood.



# CHAPTER 14. LIGHTNING, HAIL, AND WIND

LIGHTNING, HAIL, AND WIND RANKING			
	Lightning	Hail	Wind
Wharton County	Low	Medium	Low
City of East Bernard	Low	Medium	Low
City of El Campo	Low	Medium	Low
City of Wharton	Low	Medium	Low

## 14.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

A thunderstorm is a rain event that includes thunder, wind, hail, and lightning. A thunderstorm is classified as “severe” when it contains one or more of the following: hail with a diameter of three-quarter inch or greater, winds gusting in excess of 50 knots (kt) (57.5 mph), or tornadoes. For this hazard mitigation plan, each component of a thunderstorm (lightning, hail, and winds) will be profiled below. Thunderstorms, as a whole, is not a Texas State Hazard per the Texas State Mitigation Plan Update 2013. ‘Thunderstorm’ is used in this section as a descriptive term to qualify hail, wind, and lightning atmospheric events. Thunderstorms are described below for general reference information and not a profiled hazard.

Three factors cause thunderstorms to form: moisture, rising unstable air (air that keeps rising when disturbed), and a lifting mechanism to provide the disturbance. The sun heats the surface of the earth, which warms the air above it. If this warm surface air is forced to rise (hills or mountains can cause rising motion, as can the interaction of warm air and cold air or wet air and dry air) it will continue to rise as long as it weighs less and stays warmer than the air around it. As the air rises, it transfers heat from the surface of the earth to the upper levels of the atmosphere (the process of convection). The water vapor it contains begins to cool and it condenses into a cloud. The cloud eventually grows upward into areas where the temperature is below freezing. Some of the water vapor turns to ice and some of it turns into water droplets. Both have electrical charges. Ice particles usually have positive charges, and rain droplets usually have negative charges. When the charges build up enough, they are discharged in a bolt of lightning, which causes the sound waves we hear as thunder. Thunderstorms have three stages (see Figure 14-1):

- The **developing stage** of a thunderstorm is marked by a cumulus cloud that is being pushed upward by a rising column of air (updraft). The cumulus cloud soon looks like a tower (called towering cumulus) as the updraft continues to develop. There is little to no rain during this stage but occasional lightning. The developing stage lasts about 10 minutes.
- The thunderstorm enters the **mature stage** when the updraft continues to feed the storm, but precipitation begins to fall out of the storm, and a downdraft begins (a column of air pushing

### DEFINITIONS

**Severe Local Storm** — Small-scale atmospheric systems, including tornadoes, thunderstorms, windstorms, ice storms, and snowstorms. These storms may cause a great deal of destruction and even death, but their impact is generally confined to a small area. Typical impacts are on transportation infrastructure and utilities.

**Thunderstorm** — A storm featuring heavy rains, strong winds, thunder and lightning, typically about 15 miles in diameter and lasting about 30 minutes. Hail and tornadoes are also dangers associated with thunderstorms. Lightning is a serious threat to human life. Heavy rains over a small area in a short time can lead to flash flooding.

**Windstorm** — A storm featuring violent winds. Windstorms tend to damage ridgelines that face into the wind.

downward). When the downdraft and rain-cooled air spread out along the ground, they form a gust front, or a line of gusty winds. The mature stage is the most likely time for hail, heavy rain, frequent lightning, strong winds, and tornadoes. The storm occasionally has a black or dark green appearance.

- Eventually, a large amount of precipitation is produced and the updraft is overcome by the downdraft beginning the **dissipating stage**. At the ground, the gust front moves out a long distance from the storm and cuts off the warm moist air that was feeding the thunderstorm. Rainfall decreases in intensity, but lightning remains a danger.

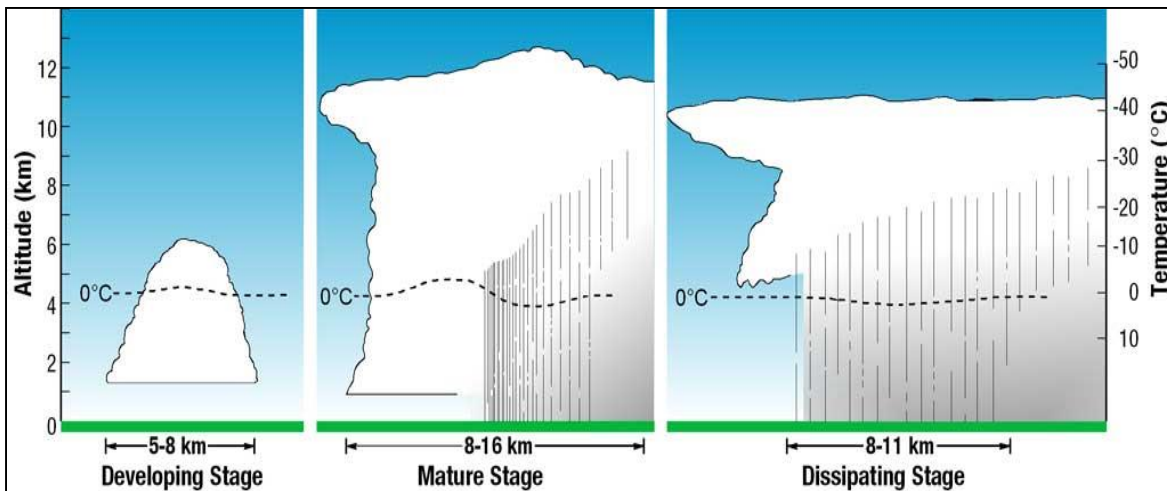


Figure 14-1. Thunderstorm Life Cycle

There are four types of thunderstorms:

- **Single-Cell Thunderstorms**—Single-cell thunderstorms usually last 20 to 30 minutes. A true single-cell storm is rare, because the gust front of one cell often triggers the growth of another. Most single-cell storms are not usually severe, but a single-cell storm can produce a brief severe weather event. When this happens, it is called a pulse severe storm.
- **Multi-Cell Cluster Storm**—A multi-cell cluster is the most common type of thunderstorm. The multi-cell cluster consists of a group of cells, moving as one unit, with each cell in a different phase of the thunderstorm life cycle. Mature cells are usually found at the center of the cluster and dissipating cells at the downwind edge. Multi-cell cluster storms can produce moderate-size hail, flash floods, and weak tornadoes. Each cell in a multi-cell cluster lasts only about 20 minutes; the multi-cell cluster itself may persist for several hours. This type of storm is usually more intense than a single cell storm.
- **Multi-Cell Squall Line**—A multi-cell line storm, or squall line, consists of a long line of storms with a continuous well-developed gust front at the leading edge. The line of storms can be solid, or there can be gaps and breaks in the line. Squall lines can produce hail up to golf-ball size, heavy rainfall, and weak tornadoes, but they are best known as the producers of strong downdrafts. Occasionally, a strong downburst will accelerate a portion of the squall line ahead of the rest of the line. This produces what is called a bow echo. Bow echoes can develop with isolated cells as well as squall lines. Bow echoes are easily detected on radar but are difficult to observe visually.
- **Super-Cell Storm**—A super-cell is a highly organized thunderstorm that poses a high threat to life and property. It is similar to a single-cell storm in that it has one main updraft, but the updraft is extremely strong, reaching speeds of 150 to 175 mph. Super-cells are rare. The main characteristic that sets them apart from other thunderstorms is the presence of rotation. The rotating updraft of a super-cell (called a mesocyclone when visible on radar) helps the super-cell

to produce extreme weather events, such as giant hail (more than 2 inches in diameter), strong downbursts of 80 mph or more, and strong to violent tornadoes.

### **14.1.1 Lightning**

Lightning is an electrical discharge between positive and negative regions of a thunderstorm. A lightning flash is composed of a series of strokes with an average of about four. The length and duration of each lightning stroke vary, but typically average about 30 microseconds.

Lightning is one of the more dangerous and unpredictable weather hazards in the United States and in Texas. Each year, lightning is responsible for deaths, injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage, including damage to buildings, communications systems, power lines and electrical systems. Lightning also causes forest and brush fires as well as deaths and injuries to livestock and other animals. According to the National Lightning Safety Institute, lightning strikes the U.S about 25 million times each year and causes more than 26,000 fires nationwide each year. The institute estimates property damage, increased operating costs, production delays, and lost revenue from lightning and secondary effects to be in excess of \$6 billion per year. Impacts can be direct or indirect. People or objects can be directly struck, or damage can occur indirectly when the current passes through or near it.

Intra-cloud lightning is the most common type of discharge. This occurs between oppositely charged centers within the same cloud. Usually it takes place inside the cloud and looks from the outside of the cloud like a diffuse brightening that flickers. However, the flash may exit the boundary of the cloud, and a bright channel can be visible for many miles.

Although not as common, cloud-to-ground lightning is the most damaging and dangerous form of lightning. Most flashes originate near the lower-negative charge center and deliver negative charge to earth. However, a minority of flashes carry positive charge to earth. These positive flashes often occur during the dissipating stage of a thunderstorm's life. Positive flashes are also more common as a percentage of total ground strikes during the winter months. This type of lightning is particularly dangerous for several reasons. It frequently strikes away from the rain core, either ahead or behind the thunderstorm. It can strike as far as 5 or 10 miles from the storm in areas that most people do not consider to be a threat. Positive lightning also has a longer duration, so fires are more easily ignited. And, when positive lightning strikes, it usually carries a high peak electrical current, potentially resulting in greater damage.

The ratio of cloud-to-ground and intra-cloud lightning can vary significantly from storm to storm. Depending upon cloud height above ground and changes in electric field strength between cloud and earth, the discharge stays within the cloud or makes direct contact with the earth. If the field strength is highest in the lower regions of the cloud, a downward flash may occur from cloud to earth. Using a network of lightning detection systems, NOAA monitors a yearly average of 25 million strokes of lightning from the cloud-to-ground. Figure 14-2 shows the lightning flash density for the nation.

U.S. lightning statistics compiled by NOAA between 1959 and 1994 indicate that most lightning incidents occur during the summer months of June, July, and August, and during the afternoon hours from between 2 and 6 p.m.

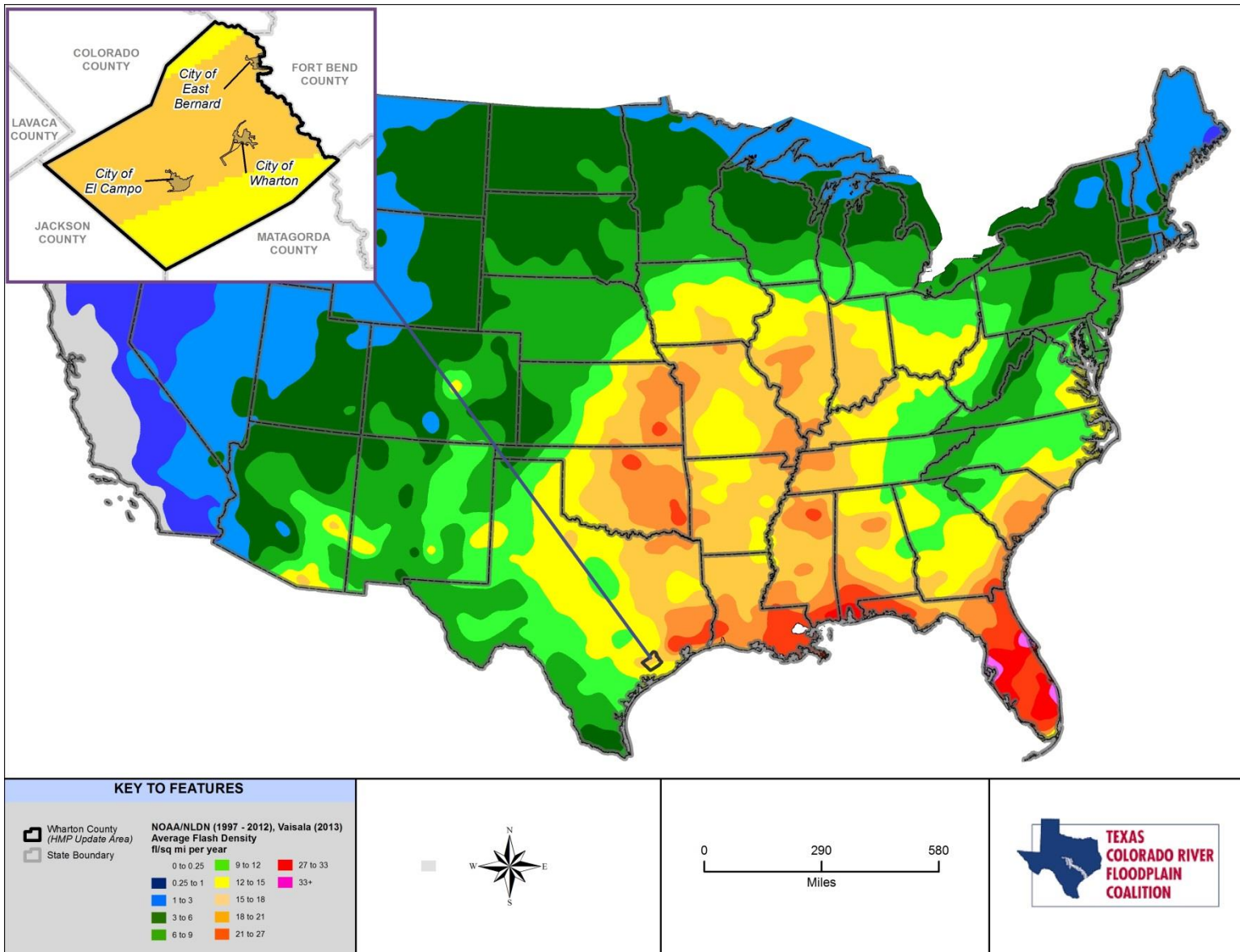


Figure 14-2. Average Annual National Lightning Density

### **14.1.2 Hail**

Hail occurs when updrafts in thunderstorms carry raindrops upward into extremely cold areas of the atmosphere where they freeze into ice. Figure 14-3 shows the hail path across the nation. Recent studies suggest that super-cooled water may accumulate on frozen particles near the back-side of a storm as they are pushed forward across and above the updraft by the prevailing winds near the top of the storm. Eventually, the hailstones encounter downdraft air and fall to the ground.

Hailstones grow two ways: by wet growth or dry growth. In wet growth, a tiny piece of ice is in an area where the air temperature is below freezing, but not super cold. When the tiny piece of ice collides with a super-cooled drop, the water does not freeze on the ice immediately. Instead, liquid water spreads across tumbling hailstones and slowly freezes. Since the process is slow, air bubbles can escape, resulting in a layer of clear ice. Dry growth hailstones grow when the air temperature is well below freezing and the water droplet freezes immediately as it collides with the ice particle. The air bubbles are “frozen” in place, leaving cloudy ice.

Hailstones can have layers like an onion if they travel up and down in an updraft, or they can have few or no layers if they are “balanced” in an updraft. One can tell how many times a hailstone traveled to the top of the storm by counting its layers. Hailstones can begin to melt and then re-freeze together, forming large and very irregularly shaped hail. NWS classifies hail as non-severe and severe based on hail diameter size. Descriptions and diameter sizes are provided in Table 14-1.

Source: NOAA's NWS Storm Prediction Center Severe Report Database 1950 – 2013

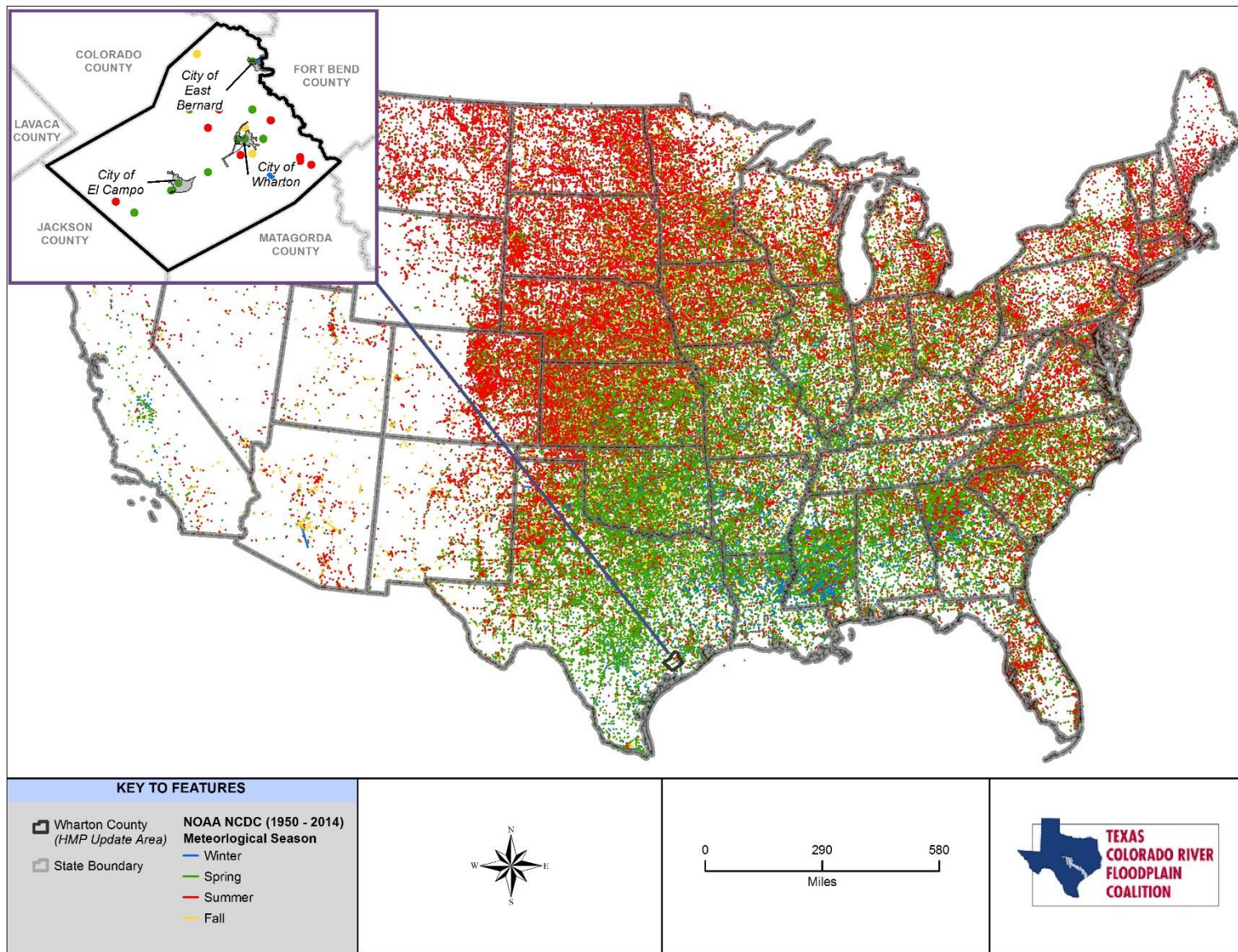


Figure 14-3. National Hail Paths

<b>TABLE 14-1. NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HAIL SEVERITY</b>		
Severity	Description	Hail Diameter Size
Non-Severe Hail  Does not typically cause damage and does not warrant severe thunderstorm warning from National Weather Service.	Pea	1/4"
	Plain M&M Candy	1/2"
	Penny	3/4"
	Nickel	7/8"
Severe Hail  Research has shown that damage occurs after hail reaches around one inch in diameter and larger. Hail of this size will trigger a severe thunderstorm warning from National Weather Service.	Quarter	1" (severe)
	Half Dollar	1 1/4"
	Walnut/Ping Pong Ball	1 1/2"
	Golf Ball	1 3/4"
	Hen Egg/Lime	2"
	Tennis Ball	2 1/2"
	Baseball	2 3/4"
	Teacup/Large Apple	3"
	Grapefruit	4"
	Softball	4 1/2"
Computer CD-DVD	4 3/4"- 5"	

NOAA's National Severe Storms Laboratory used historical data to estimate the daily probability of hail occurrences across the U.S., regardless of storm magnitude. Figure 14-4 shows the average number of hail days per year. The density per 25 square miles in the map's legend indicates the probable number of hail days for each 25 square mile cell within the contoured zone that can be expected over a similar period of record. It should be noted that the density number does NOT indicate the number of events that can be expected across the entire zone on the map.

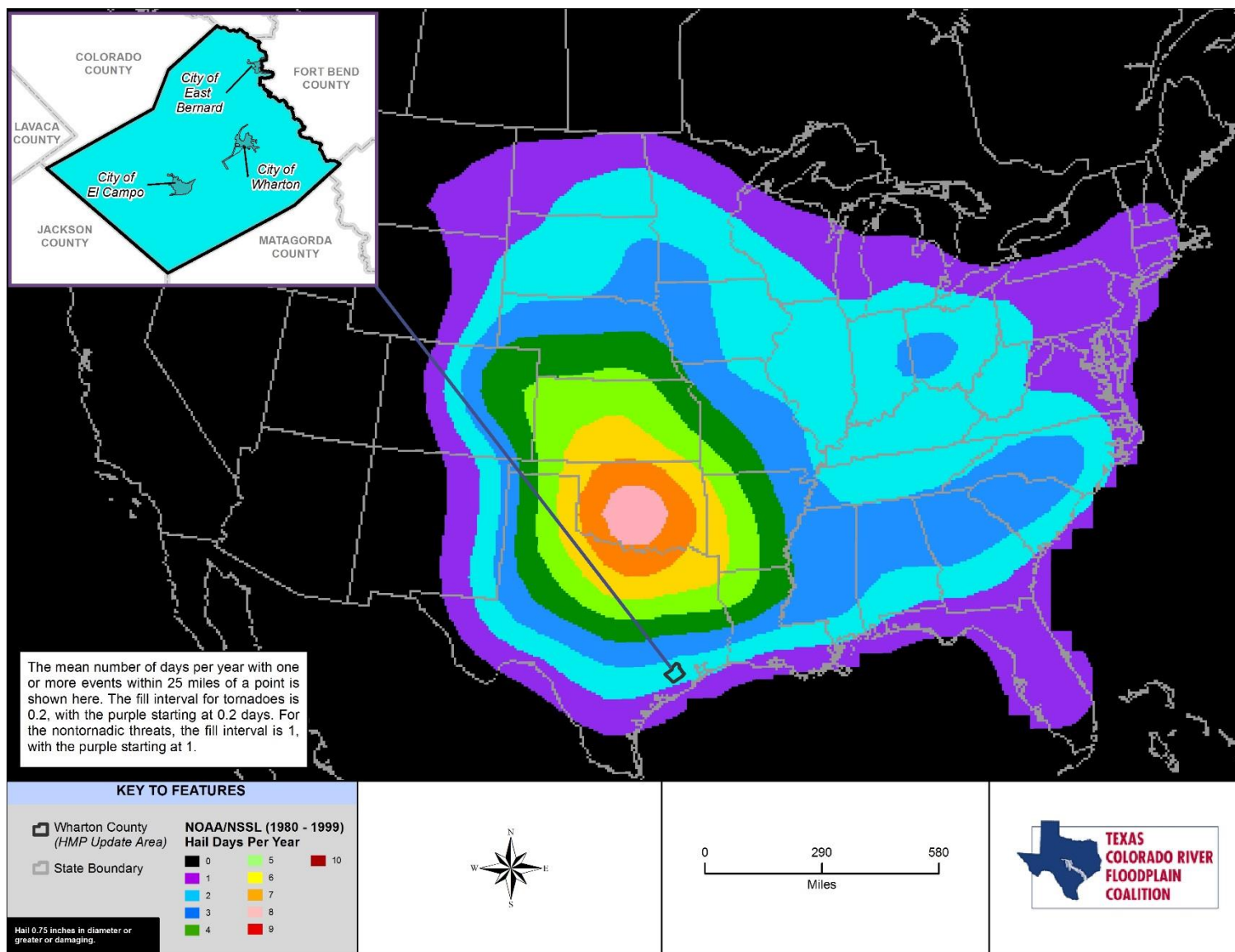


Figure 14-4. National Hail Days per Year



### 14.1.3 Wind

Damaging winds are classified as those exceeding 60 mph. Figure 14-5 shows the wind zones in the nation. NOAA's NWS Storm Prediction Center Severe Report Database has wind inventory from 1955 to 2014. Figure 14-6 shows the thunderstorm wind paths. Damage from such winds accounts for half of all severe weather reports in the lower 48 states and is more common than damage from tornadoes. Wind speeds can reach up to 100 mph and can produce a damage path extending for hundreds of miles. There are seven types of damaging winds:

- **Straight-line winds**—Any thunderstorm wind that is not associated with rotation; this term is used mainly to differentiate from tornado winds. Most thunderstorms produce some straight-line winds as a result of outflow generated by the thunderstorm downdraft.
- **Downdrafts**—A small-scale column of air that rapidly sinks toward the ground.
- **Downbursts**—A strong downdraft with horizontal dimensions larger than 2.5 miles resulting in an outward burst or damaging winds on or near the ground. Downburst winds may begin as a microburst and spread out over a wider area, sometimes producing damage similar to a strong tornado. Although usually associated with thunderstorms, downbursts can occur with showers too weak to produce thunder.
- **Microbursts**—A small concentrated downburst that produces an outward burst of damaging winds at the surface. Microbursts are generally less than 2.5 miles across and short-lived, lasting only 5 to 10 minutes, with maximum wind speeds up to 168 mph. There are two kinds of microbursts: wet and dry. A wet microburst is accompanied by heavy precipitation at the surface. Dry microbursts, common in places like the high plains and the intermountain west, occur with little or no precipitation reaching the ground.
- **Gust front**—A gust front is the leading edge of rain-cooled air that clashes with warmer thunderstorm inflow. Gust fronts are characterized by a wind shift, temperature drop, and gusty winds out ahead of a thunderstorm. Sometimes the winds push up air above them, forming a shelf cloud or detached roll cloud.
- **Derecho**—A derecho is a widespread thunderstorm wind caused when new thunderstorms form along the leading edge of an outflow boundary (the boundary formed by horizontal spreading of thunderstorm-cooled air). The word “derecho” is of Spanish origin and means “straight ahead.” Thunderstorms feed on the boundary and continue to reproduce. Derechos typically occur in summer when complexes of thunderstorms form over plains, producing heavy rain and severe wind. The damaging winds can last a long time and cover a large area.
- **Bow Echo**—A bow echo is a linear wind front bent outward in a bow shape. Damaging straight-line winds often occur near the center of a bow echo. Bow echoes can be 200 miles long, last for several hours, and produce extensive wind damage at the ground.

NOAA's National Severe Storms Laboratory used historical data to estimate the daily probability of wind occurrences across the U.S., regardless of storm magnitude. Figure 14-7 shows the estimates for damaging winds with 50 kts or greater. The density per 25 square miles in the map's legend indicates the probable number of wind for each 25 square mile cell within the contoured zone that can be expected over a similar period of record. It should be noted that the density number does NOT indicate the number of events that can be expected across the entire zone on the map.

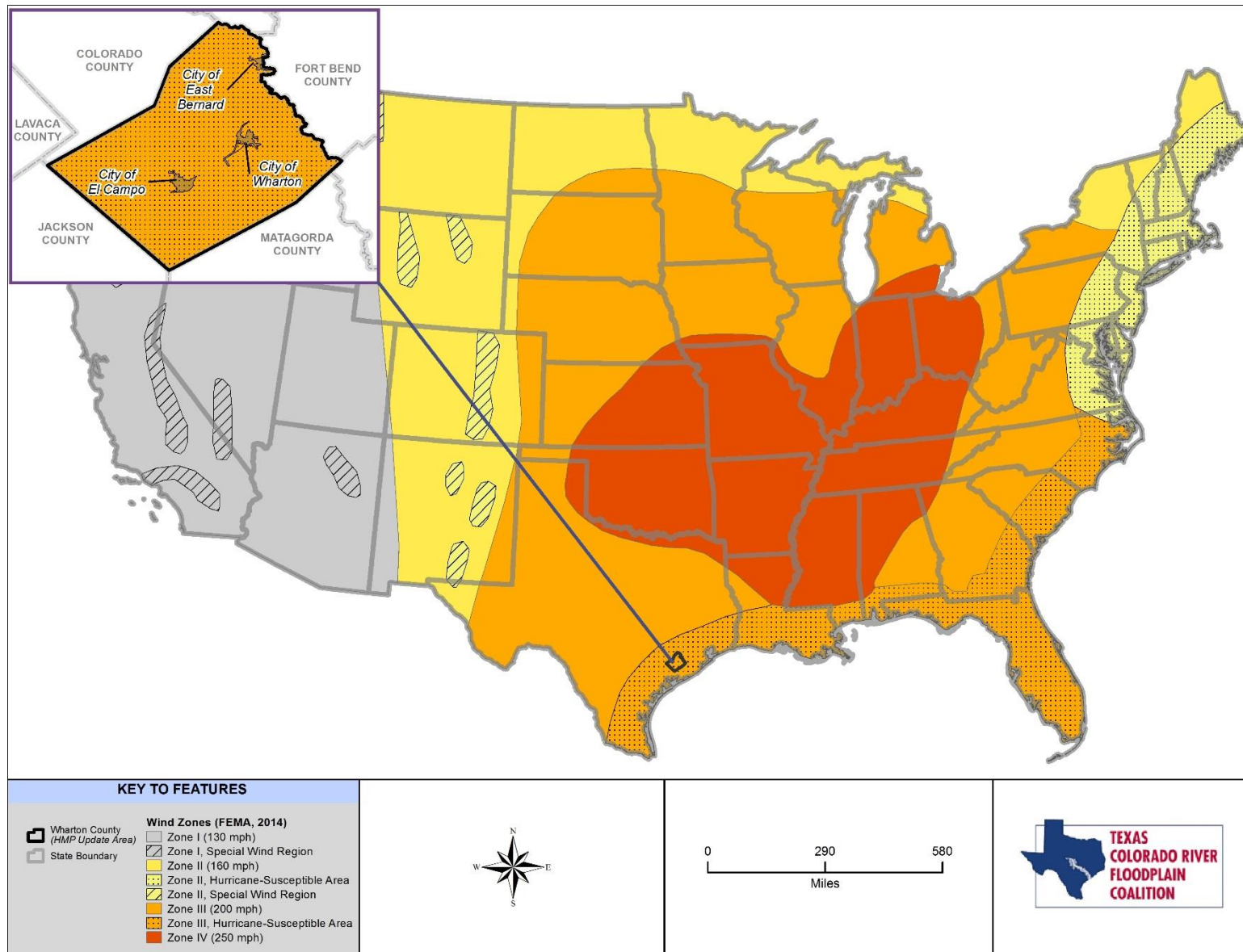


Figure 14-5. National Wind Zones

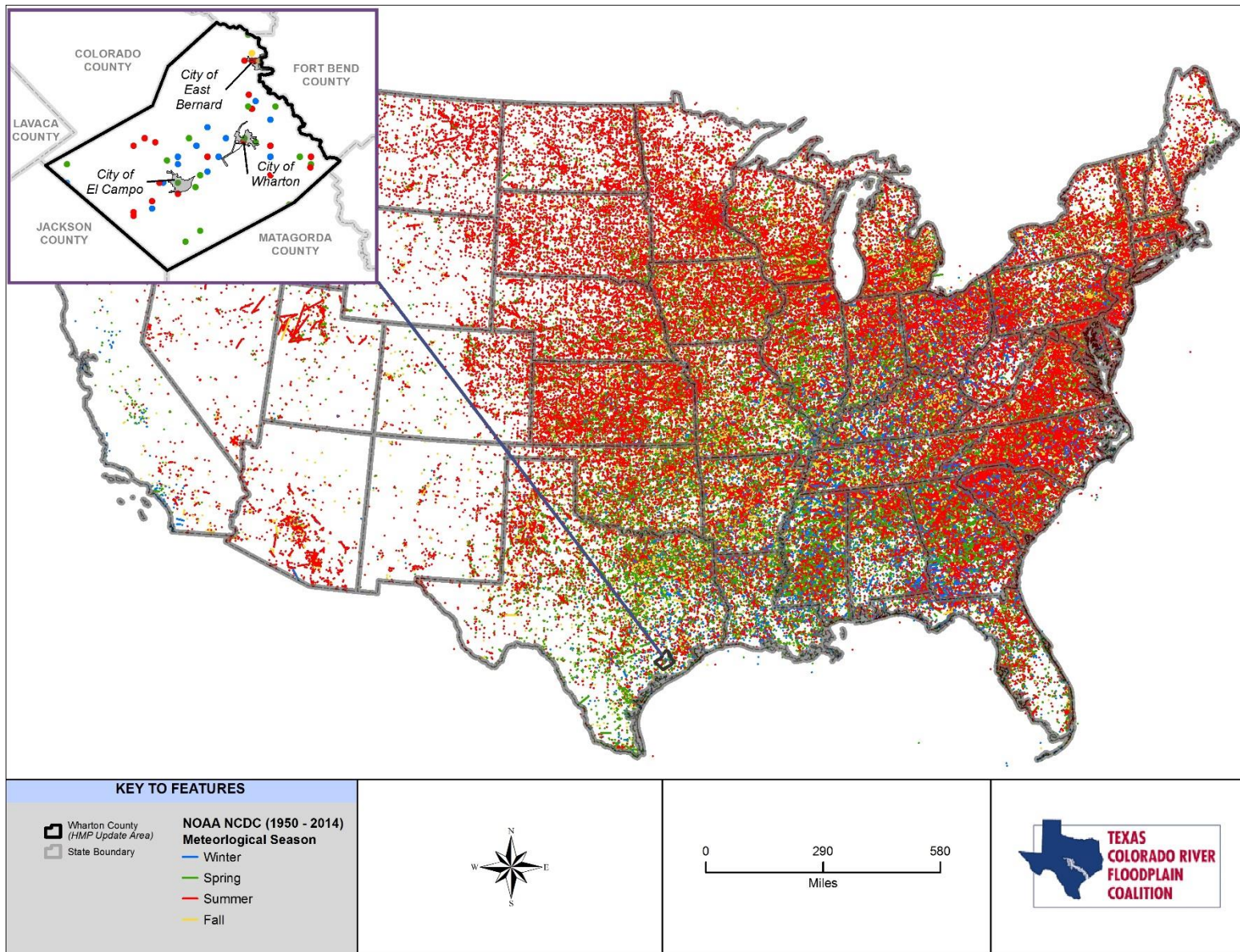


Figure 14-6. National High Wind Paths

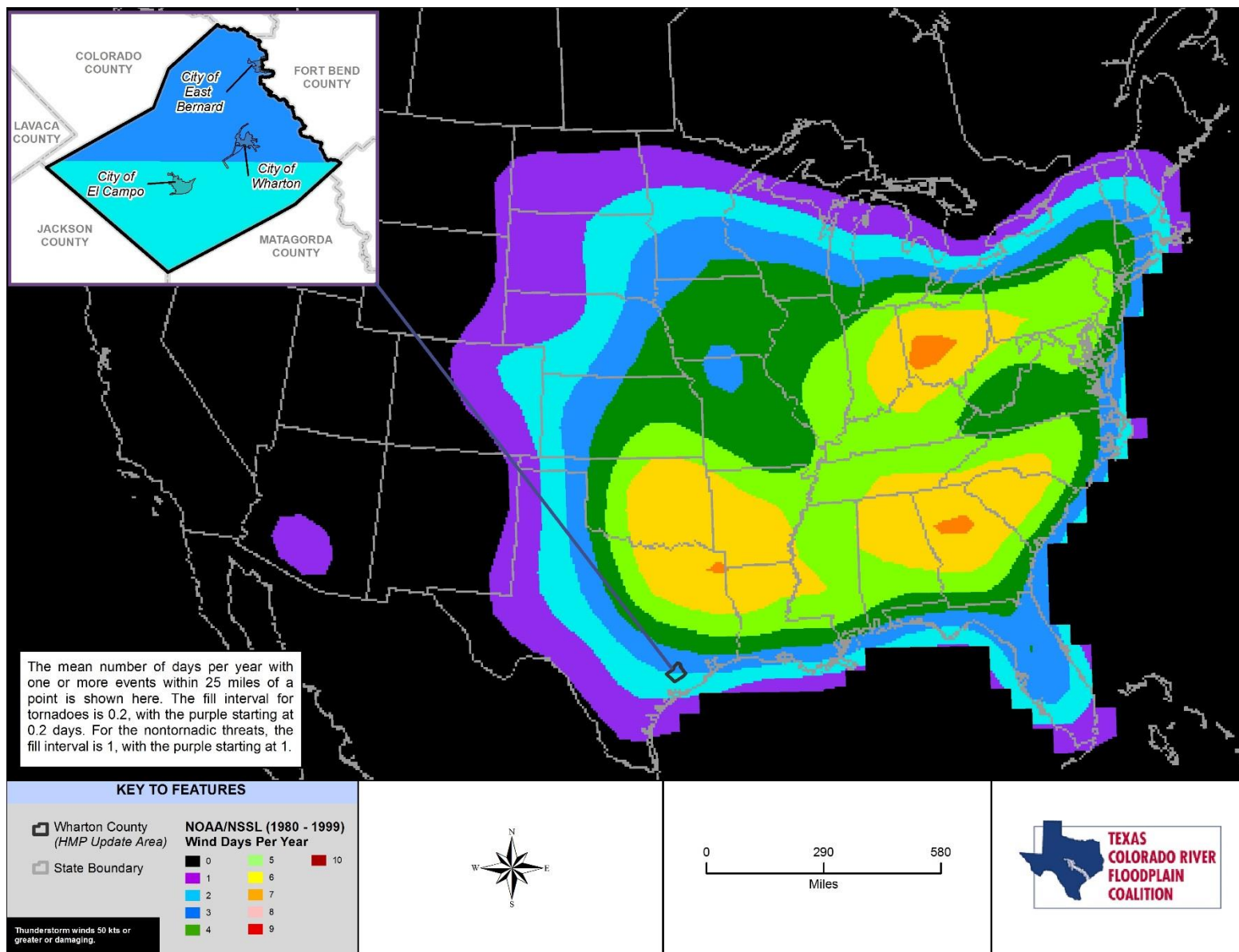


Figure 14-7. National Annual High Wind Days

## 14.2 HAZARD PROFILE

### 14.2.1 Past Events

#### *Lightning*

Data from the National Lightning Detection Network ranks Texas second in the nation (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) with respect to the number of cloud-to-ground lightning flashes. On average, Texas has more than 2,892,486 cloud-to-ground lightning strikes per year with higher lightning frequency in the western part of the state. Wharton County and participating communities have an average of 12 to 15 lightning flashes per square mile per year as shown in Figure 14-2. The National Climatic Data Center Severe Weather Data Inventory documents that 327,050 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes have been reported in Wharton County from 1986 to 2013. Using an area weighted average, it is estimated that the Wharton County Unincorporated Area experienced 316,650 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes; the City of East Bernard experienced 1,133 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes; the City of El Campo experienced 2,479 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes; and the City of Wharton experienced 2,248 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes during this same time period (1986-2013).

Figure 14-8 shows state-by-state lightning deaths between 1959 and 2013. Texas ranks second for the number of deaths at 217. Only Florida, with 471 deaths, had more. Texas has a 0.25 death rate per million people from lightning strikes according to 1959 to 2013 data published by NWS.

Table 14-2 lists the documented lightning events for Wharton County and participating communities as documented by the National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database as well as locally available data. There were no reported injuries or fatalities from lightning in Wharton County between 1996 and 2014.

Location	Date	Estimated Damage Cost	
		Property	Crops
Wharton County	05/10/2006	\$20,000	\$0
Wharton County	05/10/2006	\$25,000	\$0
Wharton County	05/27/2009	\$15,000	\$0

Source: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/>

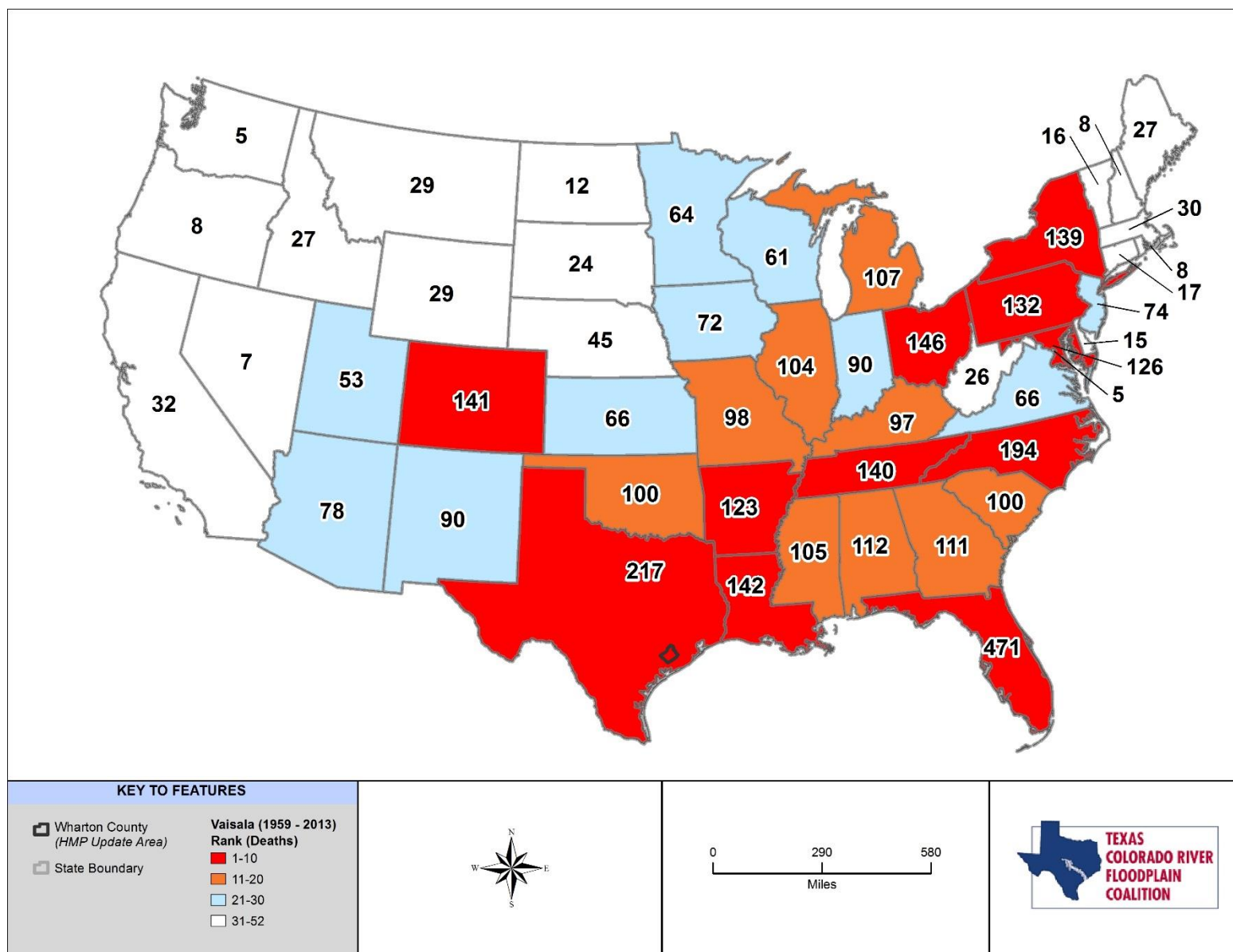


Figure 14-8. Lightning Fatalities in the U.S. (1959-2013)

## **Hail**

The National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database lists 38 hail events in Wharton County and participating communities between 1955 and 2014. These events are noted in Table 14-3. None of these events resulted in injuries or deaths. Events listed as Wharton County, Wharton, Countywide, or County in Table 14-3 affected large portions of the HMP update area. Large systems may have effected additional jurisdictions. These are also included in Table 14-3. Specific events for the participating communities are described below.

### ***Event Descriptions***

**City of East Bernard** – The City of East Bernard had 5 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On April 22, 1995, the Sheriff's office reported dime-to-quarter size hail in the City of East Bernard.
- On April 2, 2000, quarter sized hail was reported in East Bernard and at Spanish Camp.
- On April 2, 2013, a severe thunderstorm produced quarter to golf ball sized hail.

**City of El Campo** – The City of El Campo had 8 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On March 30, 2002, Emergency Management and Sheriff witnessed baseball sized hail at State Highway 59 and FM 1163, with one inch hail covering the ground.
- On December 12, 2002, there was 0.75 inch hail reported in the El Campo area.
- On April 11, 2004, golf ball size hail was reported by residents in El Campo.

**City of Wharton** – The City of Wharton had 20 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On September 9, 1997 severe roof and car damage was reported from 1.25 inch hail.
- On April 11, 2004 quarter-size hail in Wharton reported.
- On June 13, 2006 golf-ball size hail was reported on County Road 120.

**Wharton County (Unincorporated Areas)** - Wharton County Unincorporated Areas had 43 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On October 30, 1969 hail, ranging in size from ½ to 2 inches in diameter fell for about 10 minutes in Wharton. No damage was reported.
- On February 10, 1985 thunderstorm winds blew over a trailer in Mackay, located near Wharton. ¾ inch hail fell also.
- On June 7, 1985 Wharton County Sheriff's Dept. reported golf ball size hail fell between El Campo and Wharton. Damage not reported.

**TABLE 14-3.  
HISTORIC HAIL EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES  
(1960-2014)**

Location	Date	Hail Size	Estimated Damage Cost		Injuries	Deaths
			Property	Crops		
WHARTON CO.	06/25/1962	1.75	\$0	\$0	0	0
WHARTON CO.	10/30/1969	2	\$0	\$0	0	0
WHARTON CO.	05/09/1981	1.75	\$0	\$0	0	0
WHARTON CO.	06/07/1985	1.75	\$0	\$0	0	0
WHARTON CO.	07/23/1989	1	\$0	\$0	0	0
East Bernard	04/22/1995	1	\$1,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	05/11/1996	1.75	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
EGYPT	06/20/1996	4.5	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	0	0
WHARTON	04/25/1997	1.75	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
HUNGERFORD	04/25/1997	1.75	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	09/09/1997	1	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	09/09/1997	1.25	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
EL CAMPO	06/05/1998	1.75	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
LOUISE	06/05/1998	2	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
LOUISE	05/02/1999	1.75	\$40,000	\$0	0	0
DANEVANG	05/02/1999	1.75	\$40,000	\$0	0	0
EAST BERNARD	04/02/2000	1	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
EAST BERNARD	08/02/2000	1	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
HILLJE	03/30/2002	1	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
LOUISE	03/30/2002	1.75	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
EL CAMPO	03/30/2002	2.75	\$50,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	03/13/2003	1	\$6,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	03/13/2003	1	\$6,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	03/13/2003	1.75	\$9,000	\$0	0	0
EAST BERNARD	04/07/2003	1.75	\$4,000	\$0	0	0
PIERCE	04/11/2004	1	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
EL CAMPO	04/11/2004	1.75	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	04/11/2004	1.75	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
BOLING	05/14/2006	1.75	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	06/13/2006	1.75	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	03/06/2008	1.75	\$3,000	\$0	0	0



**TABLE 14-3.  
HISTORIC HAIL EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES  
(1960-2014)**

Location	Date	Hail Size	Estimated Damage Cost		Injuries	Deaths
			Property	Crops		
WHARTON	06/19/2008	1	\$9,000	\$0	0	0
BOLING	06/21/2008	1.75	\$0	\$0	0	0
EAST BERNARD	01/09/2012	1.5	\$0	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	04/02/2013	1	\$0	\$0	0	0
WHARTON	04/02/2013	1.5	\$0	\$0	0	0
DINSMORE	04/02/2013	1.5	\$0	\$0	0	0
DON TOL	04/02/2013	1.75	\$0	\$0	0	0

Source: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov>

Table may list more events than are shown on related figures since some recorded events do not include specific geographic (GIS-enabled data) coordinates for precise graphical representation.

### ***Winds***

High winds occur year round in Wharton County and participating communities. In the spring and summer, which are generally warm and humid in Texas, high winds often accompany severe thunderstorms. The varying topography in the area has the potential for continuous and sudden high wind gusts. The northern winds are a fairly common wintertime phenomena in Southern Texas. These winds develop in well-defined areas and can be quite strong with resulting drastic drop in air temperatures. Atmospheric conditions are expected to continue unchanged with windstorms remaining a perennial occurrence. Winds of 0 to near 200 mph are possible in the planning area.

Although these high winds may not be life-threatening, they can disrupt daily activities, cause damage to building and structures, and increase the potential damage of other hazards. Wind resource information is shown in Figure 14-9 as a proxy for typical wind speeds. Wind resource information is estimated by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to identify areas that are suitable for wind energy applications. The wind resource is expressed in terms of wind power classes, ranging from Class 1 (lowest) to Class 7 (highest). Each class represents a range of mean wind power density or approximate mean wind speed at specified heights above the ground (in this case, 50 meters above the ground surface). Table 14-4 identifies the mean wind power density and speed associated with each classification. Figure 14-9 shows the wind power class potential density for Wharton County and participating communities classified as “Marginal.” Significant wind events for Wharton County and participating communities are highlighted below. They are also listed in Table 14-5. None of these events resulted in injuries or deaths.

### ***Event Descriptions***

**City of East Bernard** – The City of East Bernard had 3 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On September 29, 2011, severe thunderstorm winds downed large tree limbs onto power lines and cars in the East Bernard area.
- June 5, 2011, Law enforcement reported severe thunderstorm winds at over 59 mph in the City of East Bernard. Three injuries were reported.

- On June 29, 2008, strong thunderstorm winds caused major roof damage to a residential home on the 400 block of Lewis Street in East Bernard.

**City of El Campo** – The City of El Campo had 11 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On March 12, 2007, a large tree was downed across a small residential porch structure.
- On April 18, 2009, trees and power lines were blown down near the community of New Taiton.
- On April 18, 2008, a large barn (100 feet X 150 feet) was leveled due to strong thunderstorm wind gusts.

**City of Wharton** – The City of Wharton had 26 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On June 19, 2008, thunderstorm winds downed tree limbs and power lines throughout the city of Wharton. Several streets and highways, including U.S. 59 southbound at the Colorado bridge, were blocked.
- On March 31, 2007, a tree was reported as being downed on a home.
- On February 1, 2011, downed trees blocked roadways at the intersection of Avenue A and Texas, Cornell and Elm, and in the 800 block of North Alabama in the City of Wharton.

**Wharton County (Unincorporated Areas)** - Wharton County Unincorporated Areas had 52 significant events from 1960 to 2014. Three significant events are described below.

- On August 11, 2004, downed power lines were reported as result of wind gusts.
- On April 21, 2006, reports of a tree downed on the Highway 59 bridge over the Colorado River from severe wind.
- On March 19, 2005, A local newspaper reported a light pole and a couple of power lines downed as a result of severe wind.

**TABLE 14-4.  
WIND POWER CLASS AND SPEED**

Rank	Wind Power Class	Wind Power Density at 50 meters (W/m <sup>2</sup> )	Wind Speed at 50 meters (mph)
Poor	1	0-200	0-12.5
Marginal	2	200-300	12.5-14.3
Fair	3	300-400	14.3-15.7
Good	4	400-500	15.7-16.8
Excellent	5	500-600	16.8-17.9
Outstanding	6	600-800	17.9-19.7
Superb	7	800-2000	19.7-26.6

Source: National Renewable Energy Laboratory Wind Energy Resource Atlas of the United States  
 mph Miles per hour  
 W/m<sup>2</sup> Watts per square meter

Historical severe weather data from the National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database lists thunderstorm wind events in Wharton County and participating communities between 1955 and December 2014, as shown in Table 14-5. This table was supplemented with local knowledge and news articles of events effecting the participating communities.

The National Climatic Data Center database as well as locally available datasets lists no dust devil or dust storm events for the participating communities. There were several documented tornadoes in Wharton County and participating communities in the 1950 to 2014 time period. These tornadoes are discussed in Chapter 15. Events listed as Wharton County, Wharton, Countywide, or County in Table 14-5 affected large portions of the HMP update area. Large systems may have effected additional jurisdictions.

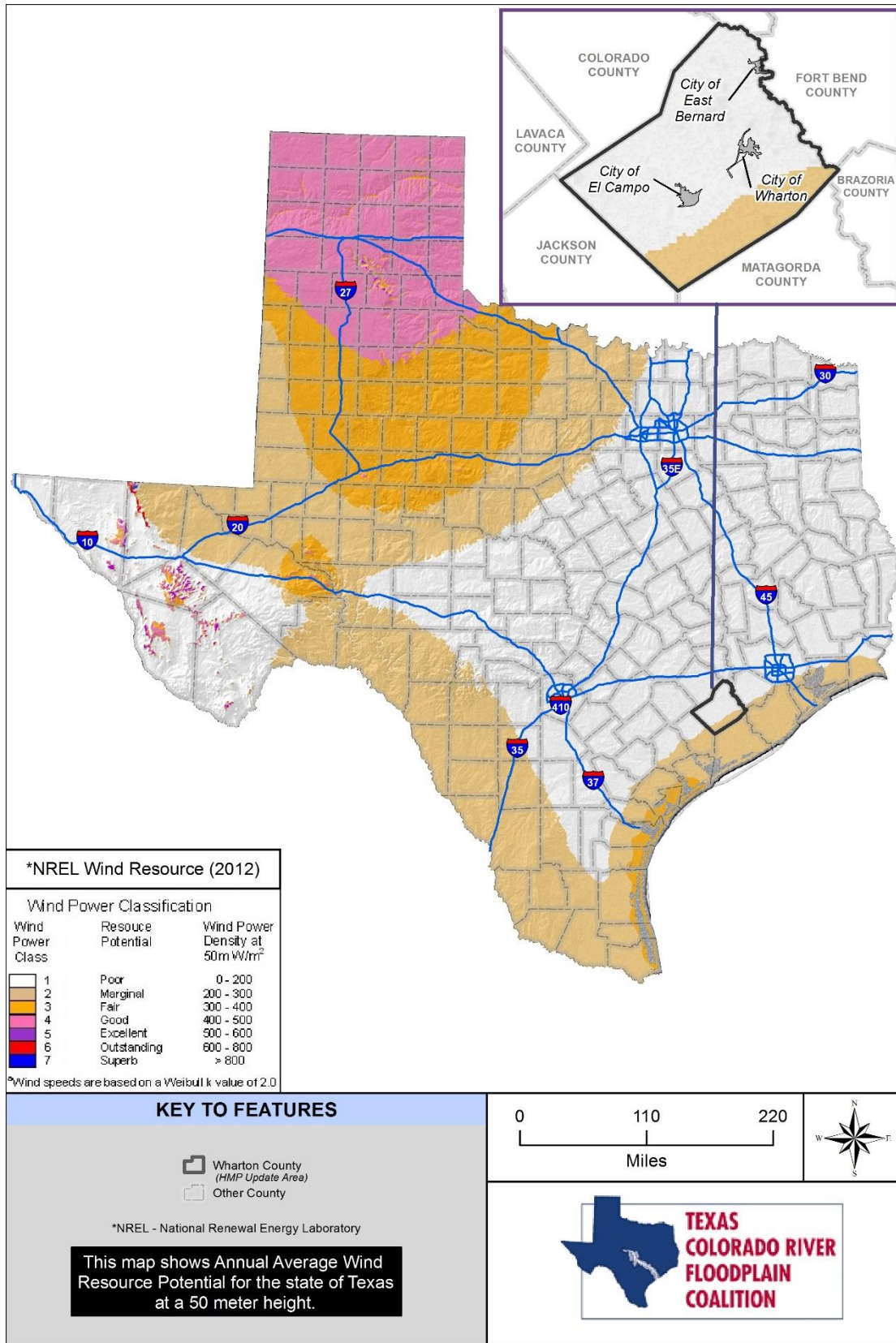


Figure 14-9. Texas Wind Power

**TABLE 14-5.  
HISTORIC WIND-RELATED EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING  
COMMUNITIES (1950-2014)**

Location	Date	Peak Wind Speed (knots)	Estimated Damage Cost		Injuries	Deaths
			Property	Crops		
Wharton County	04/20/1985	52	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	05/04/1991	91	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	02/22/1992	52	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	09/03/1992	70	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	06/11/1995	52	\$400,000	\$10,000	0	0
Pierce	04/11/1997	55	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Pierce	12/23/1997	50	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	08/31/1999	65	\$0	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	03/30/2002	60	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	12/23/2002	52	\$35,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	12/23/2002	52	\$35,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	12/30/2002	60	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	12/30/2002	60	\$12,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	07/24/2003	52	\$0	\$0	1	0
Boling	06/23/2004	50	\$75,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	08/11/2004	50	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
Glen Flora	11/23/2004	65	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	03/19/2005	52	\$8,000	\$0	0	0
Countywide	05/08/2005	64	\$200,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	04/21/2006	55	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	10/12/2006	50	\$1,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	10/16/2006	58	\$2,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	03/12/2007	50	\$8,000	\$0	0	0
Danevang	03/12/2007	50	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	03/31/2007	52	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	06/03/2007	65	\$0	\$0	0	0
Louise	02/11/2008	56	\$5,000	\$0	1	0
El Campo South	04/18/2008	56	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	06/19/2008	55	\$2,000	\$0	0	0
East Bernard	06/29/2008	51	\$9,000	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	06/29/2008	51	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo Airport	04/18/2009	52	\$2,000	\$0	0	0

**TABLE 14-5.  
HISTORIC WIND-RELATED EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING  
COMMUNITIES (1950-2014)**

Location	Date	Peak Wind Speed (knots)	Estimated Damage Cost		Injuries	Deaths
			Property	Crops		
New Taiton	06/25/2009	60	\$35,000	\$10,000	0	0
Newgulf	08/12/2009	52	\$1,000	\$0	0	0
Louise	08/26/2009	55	\$6,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	06/08/2010	52	\$10,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	02/01/2011	56	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	05/12/2011	50	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
East Bernard	06/05/2011	52	\$0	\$0	3	0
East Bernard	09/29/2011	50	\$3,000	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	04/02/2012	61	\$30,000	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	06/07/2012	52	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Magnet	05/10/2013	60	\$5,000	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	05/26/2014	61	\$0	\$0	0	0

Source: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov>

Table may list more events than are shown on related figures since some recorded events do not include specific geographic (GIS-enabled data) coordinates for precise graphical representation.

## 14.2.2 Location

Severe weather events have the potential to happen anywhere in the planning area. Figure 6-6 shows the distribution of average precipitation over the planning area.

### **Lightning**

The entire extent of Wharton County and participating communities are exposed to some degree of lightning hazard, though exposed points of high elevation have significantly higher frequency of occurrence. Since lightning can occur at any location, all of the communities could experience lightning events throughout their respective jurisdictions. There were three lightning damage events recorded by the NOAA National Climatic Data Center from 1993 to 2014 in the HMP update area. These events were located near the Cities of East Bernard and El Campo (Figure 14-10). The City of Wharton did not have any lightning events recorded by the NOAA National Climatic Data Center during this period. There were no new lightning-related data from local sources for the 1993 to 2014 time period.

### **Hail**

The entire extent of Wharton County and participating communities are exposed to the hailstorm hazard. Previous instances of hail events in the county are shown in Figure 14-11. Figure 14-11 does not show all hail events shown on Table 14-3 because not all tabular data had geographic locations. Only events listed with GIS data were mapped. Non-GIS supported events were included in the table to provide more data for participating communities.

## ***Winds***

The entire extent of Wharton County and participating communities are exposed to high winds. They have the ability to cause damage over 100 miles from the center of storm activity. Wind events are most damaging to areas that are heavily wooded. Winds impacting walls, doors, windows, and roofs, may cause structural components to fail. Previous occurrences of damaging high winds and the locations that they occurred are shown in Figure 14-12. Previous occurrences of damaging high winds and their respective locations are shown in Figure 14-12. Figure 14-12 does not show all wind events on Table 14-5 because not all tabular data had geographic coordinates. Only events listed with GIS data were mapped. Non-GIS supported events were included in the table to provide more data for participating communities.

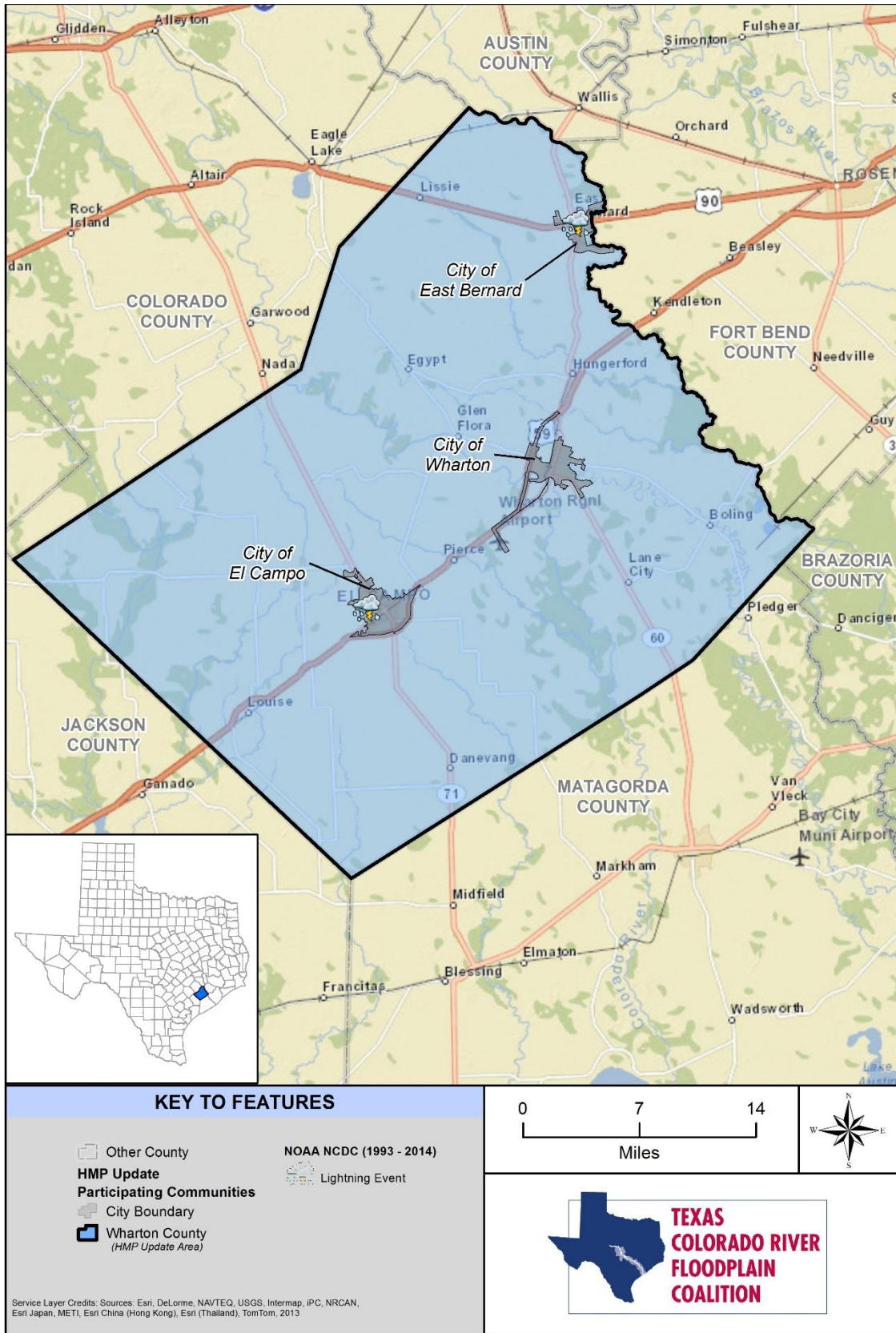


Figure 14-10. Lightning Events in Wharton County (1993-2014)



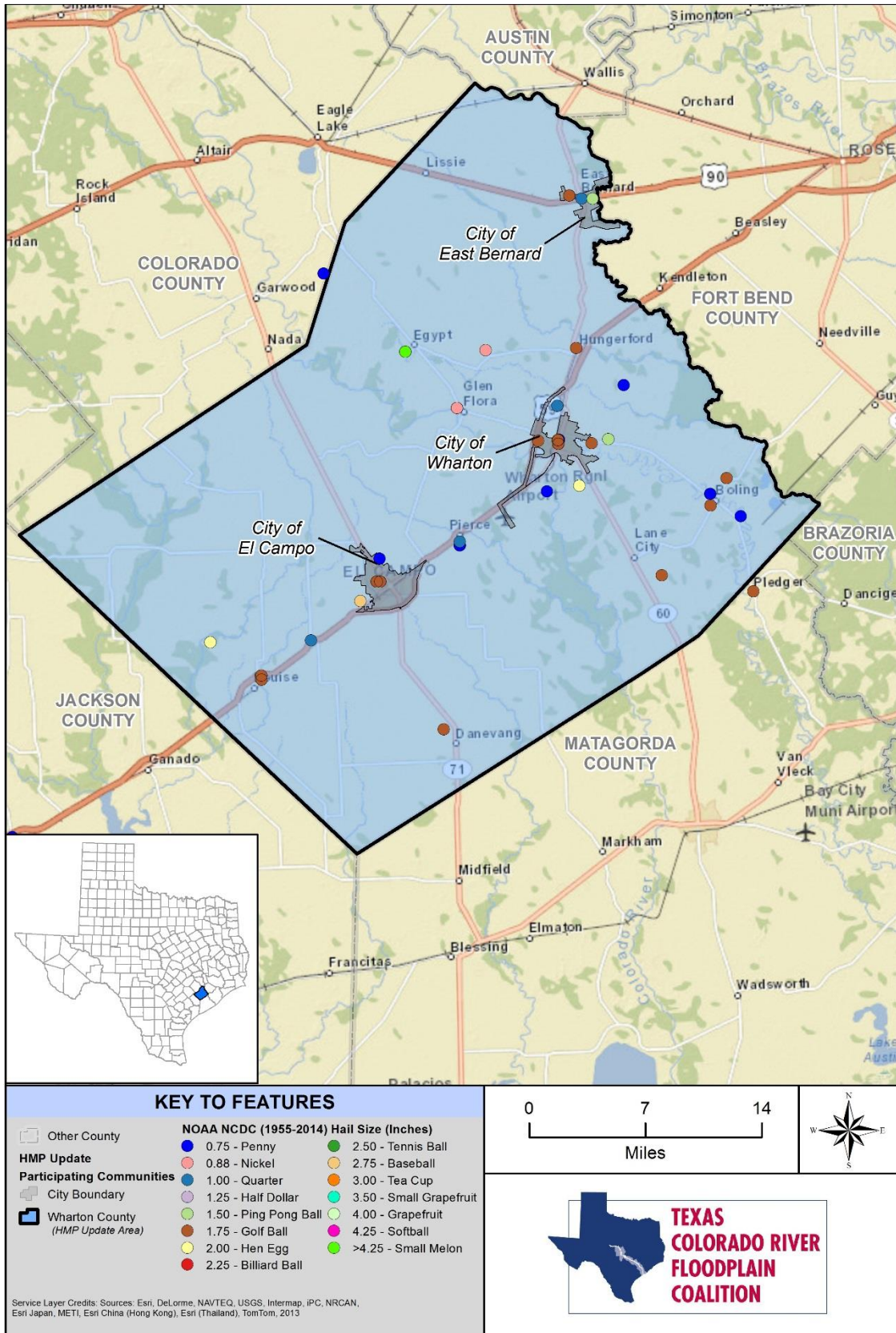


Figure 14-11. Hail Events in Wharton County (1955-2014)

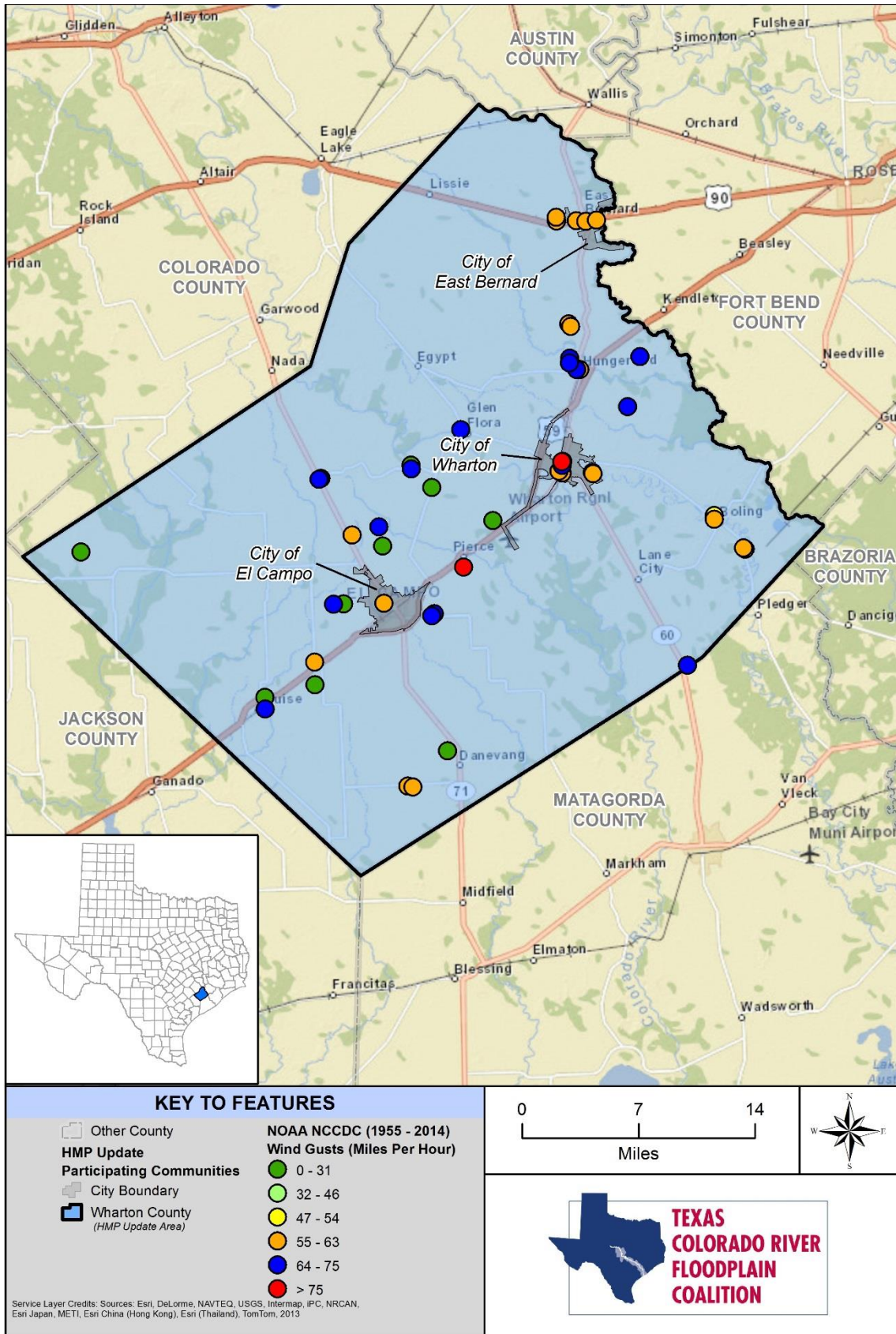


Figure 14-12. Damaging Wind Events in Wharton County (1955-2014)

### 14.2.3 Frequency

#### ***Lightning***

To date, there have been three reported lightning strikes resulting in property damage in Wharton County and participating communities. Texas ranks as one of the highest in lightning fatalities in the nation. Wharton County and all participating communities have approximately 12 to 15 lightning flashes per square mile per year and a thunderstorm lightning event is considered likely, with a recurrence interval of 6 years or more. This frequency statistics applies to all Wharton County and participating communities.

#### ***Hail***

Based on a record of 38 hailstorm events over a 54-year period, significant hail occurs approximately every other year on average and is considered likely. Since hail events can happen anywhere throughout the HMP update area, each participating community has the same frequency and probability for future events (once every 1 to two years). Based on historical records, the City of East Bernard can expect future events to have hail up to 1.75" in diameter hail. Based on historical records, the City of El Campo can expect future events up to 2.75" in diameter hail. Based on historical records, the City of Wharton can expect future events up to 1.75" in diameter hail. Based on historical records, Wharton County Unincorporated area can expect hail up to 2" in diameter. All participating jurisdictions can expect an event every 1 to 2 years in the future.

#### ***Winds***

Based on 44 events in 64 years, a damaging high-wind event occurs approximately every year to every other year on average in Wharton County and participating communities and is considered likely. Since wind events can happen anywhere throughout the HMP update area, each participating community has the same frequency and probability for future events (once every one to two years).

### 14.2.4 Severity

#### ***Lightning***

Based on the information in this hazard profile, the risk of a damaging lightning event in Wharton County and participating communities is likely, but the magnitude/severity of thunderstorms is limited. The number of reported injuries from lightning is likely to be low, and county infrastructure losses are expected to be limited each year.

#### ***Hail***

Severe hailstorms can be quite destructive. In recent years within the United States, hail causes more than \$1.3 billion in damage to property and crops each year representing between 1 and 2% of the annual crop value.

Insurance claims resulting from hailstorm damage increased 84% nationwide in 2012 from their 2010 level according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau. In 2010, there were 467,602 hail damage claims filed in the U.S. That number increased to 689,267 in 2011 and 861,597 in 2012. The property damage can be as minimal as a few broken shingles to the total destruction of buildings.

Over 2 million hail damage claims were processed from January 1, 2010, to December 31, 2012, with Texas ranking first in overall claims. The top five states generating hail damage claims were Texas (320,823 claims); Missouri (138,857 claims); Kansas (126,490 claims); Colorado (118,118 claims) and Oklahoma (114,168 claims). Much of the damage inflicted by hail is to crops. Even relatively small hail can shred plants to ribbons in a matter of minutes. Vehicles, roofs of buildings and homes, and landscaping are the

other things most commonly damaged by hail. Hail has been known to cause injury to humans and occasionally has been fatal.

A significant hail event occurred on June 20, 1996, in Egypt (an unincorporated community in northern Wharton County). Grapefruit-sized hail fell in Egypt, significantly damaging the roofs and windows of 30 to 40% of homes. Trees snapped and many cars were total losses. The event resulted in significant agricultural loss (1,000 acres of sorghum, 2,000 acres of corn, and 1,000 acres of soybeans were destroyed) and caused over \$10 million in property and crop damages.

Based on the information in this hazard profile, the severity of hail storms is moderate and the overall significance is medium. Wharton County and participating communities have an overall limited to medium risk to this hazard: The economy of Wharton County and participating communities will be affected usually by less than a day to not more than 1 week. Additionally, up to 25% of people and property can be affected. The overall significance is considered medium: moderate potential impact.

### **High Winds**

High winds, often accompanying severe thunderstorms, can cause significant property and crop damage, threaten public safety, and have adverse economic impacts from business closures and power loss. Wind storms in Wharton County participating communities are rarely life threatening, but do disrupt daily activities, cause damage to buildings, and structures, and increase the potential for other hazards, such as wildfires. Winter winds can result in damage and close highways due to ice and blowing snow. Winds can also cause trees to fall, particularly those killed by insects or wildfire, creating a hazard to property or those outdoors.

Based on the information in this hazard profile, the magnitude/severity of high winds is considered limited. The overall significance of the hazard is considered low, with minimal potential impact. The economy of Wharton County and participating communities will be affected usually by less than a day to not more than 1 week. Additionally, up to 25% of people and property can be affected. The overall significance of the hazard is considered medium: moderate potential impact.

## **14.2.5 Warning Time**

Meteorologists can often predict the likelihood of a severe storm. This can give several days of warning time. However, meteorologists cannot predict the exact time of onset or severity of the storm. Some storms may come on more quickly and have only a few hours of warning time. Weather forecasts for the planning area are reliable. However, at times, the warning for the onset of severe weather may be limited.

## **14.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS**

The most significant secondary hazards associated with severe local storms are floods, falling and downed trees, landslides, and downed power lines. Rapidly melting snow combined with heavy rain can overwhelm both natural and man-made drainage systems, causing overflow and property destruction. Erosion can occur when the soil on slopes becomes oversaturated and fails. Fires can occur as a result of lightning strikes. Many locations in the region have minimal vegetative ground cover and the high winds can create a large dust storm, which becomes a hazard for travelers and a disruption for local services. High winds in the winter can turn small amount of snow into a complete whiteout and create drifts in roadways. Debris carried by high winds can also result in injury or damage to property. A wildland fire can be accelerated and rendered unpredictable by high winds, which creates a dangerous environment for firefighters.

## **14.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

Climate change presents a significant challenge for risk management associated with severe weather. The frequency of severe weather events has increased steadily over the last century. The number of weather-related disasters during the 1990s was four times that of the 1950s, and cost 14 times as much in economic losses. Historical data shows that the probability for severe weather events increases in a warmer climate

(see Figure 14-13). The changing hydrograph caused by climate change could have a significant impact on the intensity, duration, and frequency of storm events. All of these impacts could have significant economic consequences.

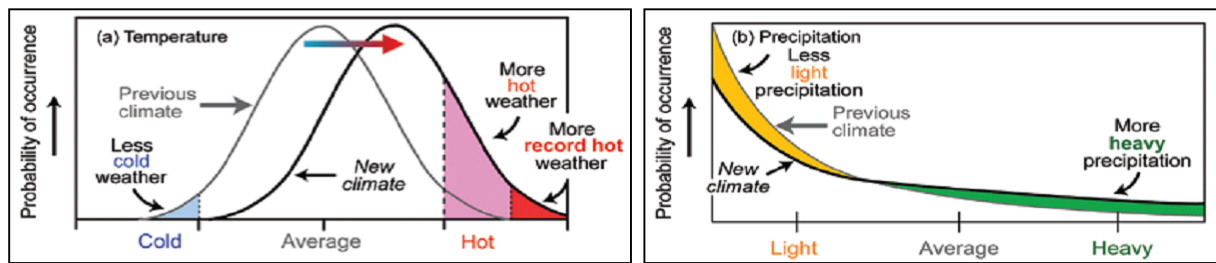


Figure 14-13. Severe Weather Probabilities in Warmer Climates

## 14.5 EXPOSURE

The primary data source was the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 Census Data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), augmented with state and federal data sets, NOAA National Climatic Data Center Storm Event Database, as well as data from local sources.

### 14.5.1 Population

It can be assumed that the entire planning area is exposed to some extent to thunderstorm, lightning, high wind, and hail events. Certain areas are more exposed due to geographic location and local weather patterns. Populations with large stands of trees or overhead power lines may be more susceptible to wind damage and black out, while populations in low-lying areas are at risk for possible flooding. It is not uncommon for residents living in more remote areas of the county to be isolated after such events. Table 14-6 lists the vulnerable population for the participating communities.

### 14.5.2 Property

According to the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), there are 15,781 buildings within the census blocks that define the planning area with an asset replaceable value of over \$4 million (excluding contents). About 98% of these buildings (and 78% of the building value) are associated with residential housing. Within the participating communities in the HMP update area, there are an estimated 14,741 buildings (residential, commercial, and other) with a total asset inventory (excluding contents) value of over \$3.7 million. Other types of buildings in this report include agricultural, education, religious, and governmental structures. See Table 14-6 below.

It is estimated that most of the residential structures were built without the influence of a structure building code with provisions for wind loads. Wind pressure can create a direct and frontal assault on a structure, pushing walls, doors, and windows inward. Conversely, passing currents can create lift and suction forces that act to pull building components and surfaces outward. The effects of winds are magnified in the upper levels of multi-story structures. As positive and negative forces impact the building's protective envelope (doors, windows, and walls), the result can be roof or building component failures and considerable structural damage.

All of these buildings are considered to be exposed to the lightning, wind, and hail hazards, but structures in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations (located on hilltops or exposed open areas) may risk the most damage. The frequency and degree of damage will depend on specific locations.

**TABLE 14-6  
EXPOSED STRUCTURES AND POPULATION**

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	830	10	9	849	2,272
City of El Campo	3,989	83	39	4,111	11,602
City of Wharton	3,021	92	23	3,136	8,832
Unincorporated Area	6,585	29	31	6,645	15,949
<b>Total</b>	14,425	214	102	14,741	38,655

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

### 14.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

All critical facilities within the planning area are exposed to lightning, high winds, and hail. Those facilities within the floodplain (Chapter 12) are exposed to flooding associated with thunderstorms. Additional facilities on higher ground may be particularly exposed to wind damage, lightning, or damage from falling trees. The most common problems associated with these weather events are loss of utilities. Downed power lines can cause blackouts, leaving large areas isolated. Phone, water, and sewer systems may not function. Roads may become impassable due to secondary hazards such as flooding.

### 14.5.4 Environment

The environment is highly exposed to lightning, high winds, and hail. Natural habitats such as streams and trees risk major damage and destruction. Prolonged rains can saturate soils and lead to slope failure. Flooding events can produce river channel migration or damage riparian habitat. Lightning can start wildfires, particularly during a drought.

## 14.6 VULNERABILITY

Because lightning, hail, and wind cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical local knowledge of the region were used for this assessment.

### 14.6.1 Population

Vulnerable populations are the elderly, low income or linguistically isolated populations, people with life-threatening illnesses, and residents living in areas that are isolated from major roads. Power outages can be life threatening to those dependent on electricity for life support. Isolation of these populations is a significant concern. These populations face isolation and exposure during thunderstorm, wind, and hail events and could suffer more secondary effects of the hazard. Outdoor recreational users in the area may also be more vulnerable to severe weather events. Table 14-7 shows vulnerable populations per participating jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction	Youth Population ( < 16 )	% of Total Population	Elderly Population ( > 65 )	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	638	28.08	342	15.05	129	5.68
City of El Campo	3,400	29.31	1,646	14.19	993	8.56
City of Wharton	2,319	26.26	1,288	14.58	1,252	14.18
Unincorporated Area	3,965	24.86	2,390	14.99	1,304	8.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,322</b>	<b>26.70</b>	<b>5,666</b>	<b>14.66</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>9.51</b>

### 14.6.2 Property

All property is vulnerable during thunderstorm, lightning, wind, and hail events, but properties in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations may risk the most damage. Generally, damage is minimal and goes unreported. Those on hillsides and ridges may be more prone to wind damage. Those that are located under or near overhead lines or near large trees may be damaged in the event of a collapse.

Loss estimations for the lightning, wind, and hail hazards are not based on damage functions, because no such damage functions have been generated. Instead, loss estimates were developed representing projected damages (annualized loss) on reported damages and exposed values. Historical events, statistical analysis and probability factors were applied to the county’s and communities reported damages and exposed values to create an annualized Table 14-8 through Table 14-10 lists the property loss estimates for lightning, hail, and wind events. Annualized losses of ‘negligible’ are less than \$50 annually. Negligible loss hazards are still included despite minimal annualized losses because of the potential for a high value damaging event.

Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$391,249,566	\$812	<0.01
City of El Campo	\$2,159,712,946	\$9,803	<0.01
City of Wharton	\$1,416,664,643	\$5,830	<0.01

<b>TABLE 14-8. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR HAIL EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES</b>			
Unincorporated Area	\$2,255,940,086	\$1,307,878	0.06
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$6,223,567,243</b>	<b>\$1,324,323</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

<b>TABLE 14-9. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR LIGHTNING EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES</b>			
Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$391,249,566	Negligible	<0.01
City of El Campo	\$2,159,712,946	Negligible	<0.01
City of Wharton	\$1,416,664,643	Negligible	<0.01
Unincorporated Area	\$2,255,940,086	Negligible	<0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$6,223,567,243</b>	<b>Negligible</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

<b>TABLE 14-10. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR WIND EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES</b>			
Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$391,249,566	\$148	<0.01
City of El Campo	\$2,159,712,946	\$1,787	<0.01
City of Wharton	\$1,416,664,643	\$1,063	<0.01
Unincorporated Area	\$2,255,940,086	\$238,437	0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$6,223,567,243</b>	<b>\$241,435</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

**Vulnerability Narrative**



All participating communities are equally at risk to either lightning, hail, or wind. Table 14-7 lists the vulnerable population per community. Table 14-8 to Table 14-10 lists the estimated annualized losses in dollars for each participating community. All participating communities are vulnerable to communication problems. This applies to both residents of the communities, such as Early Warning Systems, and between emergency personnel. Resources such as the implementation of Emergency Notification Systems and NOAA “All Hazard” Radios would decrease the vulnerability of each jurisdiction.

#### **City of East Bernard -**

- *Lightning* – Properties with thick vegetation and large trees or those built under no or insufficient building codes are more susceptible to negative impacts of a lightning event. Residents unaware of the risks or hazards associated with lightning increase their vulnerability as well.
- *Hail* – The maximum hail size recorded for the City is 1.75 inches (golf ball size hail) and can cause extensive damage to windows, glass roofs, as well as the bodywork of vehicles. Mobile homes and older residential areas are more prone to damages from an event. Residents uninformed on the hazards associated with hail will be more vulnerable to its impacts.
- *Wind* – Based on historical events, significant wind events have been recorded within The City at over 55-63 mph. Approximately 12% of the of the City of East Bernard’s housing are manufactured homes. Older residential areas as well as manufactured home subdivisions, houses, and structures not securely anchored to foundations are most vulnerable to wind damages. Furthermore, areas with dead trees and vegetation that are not regularly cleared are more prone to wind damages. Both of these (loose structures and dead vegetation) can become flying/falling hazards in a wind event. Recorded reports of these events were most prevalent around US 90.

#### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability in the City of East Bernard***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for the City of East Bernard. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

#### **City of El Campo -**

- *Lightning* – Properties built without sufficient building codes or with large trees or thick brush are more vulnerable to a damaging lightning event. Residents not aware or unable to afford preventive actions or corrective responses to a lightning event are more vulnerable as well.
- *Hail* – The maximum hail size recorded for El Campo was 2.75 inches (baseball size hail) and can cause damage to roofing tiles, facades, metal cladding, window frames, and poses a risk of serious injury. Older homes may experience more damages as they have been exposed to the elements longer and may not have been built with as stringent building codes. Manufactured homes are less resilient to natural disasters, such as hail, and are more vulnerable to feeling the effects of a damaging hail event. Cars left in the open are subject to damages from hail events as well.
- *Wind* – Based on historical events, the most significant wind event recorded for the City of El Campo was between 55 -63. Approximately 8% of the of the City’s housing are manufactured homes. Older residential areas as well as manufactured home subdivisions, houses, and structures not securely anchored to foundations are most vulnerable to wind damages. Furthermore, areas with dead trees and vegetation that are not regularly cleared are more prone to wind damages. Both of these (loose structures and dead vegetation) can become flying/falling hazards in a wind event. Residents unaware of oncoming severe weather through a community alert system are more vulnerable as well.

### *Community Perception of Vulnerability in the City of El Campo*

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for the City of El Campo. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

#### **City of Wharton-**

- *Lightning* – Properties with large trees or thick brush are more vulnerable to a damaging lightning event. Communities unaware of the areas of higher risk, such as structures built in the absence of sufficient codes, are more at risk.
- *Hail* – The maximum hail size recorded for Wharton was 1.75 inches (golf ball size hail). This hail size can cause damage to glass windows and roofs as well as the body work of cars and aircrafts. Manufactured homes are less resilient to natural disasters, such as hail, and are more vulnerable to feeling the effects of a damaging hail event.
- *Wind* – Based on historical events, the most significant wind events recorded for the City of Wharton were over 75 mph. Approximately 10% of the of the City of Wharton’s housing are manufactured homes. Older residential areas as well as manufactured home subdivisions, houses, and structures not securely anchored to foundations are most vulnerable to wind damages. Furthermore, areas with dead trees and vegetation that are not regularly cleared are more prone to wind damages. Both of these (loose structures and dead vegetation) can become flying/falling hazards in a wind event.

### *Community Perception of Vulnerability in the City of Wharton*

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for the City of Wharton. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

#### **Wharton County (Unincorporated Area) -**

- *Lightning* – Emergency service facilities and infrastructure such as area schools, police and fire departments and government buildings are vulnerable to lightning strikes. A power outage at one of these facilities could negatively impact residents and increase and complicate emergency response efforts. Rural areas are a greater distance from emergency responders and face longer response times. Properties with large trees and underbrush are also more vulnerable to lightning strikes and fires.
- *Hail* – The maximum hail size recorded for the Unincorporated Areas of Wharton County was 2 inches (golf ball size hail) and can cause extensive damage windows, glass roofs, as well as the bodywork of vehicles. Older homes may experience more damages as they have been exposed to the elements longer.
- *Wind* – Based on historical events, the most significant wind events recorded for the Unincorporated Areas of Wharton County were over 75 mph. Approximately 17% of the of the HMP update area’s housing are manufactured homes. Wharton rural areas may experience longer emergency response times if an event were to occur due to their distance from services. Older residential areas as well as manufactured home subdivisions, houses, and structures not securely anchored to foundations are most vulnerable to wind damages. Furthermore, areas with dead trees and vegetation that are not regularly cleared are more prone to wind damages. Both of these (loose structures and dead vegetation) can become flying/falling hazards in a wind event.

### *Community Perception of Vulnerability in Wharton County Unincorporated Areas*

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

#### **14.6.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

Incapacity and loss of roads are the primary transportation failures resulting from lightning, wind, and hail and are mostly associated with secondary hazards. Erosion caused by heavy prolonged rains can block roads. High winds can cause significant damage to trees and power lines, blocking roads with debris, incapacitating transportation, isolating population, and disrupting ingress and egress. Of particular concern are roads providing access to isolated areas and to the elderly. Prolonged obstruction of major routes due to debris or floodwaters can disrupt the shipment of goods and other commerce. Large, prolonged storms can have negative economic impacts for an entire region. Severe windstorms and downed trees can create serious impacts on power and above-ground communication lines. Loss of electricity and phone connection would leave certain populations isolated because residents would be unable to call for assistance. Lightning events in the participating communities can have destructive effects on power and information systems. Failure of these systems would have cascading effects throughout the county and could possible disrupt critical facility functions.

#### **14.6.4 Environment**

The vulnerability of the environment to severe weather is the same as the exposure, discussed in Section 14.5.4

### **14.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

All future development will be affected by severe storms. The ability to withstand impacts lies in sound land use practices and consistent enforcement of codes and regulations for new construction. The planning partners have already adopted the International Building Code for construction within this region. This code is equipped to deal with the impacts of severe weather events. Land use policies identified in master plans and enforced through zoning code and the permitting process also address many of the secondary impacts of the severe weather hazard. With these tools, the planning partnership is well equipped to deal with future growth and the associated impacts of severe weather.

### **14.8 SCENARIO**

Although severe local storms are infrequent, impacts can be significant, particularly when secondary hazards of flood and erosion occur. A worst-case event would involve prolonged high winds, an intense hail event, and a lightning strike at a critical facility (such as an emergency service station) during a thunderstorm. Such an event would have both short-term and longer-term effects. Initially, schools and roads would be closed due to power outages caused by high winds and downed tree obstructions. In more rural areas, some subdivisions could experience limited ingress and egress. Prolonged rain could produce flooding, overtopped culverts with ponded water on roads and landslides on steep slopes. Flooding could further obstruct roads and bridges, further isolating residents.

### **14.9 ISSUES**

Important issues associated with a severe weather in the planning area include the following:

- Older building stock in the planning area is built to low code standards or none at all. These structures could be highly vulnerable to severe weather events such as windstorms.
- Redundancy of power supply must be evaluated.
- The capacity for backup power generation is limited.

- The potential for isolation after a severe storm event is high.
- There is limited information available for local weather forecasts.
- The lack of proper management of trees may exacerbate damage from high winds.

# CHAPTER 15. TORNADO

TORNADO RANKING	
Wharton County	Medium
City of East Bernard	Medium
City of El Campo	Medium
City of Wharton	Medium

## DEFINITIONS

**Tornado** — Funnel clouds that generate winds up to 500 mph. They can affect an area up to three-quarters of a mile wide, with a path of varying length. Tornadoes can come from lines of cumulonimbus clouds or from a single storm cloud. They are measured using the Fujita Scale (ranging from F0 to F5), or the Enhanced Fujita Scale.

## 15.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

A tornado is a narrow, violently rotating column of air that extends from the base of a cumulonimbus cloud to the ground. The visible sign of a tornado is the dust and debris that is caught in the rotating column made up of water droplets. Tornadoes are the most violent of all atmospheric storms. Tornadoes can be induced by hurricanes. The following are common ingredients for tornado formation:

- Very strong winds in the mid and upper levels of the atmosphere
- Clockwise turning of the wind with height (i.e., from southeast at the surface to west aloft)
- Increasing wind speed in the lowest 10,000 feet of the atmosphere (i.e., 20 mph at the surface and 50 mph at 7,000 feet)
- Very warm, moist air near the ground with unusually cooler air aloft
- A forcing mechanism such as a cold front or leftover weather boundary from previous shower or thunderstorm activity

Tornadoes can form from individual cells within severe thunderstorm squall lines. They also can form from an isolated super-cell thunderstorm. Weak tornadoes can sometimes occur from air that is converging and spinning upward, with little more than a rain shower occurring in the vicinity.

In 2007, NWS began rating tornadoes using the Enhanced Fujita Scale (EF-scale). The EF-scale is a set of wind estimates (not measurements) based on damage. It uses 3-second gusts estimated at the point of damage based on a judgment of 8 levels of damage to the 28 indicators listed in Table 15-1. These estimates vary with height and exposure. Standard measurements are taken by weather stations in openly exposed area. Table 15-2 describes the EF-scale ratings (NOAA 2007).

The U.S. experiences more tornadoes than any other country. In a typical year, approximately 1,000 tornadoes affect the U.S. The peak of the tornado season is April through June, with the highest concentration of tornadoes in the central U.S. Figure 15-1 shows the annual average number of tornadoes between 1991 and 2010. Texas experienced an average of 155 tornado events annually in that period. Texas ranks first among the 50 states in both the frequency of tornadoes and the number of lethal tornadoes. When these statistics are compared to other states by the frequency per 10,000 square miles, Texas ranks tenth in the U.S. "Tornado Alley" is a nickname given to an area in the southern plains of the central United States that consistently experiences a high frequency of tornadoes each year. Tornadoes in this region typically happen in late spring and occasionally the early fall. The Gulf Coast area has a separate tornado region nicknamed "Dixie Alley" with a relatively high frequency of tornadoes occurring in the late fall (October through December).

NOAA's National Severe Storms Laboratory used historical data to estimate the daily probability of tornado occurrences across the U.S., regardless of tornado magnitude. Figure 15-2 shows the estimates. The density

per 25 square miles in the map’s legend indicates the probable number of tornadoes for each 25 square mile cell within the contoured zone that can be expected over a similar period of record. This density number does NOT indicate the number of events that can be expected across the entire zone on the map.

<b>TABLE 15-1. ENHANCED FUJITA SCALE DAMAGE INDICATORS</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Damage Indicator</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Damage Indicator</b>
1	Small barns, farm outbuildings	15	School – one-story elementary (interior or exterior halls)
2	One or two-family residences	16	School – junior or senior high school
3	Single-wide mobile home	17	Low-rise (1-4 story) building
4	Double-wide mobile home	18	Mid-rise (5-20) building
5	Apartment, condo, townhouse (3 stories or less)	19	High-rise (over 20 stories) building
6	Motel	20	Institutional building (hospital, government, or university)
7	Masonry apartment or motel	21	Metal building system
8	Small retail building (fast food)	22	Service station canopy
9	Small professional (doctor office, bank)	23	Warehouse (tilt-up walls or heavy timber)
10	Strip mall	24	Transmission line tower
11	Large shopping mall	25	Free-standing tower
12	Large, isolated (big box) retail building	26	Free standing pole (light, flag, luminary)
13	Automobile showroom	27	Tree – hardwood
14	Automobile service building	28	Tree – softwood

<b>TABLE 15-2. THE FUJITA SCALE AND ENHANCED FUJITA SCALE</b>						
<b>Fujita (F) Scale</b>			<b>Derived</b>		<b>Operational Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale</b>	
<b>F Number</b>	<b>Fastest ¼ mile (mph)</b>	<b>3-second gust (mph)</b>	<b>EF Number</b>	<b>3-second gust (mph)</b>	<b>EF Number</b>	<b>3-second gusts (mph)</b>
0	40-72	45-78	0	65-85	0	65-85
1	73-112	79-117	1	86-109	1	86-110
2	113-157	118-161	2	110-137	2	111-135
3	158-207	162-209	3	138-167	3	136-165
4	208-260	210-261	4	168-199	4	166-200
5	261-318	262-317	5	200-234	5	Over 200

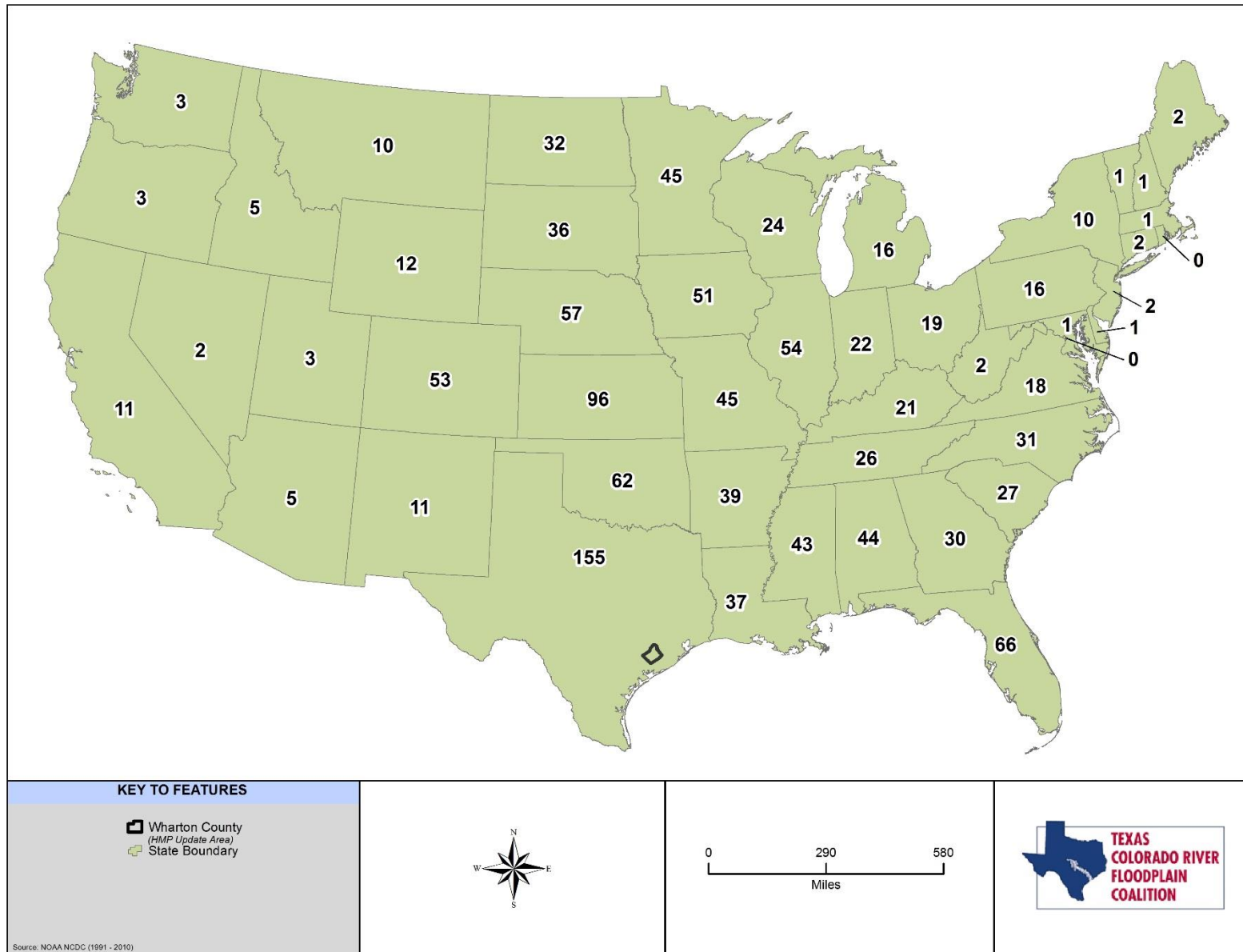


Figure 15-1. Annual Average Number of Tornadoes in the U.S. (1991-2010)

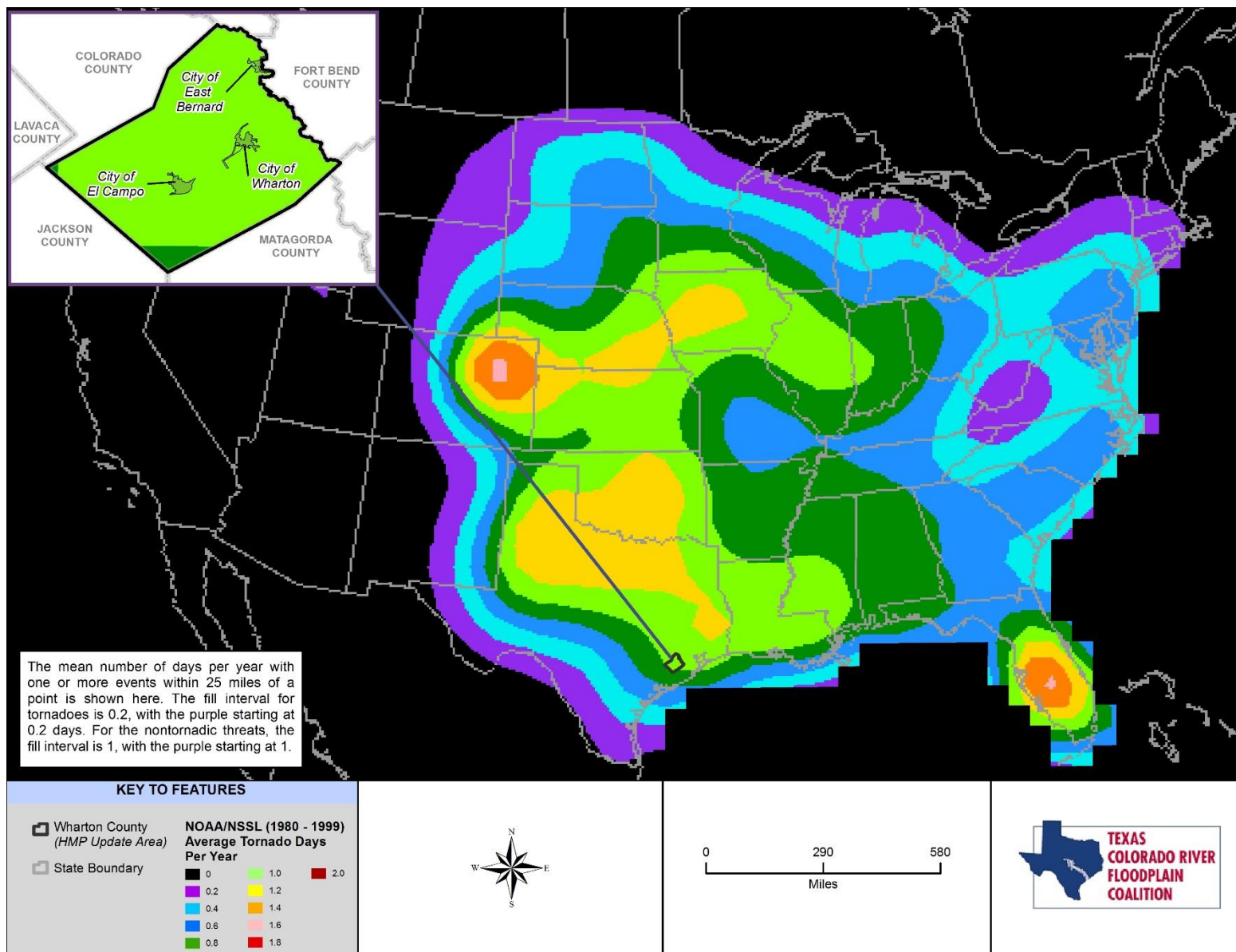


Figure 15-2. Total Annual Threat of Tornado Events in the U.S. (1980-1999)



## 15.2 HAZARD PROFILE

### 15.2.1 Past Events

Table 15-3 lists tornadoes in Wharton County and the participating communities recorded by the NOAA Storm Events Center from 1950 to 2014. Most of the tornadoes caused property damages with a sizeable number rated as F1 tornadoes. Figure 15-3 shows the location of NOAA documented tornado paths between 1950 and 2014. As can be seen from the map, most of the tornadoes occur in the spring season, with a few in the fall.

Location	Date	Category	Estimated Damage Cost			
			Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Wharton County	12/2/1953	F2	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	5/23/1955	F2	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	8/30/1955	F1	\$0	\$0	5	0
Wharton County	8/21/1959	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	6/24/1960	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/22/1961	F3	\$0	\$0	1	0
Wharton County	6/15/1964	F2	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	4/14/1966	F2	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	9/19/1967	F0	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	9/20/1967	F0	\$25,000	\$0	2	0
Wharton County	9/20/1967	F0	\$25,000	\$0	1	1
Wharton County	9/20/1967	F0	\$25,000	\$0	1	0
Wharton County	9/20/1967	F1	\$30	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	9/21/1967	F0	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	6/23/1968	F1	\$250	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	6/23/1968	F1	\$250	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	6/23/1968	F1	\$250	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	10/23/1970	F0	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	10/23/1970	F2	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	10/23/1970	F2	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	3/20/1972	F2	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	6/13/1973	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	7/14/1976	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/8/1977	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0

**TABLE 15-3.  
HISTORIC TORNADO EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING  
COMMUNITIES (1950-2014)**

Location	Date	Category	Estimated Damage Cost			
			Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Wharton County	12/13/1977	F1	\$250,000	\$0	1	0
Wharton County	4/22/1978	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	1/20/1979	F1	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	1/31/1983	F1	\$250,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	8/18/1983	F0	\$30	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	1/14/1991	F0	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	1/14/1991	F0	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	1/14/1991	F0	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	1/14/1991	F1	\$250,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	5/4/1991	F1	\$250,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	8/7/1991	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/19/1992	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/19/1992	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/19/1992	F1	\$2,500	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/21/1992	F1	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/21/1992	F1	\$250,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton County	11/21/1992	F1	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
Egypt	4/7/1993	F2	\$50,000	\$0	0	0
Egypt	3/13/1995	F1	\$100,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	8/12/1996	F0	\$40,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	4/11/1997	F0	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	6/21/1997	F0	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
Mustang	10/21/2000	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Hillje	5/31/2001	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	9/2/2001	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	9/4/2001	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Hungerford	3/30/2002	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	3/30/2002	F0	\$50,000	\$0	0	0
Boling	9/7/2002	F0	\$75,000	\$0	0	0
Egypt	7/7/2003	F0	\$18,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton Airport	7/24/2003	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0

Location	Date	Category	Estimated Damage Cost			
			Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Wharton	10/9/2003	F0	\$15,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	11/17/2003	F0	\$1,000	\$0	0	0
El Campo	11/17/2003	F0	\$8,000	\$0	2	0
Pierce	11/17/2003	F0	\$2,000	\$0	0	0
Wharton	11/17/2003	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Boling	11/17/2003	F0	\$20,000	\$0	0	0
Danevang	4/6/2004	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	4/6/2004	F0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Danevang	4/6/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Egypt	5/13/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Pierce	5/16/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	6/8/2004	F1	\$300,000	\$0	6	0
Wharton	6/8/2004	F1	\$100,000	\$0	0	0
Pierce	6/15/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Danevang	6/23/2004	F0	\$55,000	\$0	0	0
Danevang	6/23/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	6/23/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	6/23/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	6/23/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	7/9/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	9/14/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	9/14/2004	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	11/23/2004	F0	\$25,000	\$0	0	0
East Bernard	8/19/2005	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo	3/29/2006	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Danevang	4/21/2006	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Louise	9/9/2006	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Glen Flora	3/6/2008	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Spanish Camp	6/28/2010	EF0	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	5/26/2014	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
El Campo South	6/24/2014	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0

<b>TABLE 15-3.                      HISTORIC TORNADO EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING                      COMMUNITIES (1950-2014)</b>						
Location	Date	Category	Estimated Damage Cost			
			Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Danevang	6/24/2014	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Danevang	9/16/2014	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton	9/17/2014	N/A	\$0	\$0	0	0
<i>http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov</i> N/A Not Available Table may list more events than are shown on related figures since some recorded events do not include specific geographic coordinates (GIS-enabled data) for precise graphical representation.						

### 15.2.2 Location

Recorded tornadoes in the planning area are typically average size and short-lived. They can occur anywhere in Wharton County and participating communities. Figure 15-4 shows tornado activity documented by NOAA from 1980-1999. Figure 15-5 shows the location of previous tornado events in Wharton County and participating communities.

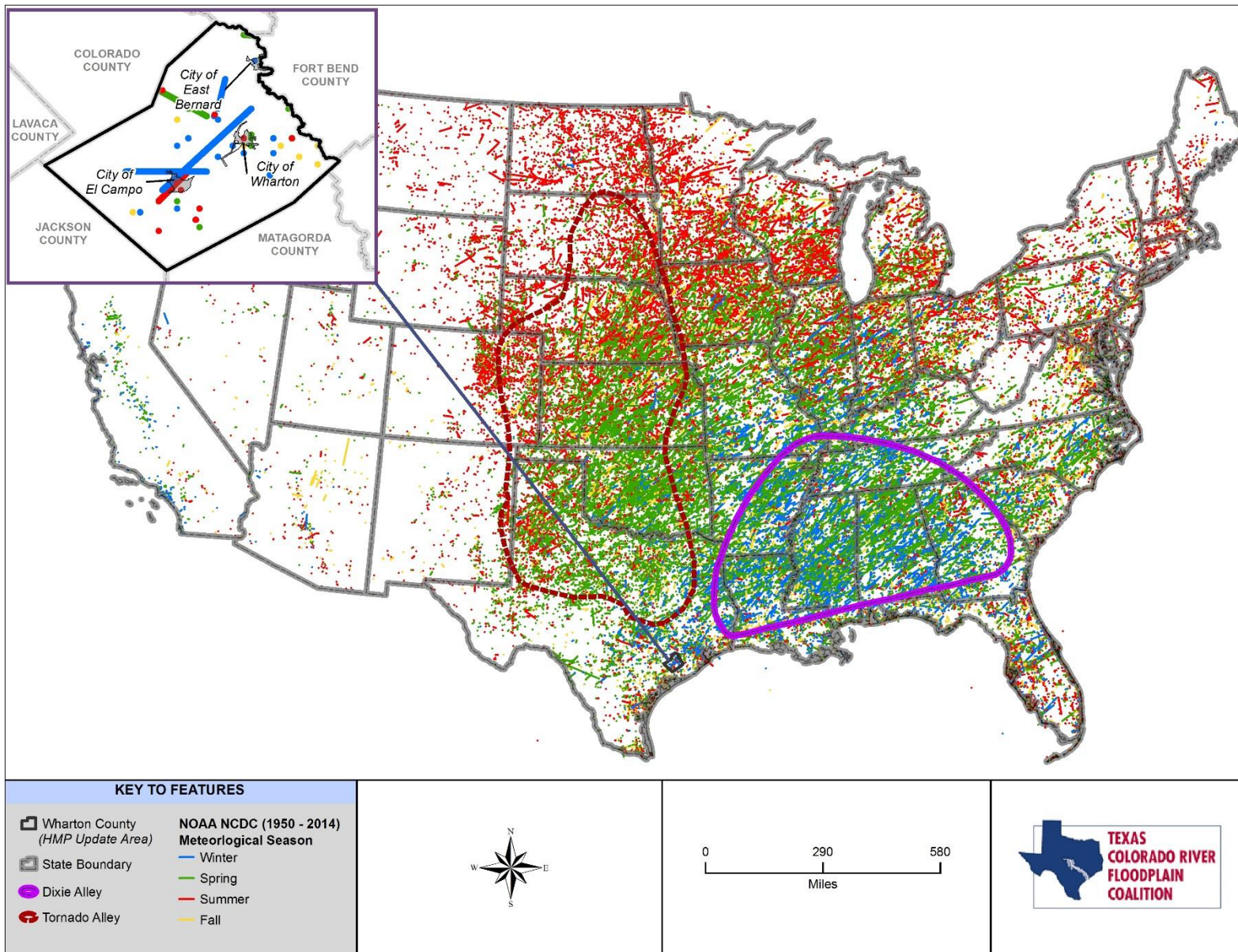


Figure 15-3. Tornado Paths in the U.S. (1950-2014)

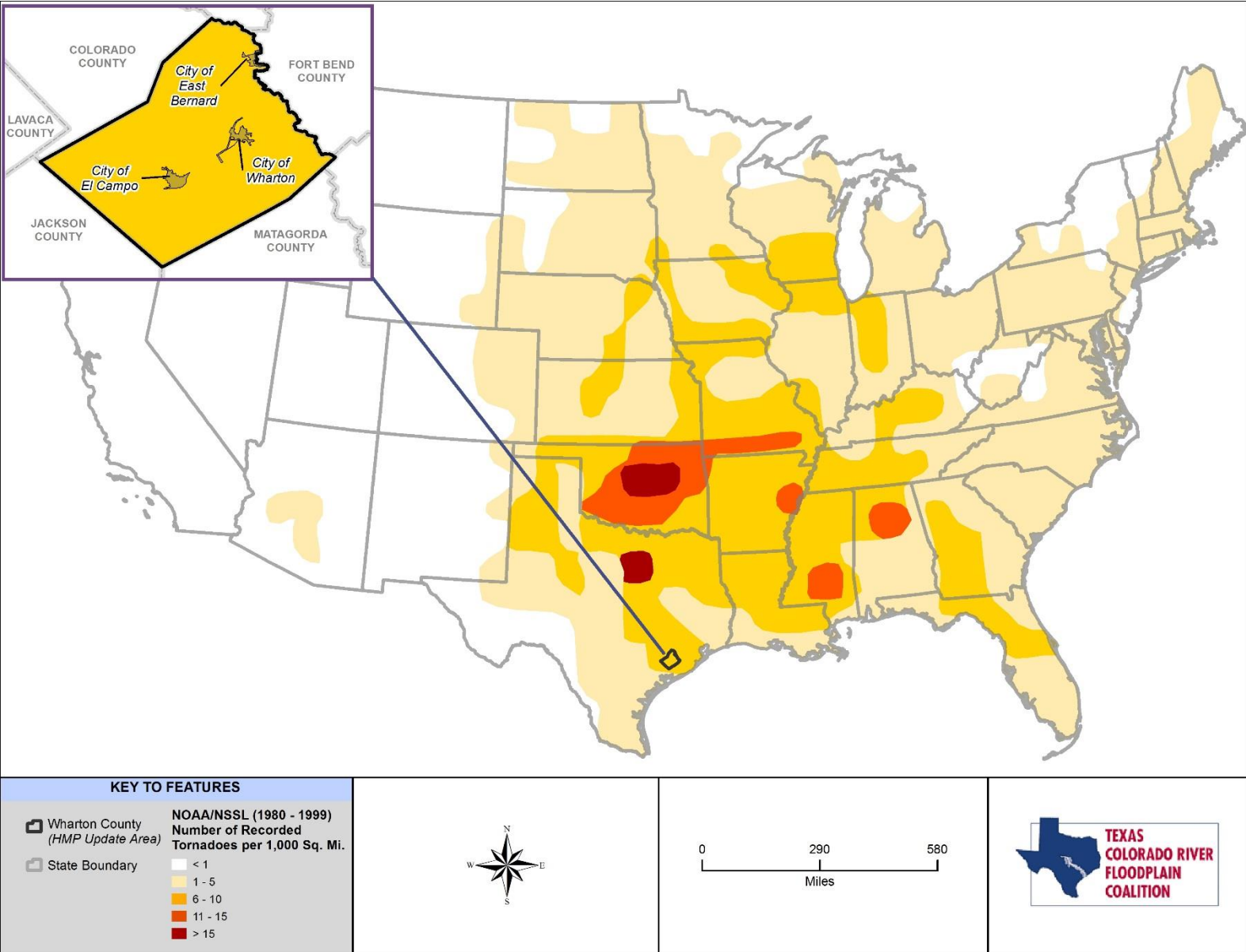


Figure 15-4. Tornado Activity in the U.S. (1950-2014)

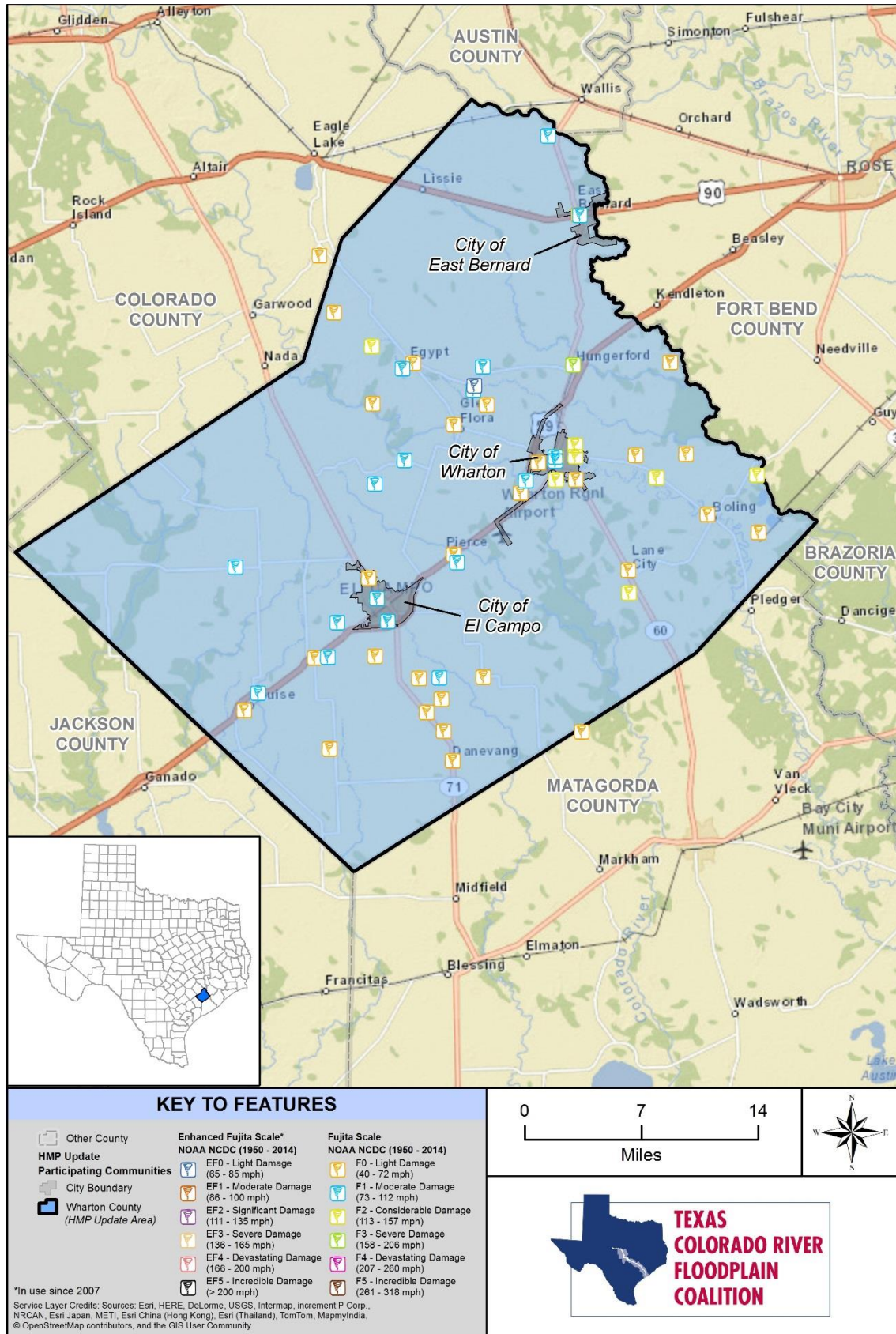


Figure 15-5. Tornado Events in Wharton County (1950-2014)

### **15.2.3 Frequency**

Tornadoes may occur in any month and at any hour of the day, but they occur with the greatest frequency during the late spring and early summer months, and between the hours of 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm. In the period of 1951 to 2011, nearly 62.7% of all Texas tornadoes occurred within the three-month period of April, May, and June, with almost one-third of the total tornadoes occurring in May.

Table 15-3 lists 32 recorded tornadoes rated F1 or higher between 1950 and 2014. Therefore, on average, a significant tornado occurs in the HMP update area once every two years. Since tornado events can occur anywhere throughout the HMP update area, each participating community has the same frequency and probability of future events (once every two years). Based on previous events, all participating jurisdictions can expect future tornado events up to a category F3.

### **15.2.4 Severity**

Tornadoes are potentially the most dangerous of local storms. If a major tornado were to strike within the populated areas of Wharton County and the participating communities, damage could be widespread. Businesses could be forced to close for an extended period or permanently, fatalities could be high, many people could be homeless for an extended period, and routine services such as telephone or power could be disrupted. Buildings may be damaged or destroyed. Historically, tornadoes have not typically been severe or caused damage in the planning area.

### **15.2.5 Warning Time**

The NOAA Storm Prediction Center issues tornado watches and warnings for Wharton County. Watches and warnings are described below:

- Tornado Watch - Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA weather radio, commercial radio, or television for information.
- Tornado Warning - A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.

Once a warning has been issued, residents may have only a matter of seconds or minutes to seek shelter.

## **15.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS**

Tornadoes may cause loss of power if utility service is disrupted. Additionally, fires may result from damages to natural gas infrastructure. Hazardous materials may be released if a structure is damaged that houses such materials or if such a material is in transport.

## **15.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

Climate change impacts on the frequency and severity of tornadoes are unclear. According to the Center for Climate Change and Energy Solutions, “Researchers are working to better understand how the building blocks for tornadoes – atmospheric instability and wind shear – will respond to global warming. It is likely that a warmer, moister world would allow for more frequent instability. However, it is also likely that a warmer world would lessen chances for wind shear. Recent trends for these quantities in the Midwest during the spring are inconclusive. It is also possible that these changes could shift the timing of tornadoes or regions that are most likely to be hit” (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions no date).

## **15.5 EXPOSURE**

Because tornadoes cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. The primary data source was the updated HAZUS inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and



2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs) augmented with state and federal data sets as well as the NOAA National Climatic Data Center Storm Event Database.

### 15.5.1 Population

It can be assumed that the entire planning area is exposed to tornadoes to some extent. Certain areas are more exposed due to geographic location (rural areas of the county) and local weather patterns.

### 15.5.2 Property

According to the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), there are 15,781 buildings within the census blocks that define the planning area with an asset replaceable value of over \$4 million (excluding contents). About 98% of these buildings (and 78% of the building value) are associated with residential housing. Within the participating communities in the HMP update area, there are an estimated 14,741 buildings (residential, commercial, and other) with a total asset inventory (excluding contents) value of over \$3.7 million. Other types of buildings in this report include agricultural, education, religious, and governmental structures. See hazard loss tables for community-specific total assessed numbers (e.g. Table 15-6).

Properties at lower elevations are more likely to be exposed to tornadoes. Table 15-4 list the exposed structures and population for each participating community.

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	830	10	9	849	2,272
City of El Campo	3,989	83	39	4,111	11,602
City of Wharton	3,021	92	23	3,136	8,832
Unincorporated Area	6,585	29	31	6,645	15,949
<b>Total</b>	14,425	214	102	14,741	38,655

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

### 15.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

All critical facilities (see Figure 6-8 and Figure 6-9) are likely vulnerable to tornadoes. The most common problems associated with this hazard are utility losses. Downed power lines can cause blackouts, leaving large areas isolated. Phone, water, and sewer systems may not function. Roads may become impassable due to downed trees or other debris.

### 15.5.4 Environment

Environmental features are exposed to tornado risk, although damages are generally localized to the path of the tornado.

## 15.6 VULNERABILITY

### 15.6.1 Population

Vulnerable populations are the elderly, low income, or linguistically isolated populations, people with life-threatening illnesses, and residents living in areas that are isolated from major roads. Power outages can be life threatening to those dependent on electricity for life support. Isolation of these populations is a significant concern. These populations face isolation and exposure after tornado events and could suffer more secondary effects of the hazard.

Individuals caught in the path of a tornado who are unable to seek appropriate shelter are especially vulnerable. This may include individuals who are out in the open, in cars, or who do not have access to basements, cellars, or safe rooms. . See Table 15-5 for population most vulnerable to tornado events per jurisdiction.

<b>TABLE 15-5 MOST VULNERABLE POPULATION</b>						
Jurisdiction	Youth Population ( < 16 )	% of Total Population	Elderly Population ( > 65 )	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	638	28.08	342	15.05	129	5.68
City of El Campo	3,400	29.31	1,646	14.19	993	8.56
City of Wharton	2,319	26.26	1,288	14.58	1,252	14.18
Unincorporated Area	3,965	24.86	2,390	14.99	1,304	8.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,322</b>	<b>26.70</b>	<b>5,666</b>	<b>14.66</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>9.51</b>

### 15.6.2 Property

All property is vulnerable during tornado events, but properties in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations (rural areas) may risk the most damage.

Loss estimations for tornadoes are not based on damage functions, because no such damage functions have been generated. Instead, loss estimates were developed representing projected damages (annualized loss) on historical events, statistical analysis, and probability factors. These were applied to the exposed value of the county and communities to create an annualized loss. Table 15-6 lists the loss estimates.

**TABLE 15-6.  
LOSS ESTIMATES FOR TORNADO EVENTS**

Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$391,249,566	\$372	<0.01
City of El Campo	\$2,159,712,947	\$4,496	<0.01
City of Wharton	\$1,416,664,643	\$2,674	<0.01
Unincorporated Area	\$2,255,940,086	\$588,833	0.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,223,567,242</b>	<b>\$596,375</b>	<b>0.01</b>

### ***Vulnerability Narrative***

Annualized losses of “negligible” are less than \$50 per year. The vulnerability of tornado events per jurisdiction are described below.

- **City of East Bernard** - Approximately 12% of the City of East Bernard’s housing is manufactured homes. This type of housing is more vulnerable to a tornado event. Loose structures and non-secured objects (such as dead trees and thick underbrush) can become flying projectiles in an event. If an event were to impact critical facilities, (such as area schools or government facilities) services could be greatly limited and residents would be negatively impacted. Facilities without an alternate power source increase their risk. Residents unaware of their risk or the hazards of tornadoes are less able to effectively protect themselves.
- **City of El Campo** - Approximately 8% of the City of El Campo’s housing is manufactured homes. Tornadoes can easily destroy poorly constructed buildings and mobile homes. Loose structures and non-secured objects (such as vehicles, dead trees and thick underbrush) can become flying projectiles in an event. Older homes constructed without the use of building codes are vulnerable as well. If an event were to strike emergency service centers or key transportation routes (such as the local police and fire stations or TX 195) emergency response times would be limited. Residents unaware of the threat of an event, such as with neighborhood alert systems, are more at risk as well.
- **City of Wharton** - Tornadoes can easily destroy poorly constructed buildings and mobile homes. Approximately 10% of the City of Wharton’s housing is manufactured homes. Loose structures, non-secured objects, and debris (such as boats, dead trees and thick underbrush) can become flying projectiles during an event. If an event were to damage major access roads such as US 90, emergency services would have limited accessibility. If a tornado were to impact critical facilities, such as police or fire departments or medical facilities, service to residents would be delayed. Communities who have not identified the areas of higher risk or who have implemented mitigation planning to incorporate measures to ensure the functionality of these facilities in the event of a tornado are more vulnerable as well.

**Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** - Approximately 17% of Wharton County’s Unincorporated Area’s housing is manufactured homes. Tornadoes can easily destroy poorly constructed buildings and mobile homes. Dead trees, branches, and non-secured structures can become flying projectiles during a tornado, placing people and property at a greater risk. Response times to rural communities and residents would be greater if major thoroughfares (such as US 59)

as well as emergency response facilities (such as police and fire departments) were impacted by an event, especially in rural areas. Communities not identifying and implementing improvements to roadways and crossings in need of maintenance increase these risks.

### **Community Perception of Vulnerability**

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

### **15.6.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

Tornadoes can cause significant damage to trees and power lines, block roads with debris, incapacitate transportation, isolate populations, and disrupt ingress and egress. Of particular concern are roads providing access to isolated areas and to the elderly. Any facility that is in the path of a tornado is likely to sustain damage.

### **15.6.4 Environment**

Environmental vulnerability will typically be the same as exposure (discussed in Section 15.5.4); however, if tornadoes impact facilities that store hazardous material, areas impacted by material releases may be especially vulnerable.

## **15.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

All future development will be affected by tornadoes, particularly development that occurs at lower elevations. Development regulations that require safe rooms, basements, or other structures that reduce risk to people would decrease vulnerability. Tornadoes that cause damage are uncommon in the county, so mandatory regulations may not be cost-effective.

## **15.8 SCENARIO**

If an F3 or higher tornado were to hit populated areas of the county, substantial damage to property and loss of life could result. Likelihood of injuries and fatalities would increase if warning time was limited before the event or if residents were unable to find adequate shelter. Damage to critical facilities and infrastructure would likely include loss of power, water, sewer, gas and communications. Roads and bridges could be blocked by debris or otherwise damaged. The most serious damage would be seen in the direct path of the tornado, but secondary effects could impact the rest of the county through loss of government services and interruptions in the transportation network. Debris from the tornado would need to be collected and properly disposed. Such an event would likely have substantial negative effects on the local economy.

## **15.9 ISSUES**

Important issues associated with a tornado in the planning area include the following:

- Older building stock in the planning area is built to low code standards or none at all. These structures could be highly vulnerable to tornadoes.
- Redundancy of power supply must be evaluated.
- The capacity for backup power generation is limited.
- Roads and bridges blocked by debris or otherwise damaged might isolate populations.
- Warning time may not be adequate for residents to seek appropriate shelter or such shelter may not be widespread throughout the planning area.
- The impacts of climate change on the frequency and severity of tornadoes are not well understood.

- Building codes may need to be updated so buildings can withstand strong wind loads or provisions may be added for tornado shelters in high risk areas.

# CHAPTER 16. WILDFIRE

WILDFIRE RANKING	
Wharton County	Medium
City of East Bernard	Low
City of El Campo	Low
City of Wharton	Low

## DEFINITIONS

**Conflagration** — A fire that grows beyond its original source area to engulf adjoining regions. Wind, extremely dry or hazardous weather conditions, excessive fuel buildup, and explosions are usually the elements behind a wildfire conflagration.

**Interface Area** — An area susceptible to wildfires and where wildland vegetation and urban or suburban development occur together. An example would be smaller urban areas and dispersed rural housing in forested areas.

**Wildfire** — Fires that result in uncontrolled destruction of forests, brush, field crops, grasslands, and real and personal property in non-urban areas. Because of their distance from firefighting resources, they can be difficult to contain and can cause a great deal of destruction.

## 16.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

According to the *2000 National Fire Plan*, the wildland fire risk is now considered by authorities as “the most significant fire service problem of the Century.”

A wildfire is any uncontrolled fire occurring on undeveloped land that requires fire suppression. Wildfires can be ignited by lightning or by human activity such as smoking, campfires, equipment use, and arson.

Fire hazards present a considerable risk to vegetation and wildlife habitats. Short-term loss caused by a wildfire can include the destruction of timber, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and watersheds. Long-term effects include smaller timber harvests, reduced access to affected recreational areas, and destruction of cultural and economic resources and community infrastructure. Vulnerability to flooding increases due to the destruction of watersheds. The potential for significant damage to life and property exists in areas designated as wildland urban interface (WUI) areas, where development is adjacent to densely vegetated areas.

Texas has seen a huge increase in the number of wildfires in the past 30 years. From January 2005 to mid-September 2006, the Texas Forest Service (TFS) responded to 4,370 wildfires that burned 1.6 million acres. More and more people are placing their homes in woodland settings in or near forests, rural areas, or remote mountain sites. Many of these homes are nestled along ridgelines, cliff-edges, and other classic fire-interface hazard zones. There, homeowners enjoy the beauty of the environment but they also face the very real danger of wildfire.

Years of fire suppression has significantly disturbed natural fire occurrences—nature’s renewal process. The result has been the gradual accumulation of understory and canopy fuels to levels of density that can feed high-energy, intense wildfires and further increase hazards from and exposure to interface problems.

### ***Fire Protection in Wharton County***

Fire protection in Wharton County is divided between volunteer fire departments, TFS, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). More information about these divisions is provided in Table 16-1. The TFS administers the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) to reduce related risks to life, property, and the environment. Its Fire Control Department provides leadership in wildland fire protection for state and private lands in Texas.

<b>TABLE 16-1. FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES</b>				
Fire Protection Service	Unincorporated Area	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton
Local Volunteer Fire Department	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Park Service	Yes	No	No	No
Bureau of Land Management	Yes	No	No	No
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas Forest Service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AgriLife	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas Interagency Coordination Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Yes	No	No	No
U.S. Forest Service	Yes	No	No	No

**Vegetation Classes in Wharton County**

General vegetation for Wharton County and Participating Communities is described in Table 16-2 and Figure 16-1. The most common vegetation classes in the county is grassland (comprising approximately 82% of the acreage in the county).

<b>TABLE 16-2. VEGETATION CLASSES IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES</b>		
Class	Acres	% of Area
Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	1,064	0.2
Deciduous Forest	25,844	3.7
Developed Land	39,522	5.7
Evergreen Forest	15,348	2.2
Grassland	566,132	82.0
Marshland	33,065	4.8
Mixed Forest	5,492	0.8
Water	4,024	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>690,491</b>	<b>100</b>

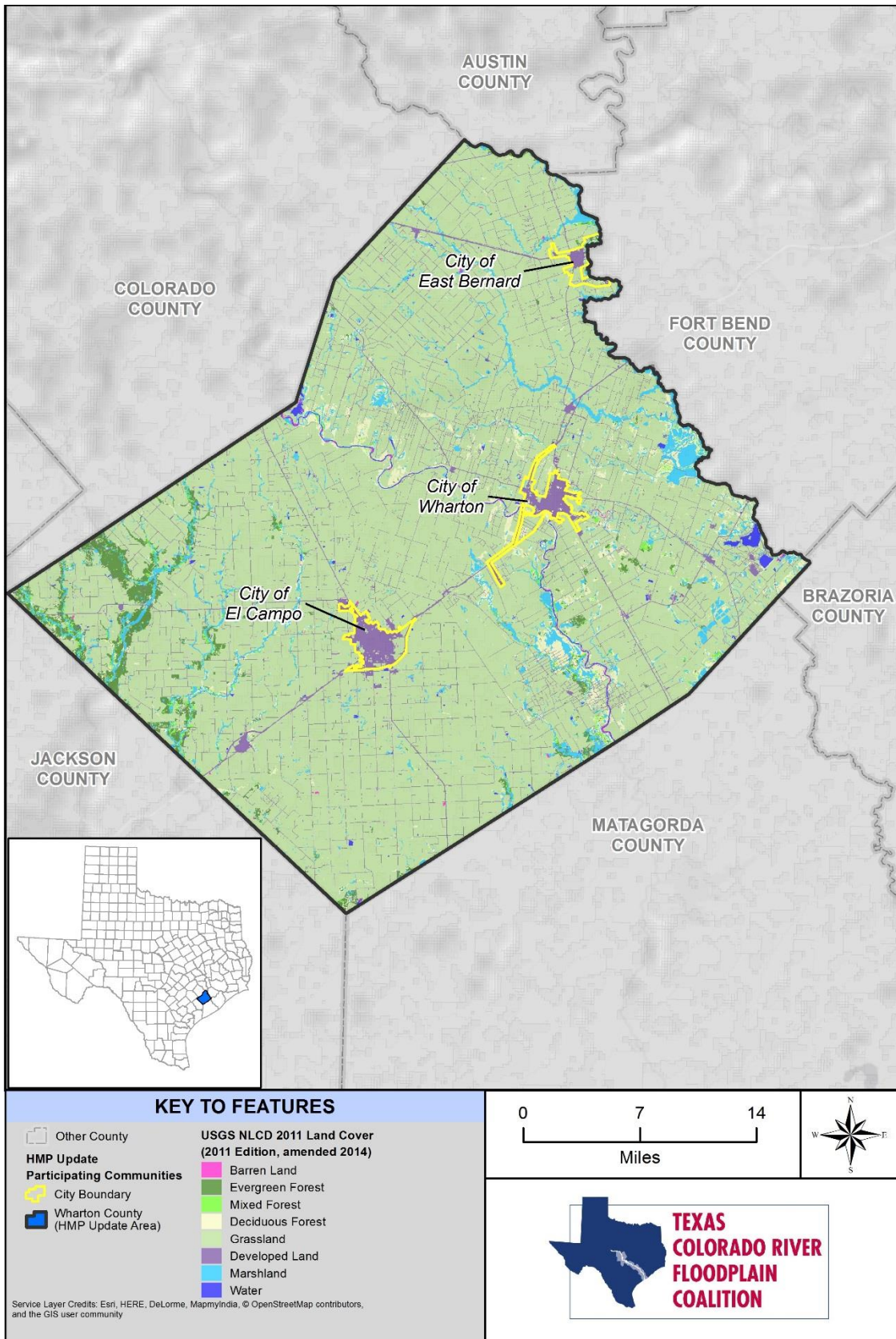


Figure 16-1. Vegetation Types in Wharton County



## 16.2 HAZARD PROFILE

### 16.2.1 Past Events

Figure 16-2 shows the locations of federally reported wildfires in Wharton County and participating communities, documented by federal and state agencies from 1980 through 2014. Recent fires larger than fifty acres are listed in Table 16-3. The locations of past wildfires in each partner community are shown on Figure 16-3 through Figure 16-5. No detailed descriptions of the wildfire events in Wharton County participating communities were available.

**TABLE 16-3.  
HISTORIC WILDFIRE EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES (50+ ACRES) (1980-2014)**

Fire ID	Name	Cause	Start Date	Acres
156472	16800 FM 1300	Debris burning	1/12/2008	100
156487	3100 CR 414	Miscellaneous	1/13/2008	50
156492	600 CR 301	Debris burning	1/13/2008	75
156690	2100 CR 310	Debris burning	4/6/2008	50
156771	1000 FM 441	Debris burning	5/18/2008	50
156942	13346 CR 394 (Fire)	Debris burning	8/10/2008	300
159915	11400 CR 365	Equipment use	10/1/2008	60
163929	2413 CR 408	Debris burning	11/27/2008	100
170207	3644 CR 410	Debris burning	12/6/2008	60
176710	12309 CR 360	Debris burning	1/2/2009	75
176796	300 CR 219	Debris burning	1/18/2009	100
176799	15400 FM 102	Debris burning	1/19/2009	100
176800	13600 CR 360	Debris burning	1/20/2009	50
176809	5900 FM 1161	Debris burning	1/24/2009	75
176818	2886 CR 475	Miscellaneous	1/30/2009	50
193180	3900 CR 377	Debris burning	3/21/2009	50
67519	RENZ FOOD PLOT FIRE	Lightning	7/23/2009	82.7
218780	1455 CR 450	Miscellaneous	8/17/2009	100
201397520	587 FM 2546	Debris Burning	3/5/2010	50

Source: TxWRAP (<https://www.texaswildfirerisk.com/>), USGS (<http://wildfire.cr.usgs.gov/firehistory/data.html>), USDA (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/rds/archive/Product/RDS-2013-0009.2/>)

Table may list more events than are shown on related figures since some recorded events do not include specific geographic coordinates (GIS-enabled data) for precise graphical representation.

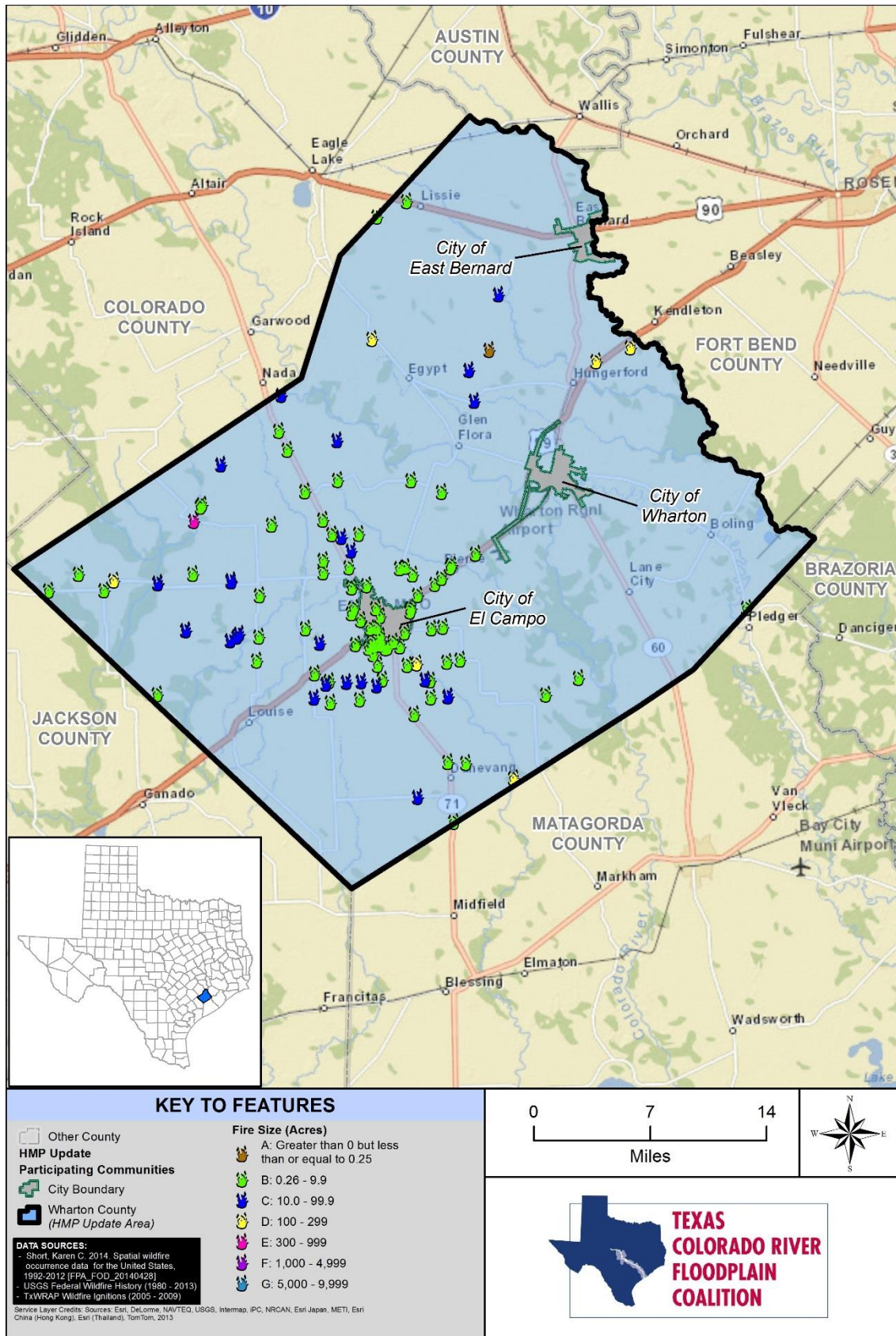


Figure 16-2. Wildfires in Wharton County and Participating Communities (1980-2014)

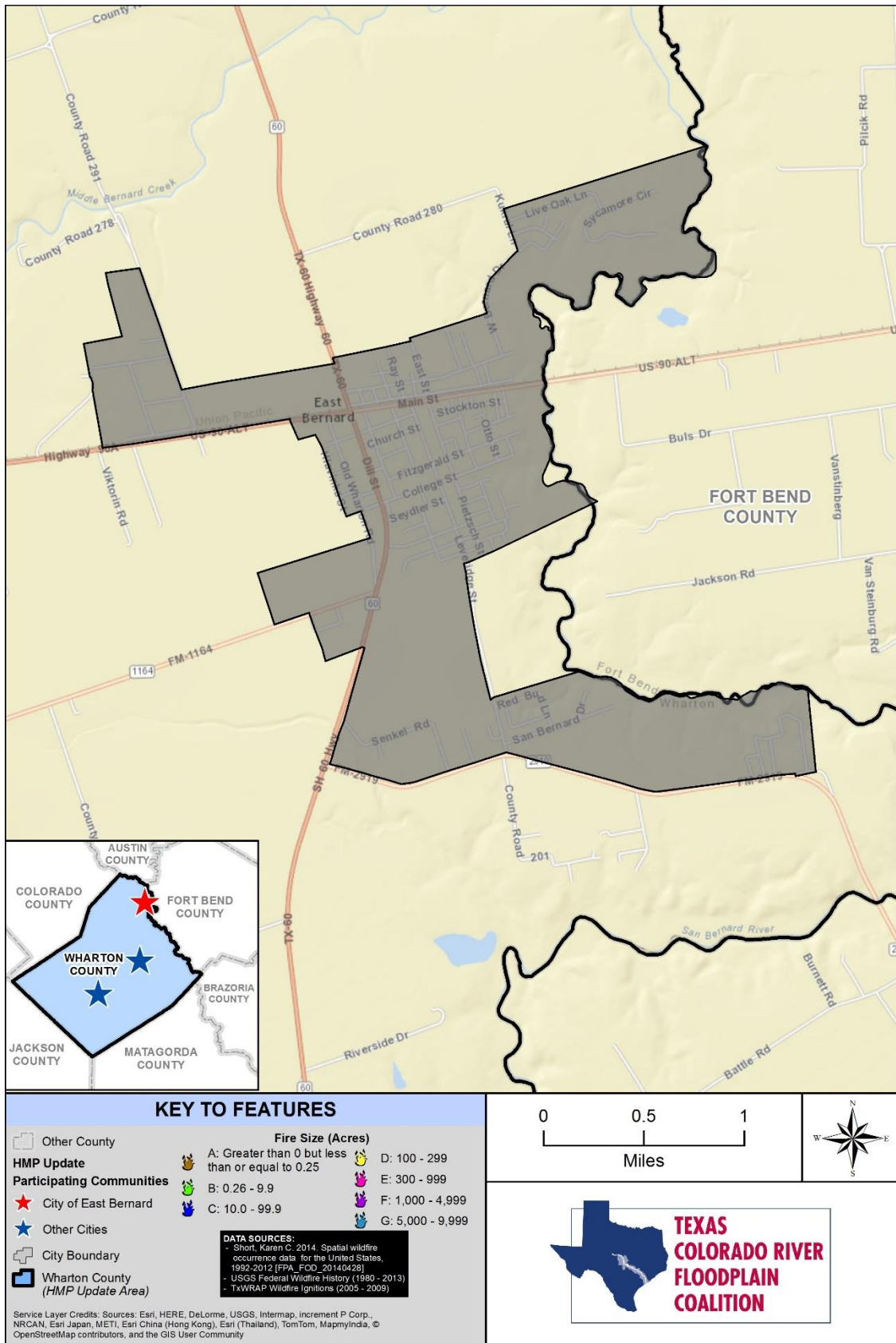


Figure 16-3. Wildfires in the City of East Bernard (1980-2014)

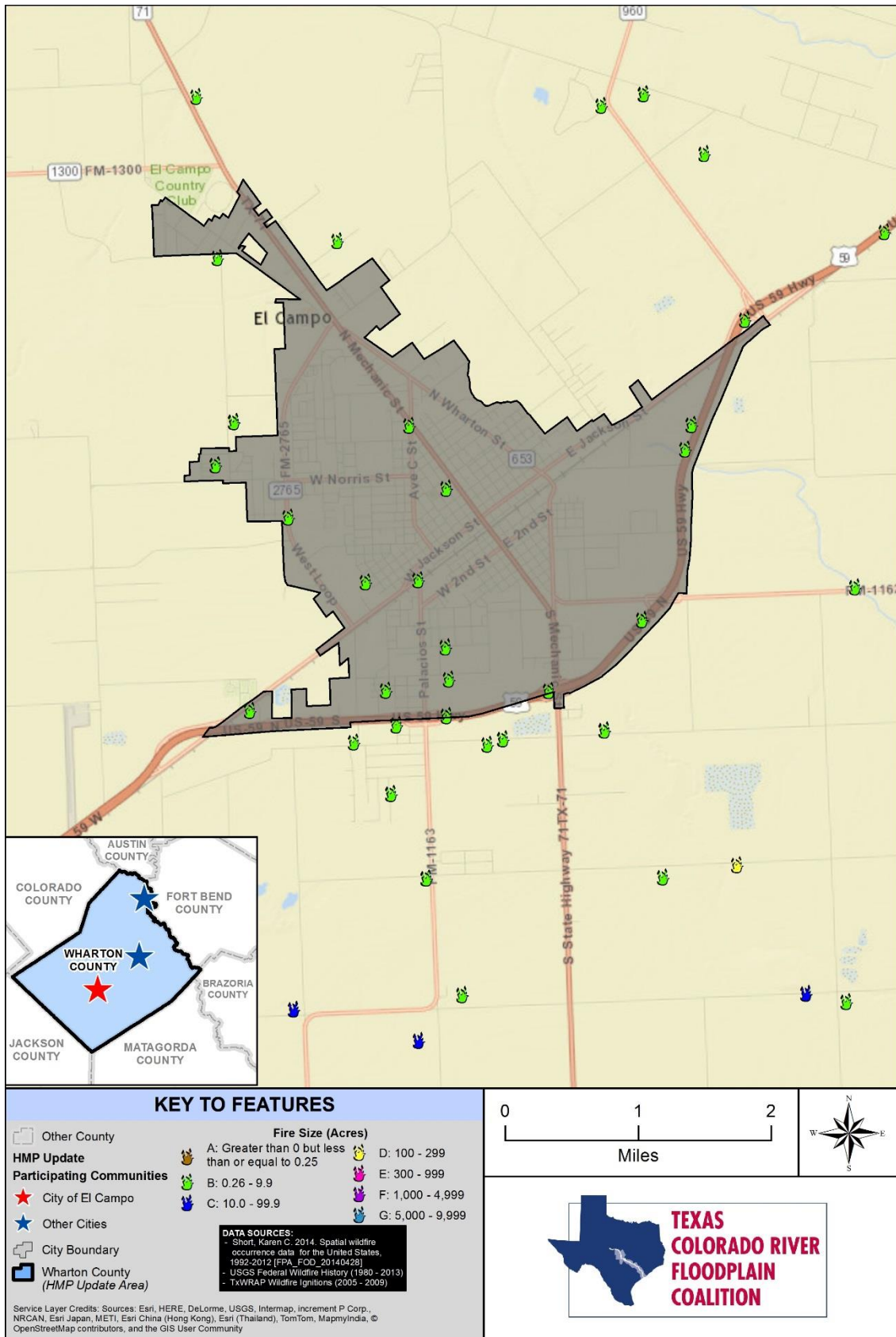


Figure 16-4. Wildfires in the City of El Campo (1980-2014)

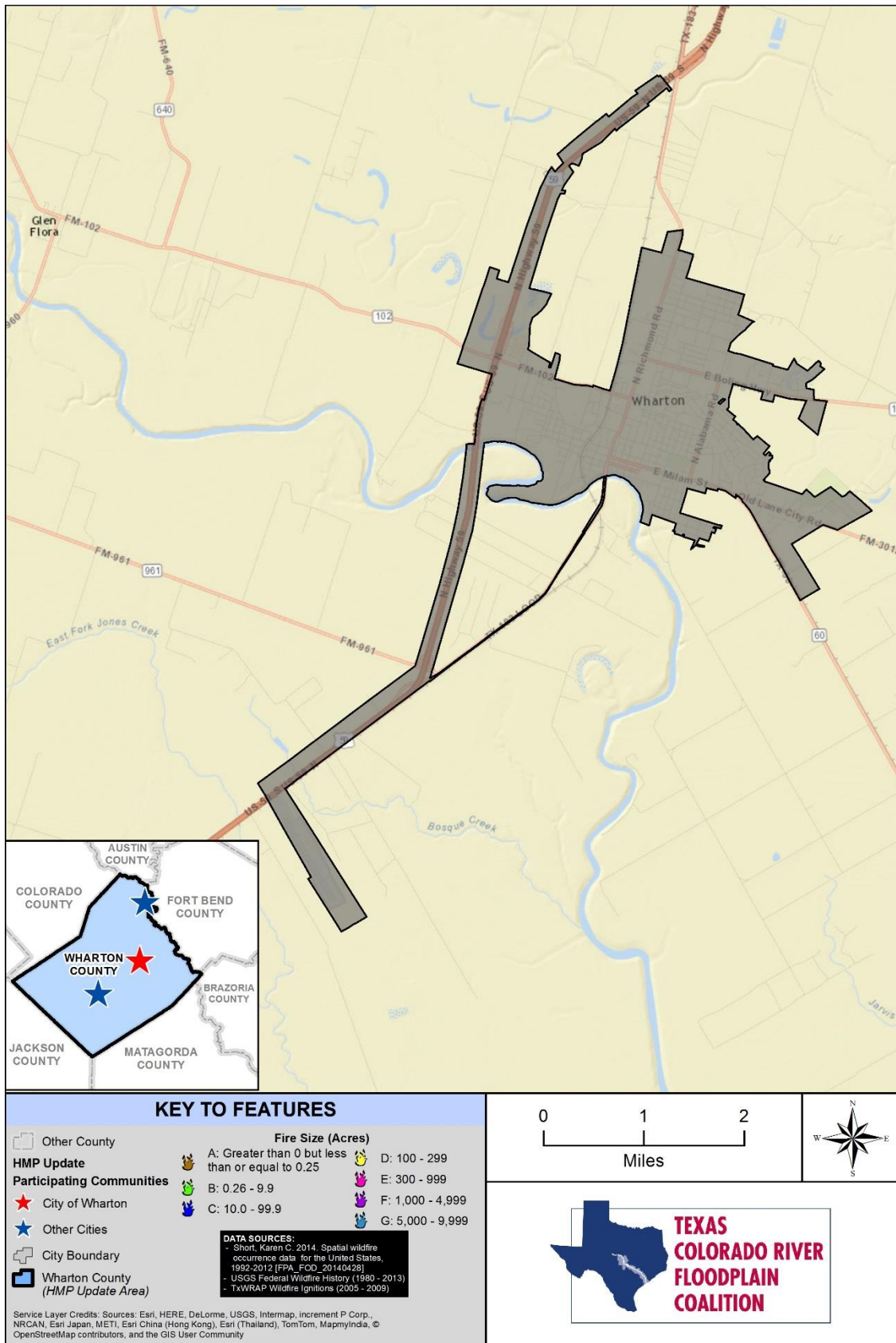


Figure 16-5. Wildfires in the City of Wharton (1980-2014)

---

## 16.2.2 Location

According to the TFS CWPP, nearly 85% of wildfires in Texas occur within two miles of a community. These wildfires pose a threat to life and property. There are approximately 14,000 communities in Texas that have been identified as “at risk” for potentially devastating fires. Figure 16-6 shows the distribution of wildfire ignitions in the Wharton County and the participating communities.

Texas is one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Much of this growth is occurring in the WUI area, where structures and other human improvements meet and mix with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Population growth within the WUI substantially increases the risk from wildfires. For Wharton County, the Texas State Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (TxWRAP) estimated that 24,923 people or 61% of the total county population (40,997) live within the WUI. The WUI layer reflects housing density depicting where humans and their structures meet or intermix with wildland fuels. Figure 16-7 shows the Wharton County housing density within the WUI.

The TxWRAP report for Wharton County and the participating communities maps the WUI Response Index, which is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes. The key input, WUI, reflects housing density (houses per acre) consistent with Federal Register National standards (Figure 16-7). The TxWRAP report states that the location of people living in the WUI and rural areas is essential for defining potential wildfire impacts to people and homes. Figure 16-8 shows the WUI Response Index for Wharton County.

According to the TxWRAP report for Wharton County, wildfire Values Response Index (VRI) layer reflects a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on values or assets. The VRI is an overall rating that combines the impact ratings for WUI (housing density) and Pine Plantations (pine age) into a single measure. VRI combines the likelihood of a fire occurring (threat) with those areas of most concern that are adversely impacted by fire to derive a single overall measure of wildfire risk. Figure 16-9 shows the VRI for Wharton County.

The TxWRAP report for Wharton County maps the Community Protection Zones (CPZ), which represent those areas considered highest priority for mitigation planning activities. CPZs are based on an analysis of the “Where People Live” housing density data and surrounding fire behavior potential. “Rate of Spread” data is used to determine the areas of concern around populated areas that are within a 2-hour fire spread distance. Figure 16-10 shows the demarcation of CPZs in Wharton County and the participating communities.

Finally, wildfire threat or Wildfire Hazard Potential (WHP) is the likelihood of a wildfire occurring or burning into an area. Threat is calculated by combining multiple landscape characteristics including surface and canopy fuels, fire behavior, historical fire occurrences, weather observations, terrain conditions, and other factors. Figure 16-11 through Figure 16-14 maps the WHP for Wharton County and the participating communities and each partner community as identified in the 2014 USDA Forest Service, Fire Modeling Institute WHP using data from 1992 to 2012. On its own, WHP is not an explicit map of wildfire threat or risk, but when paired with spatial data depicting highly valued resources and assets such as structures or power lines, it can approximate relative wildfire risk to those specific resources and assets. WHP is also not a forecast or wildfire outlook for any particular season, as it does not include any information on current or forecasted weather or fuel moisture conditions. It is instead intended for long-term strategic fuels management and appropriate for regional, county, or local protection mitigation or prevention planning.

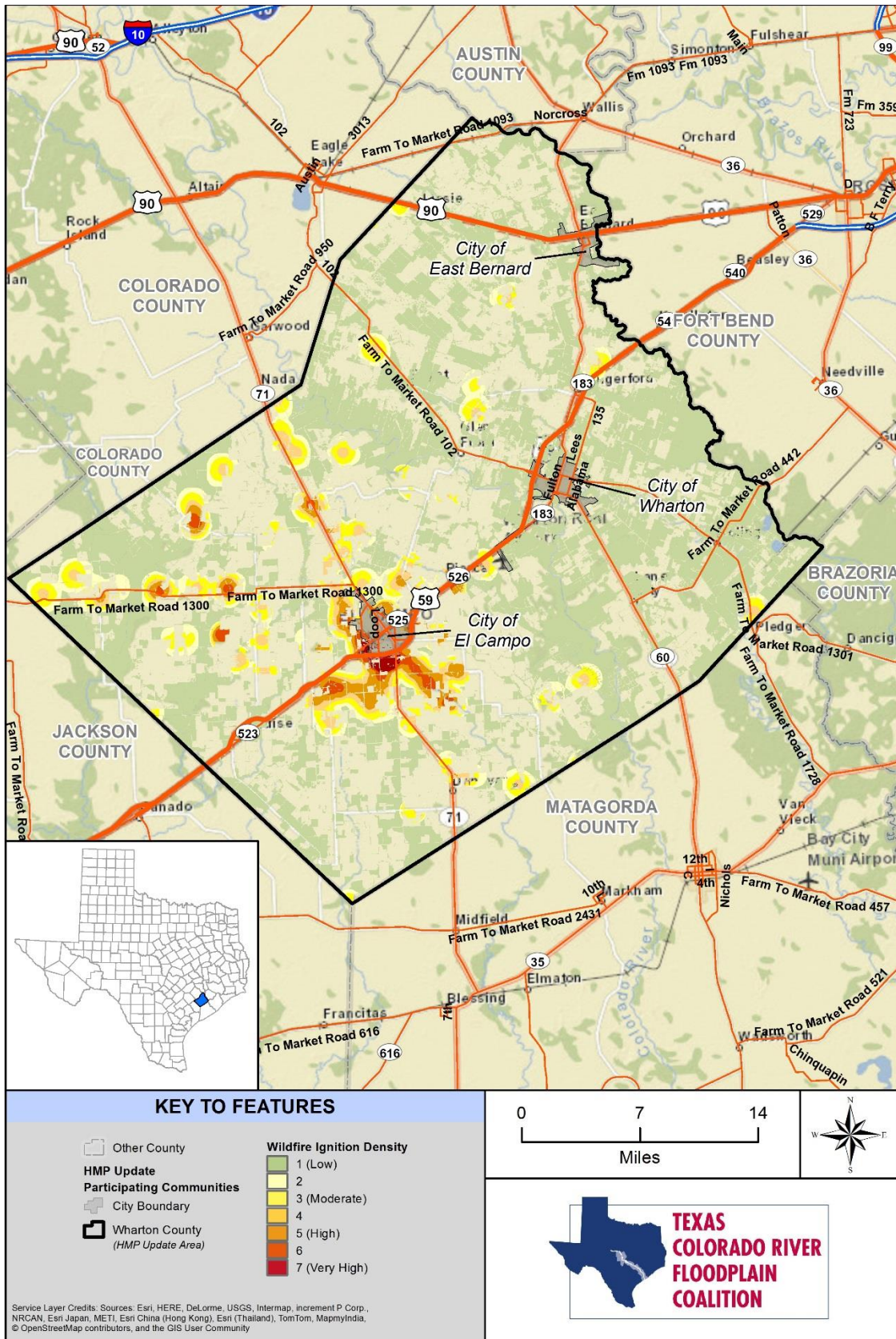


Figure 16-6. Wharton County Wildfire Ignitions Distribution and Participating Communities

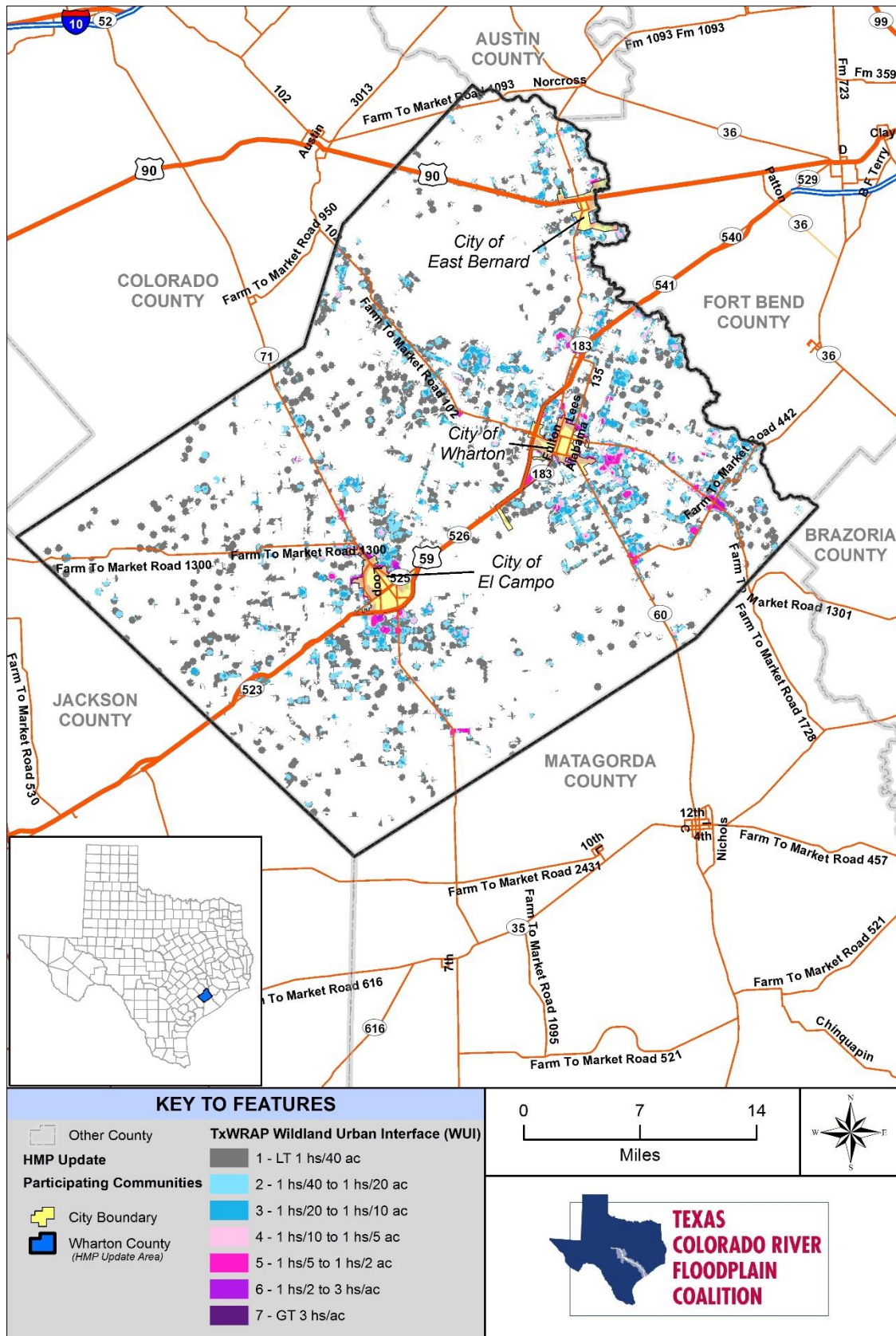


Figure 16-7. Wharton County Wildland Urban Interface and Participating Communities



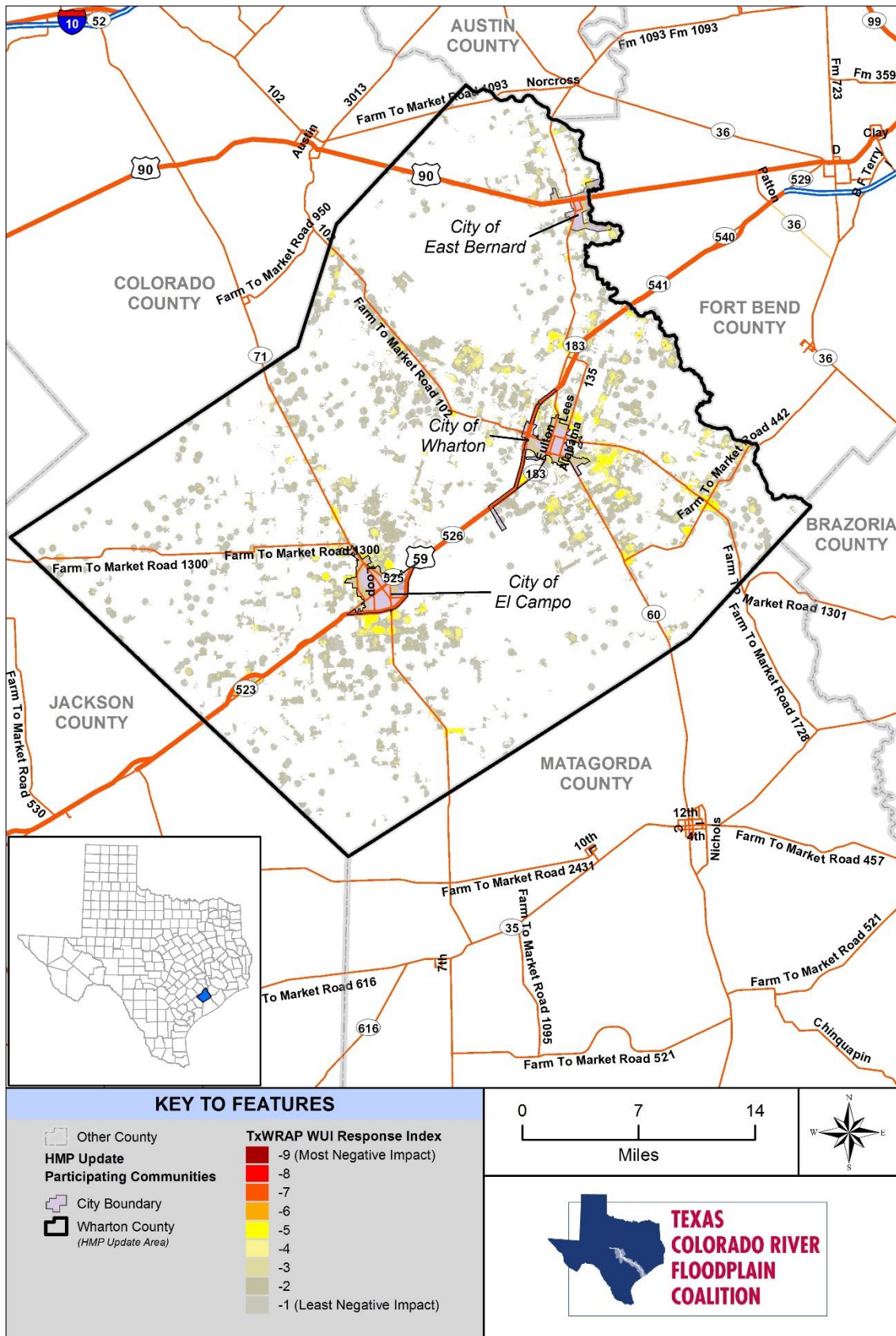


Figure 16-8. Wharton County Wildland Urban Interface Response Index and Participating Communities

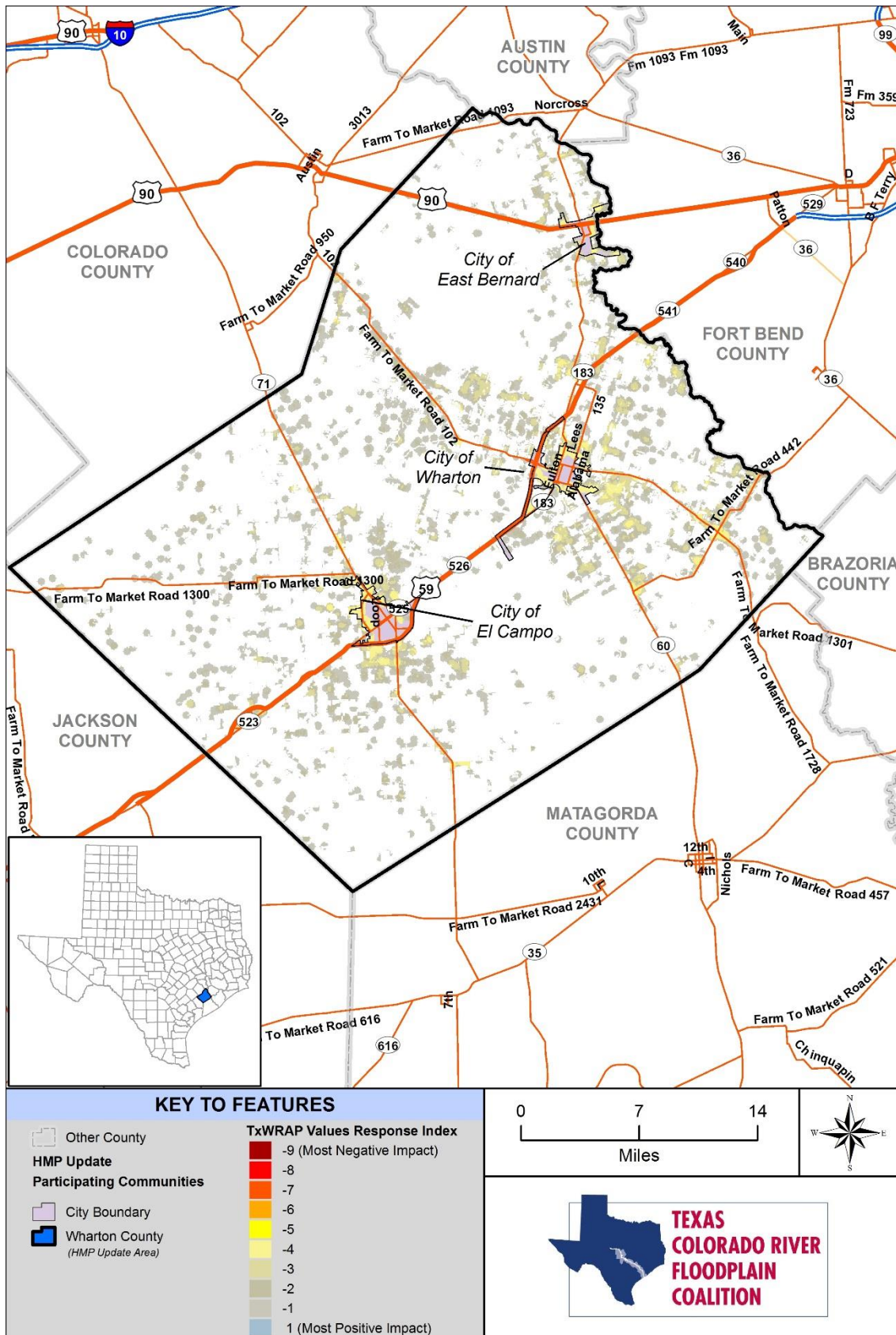


Figure 16-9. Wharton County Wildfire Values Response Index and Participating Communities

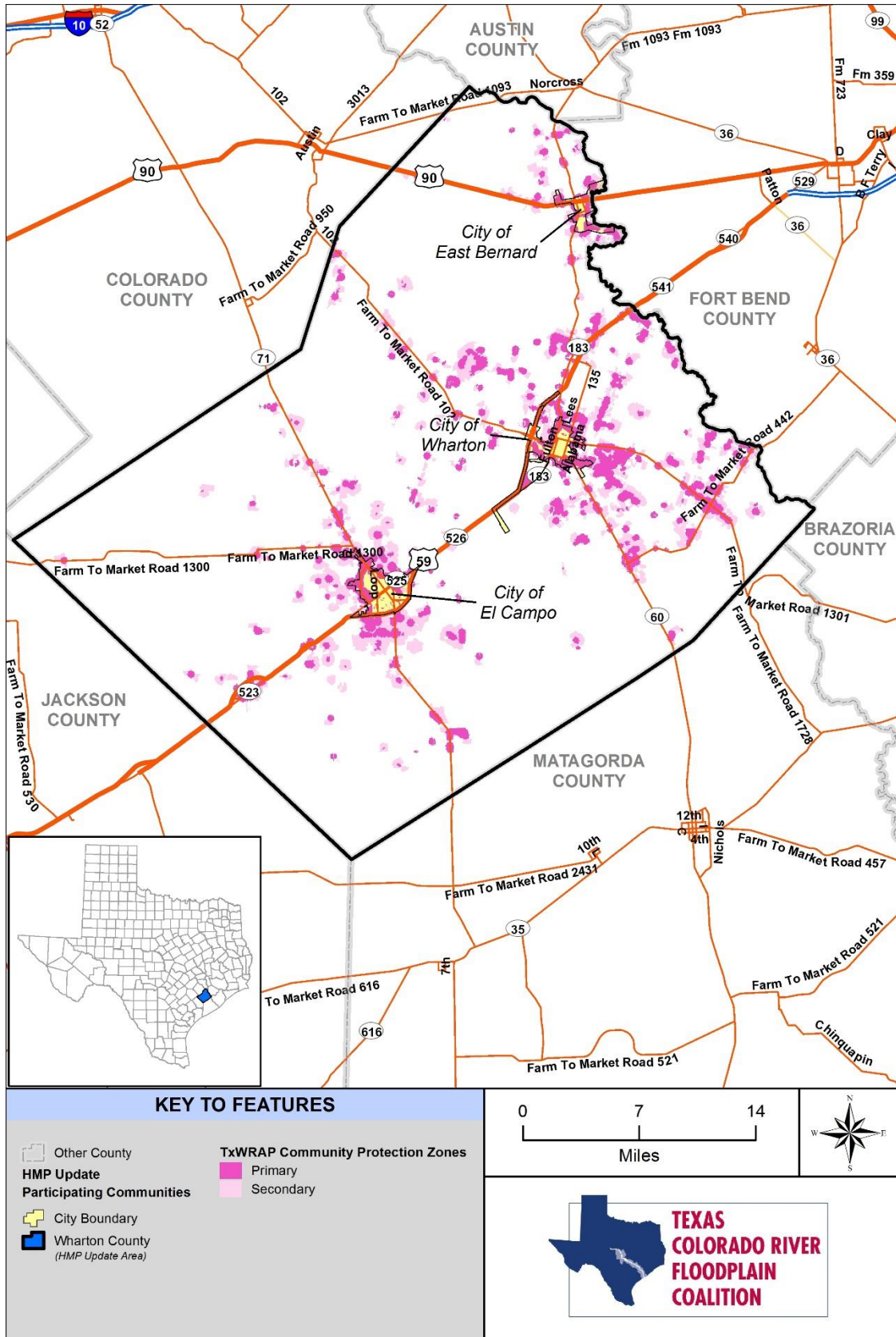


Figure 16-10. Wharton County Wildfire Community Protection Zones and Participating Communities

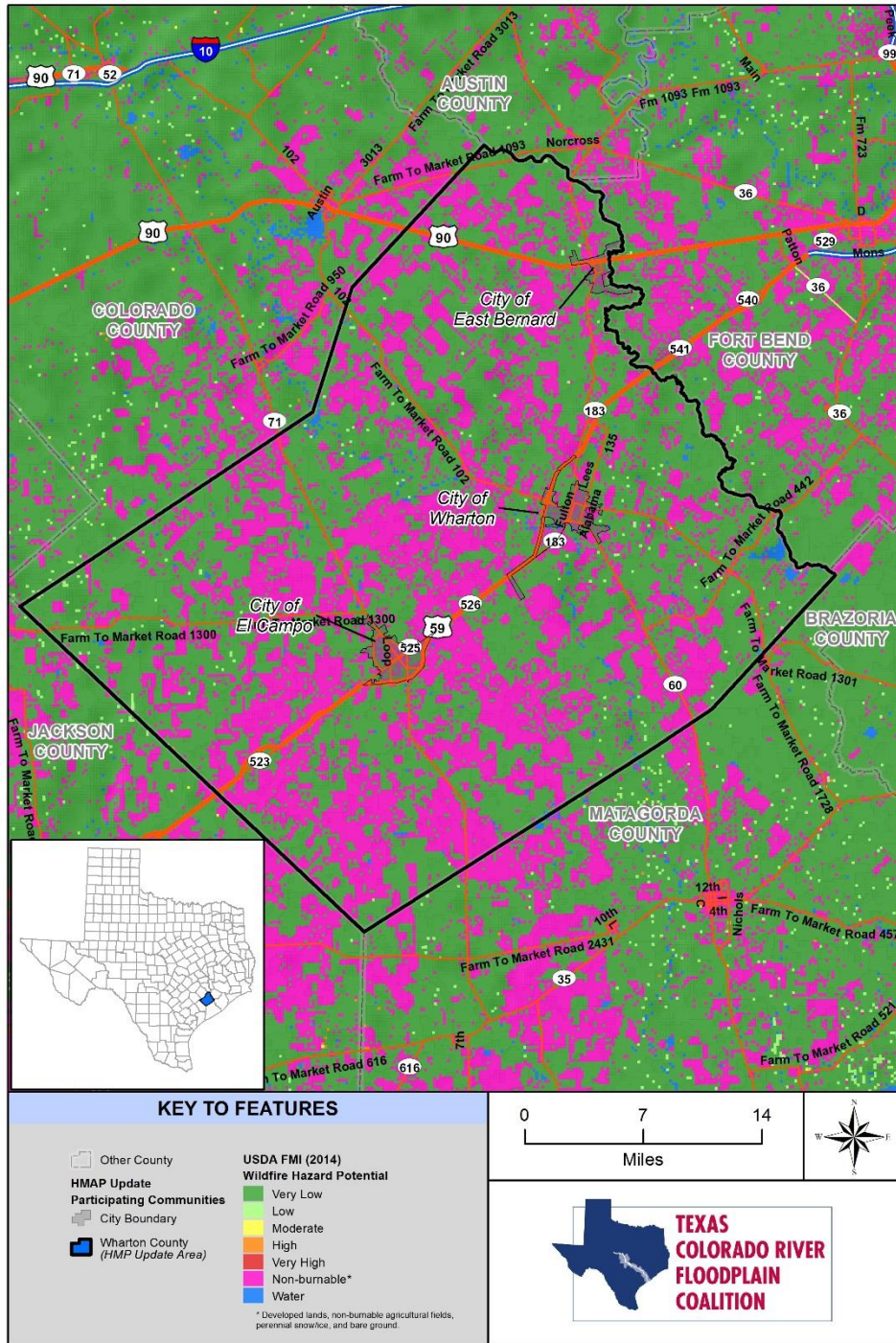


Figure 16-11. Wharton County Wildfire Hazard Potential

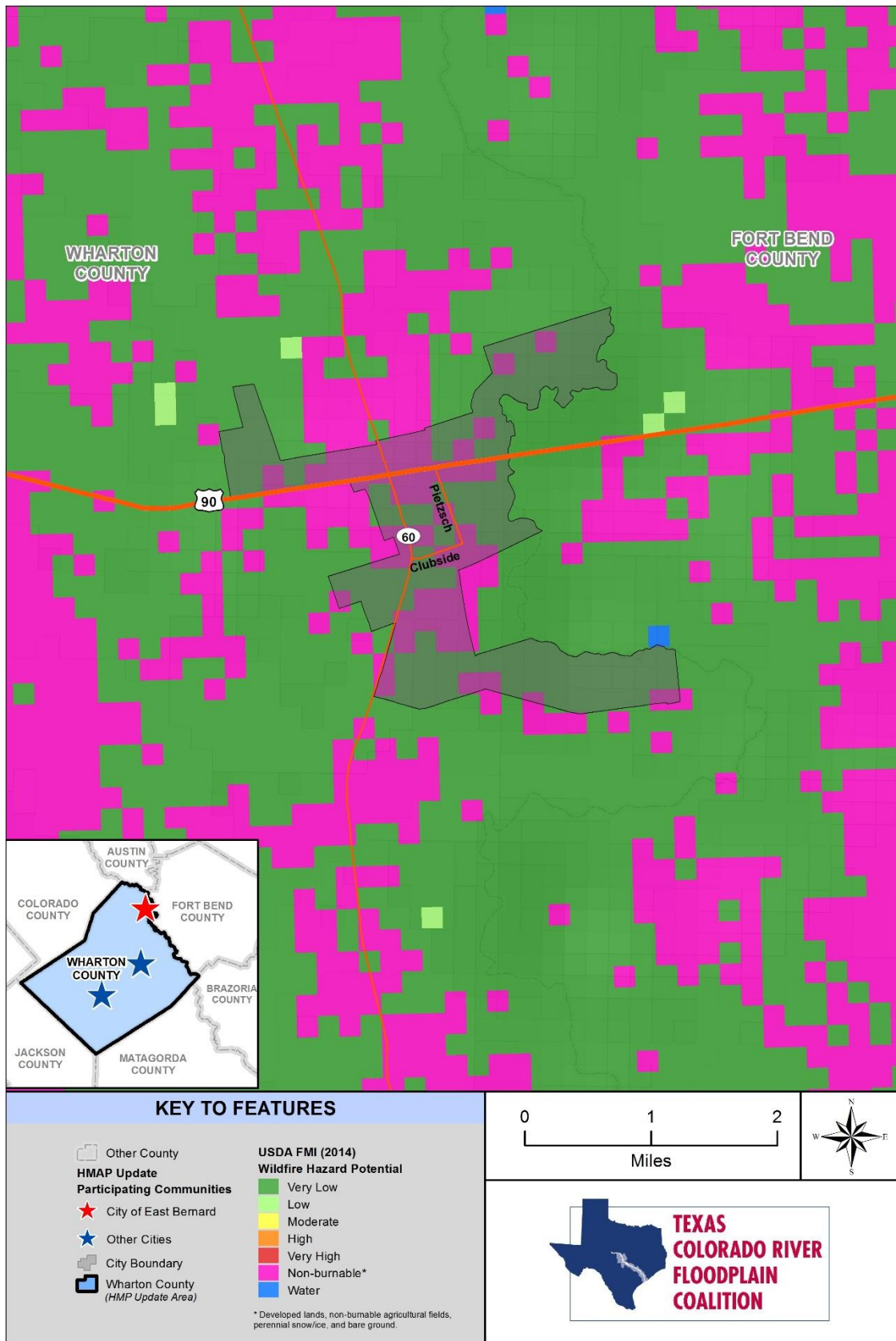


Figure 16-12. City of East Bernard Wildfire Hazard Potential

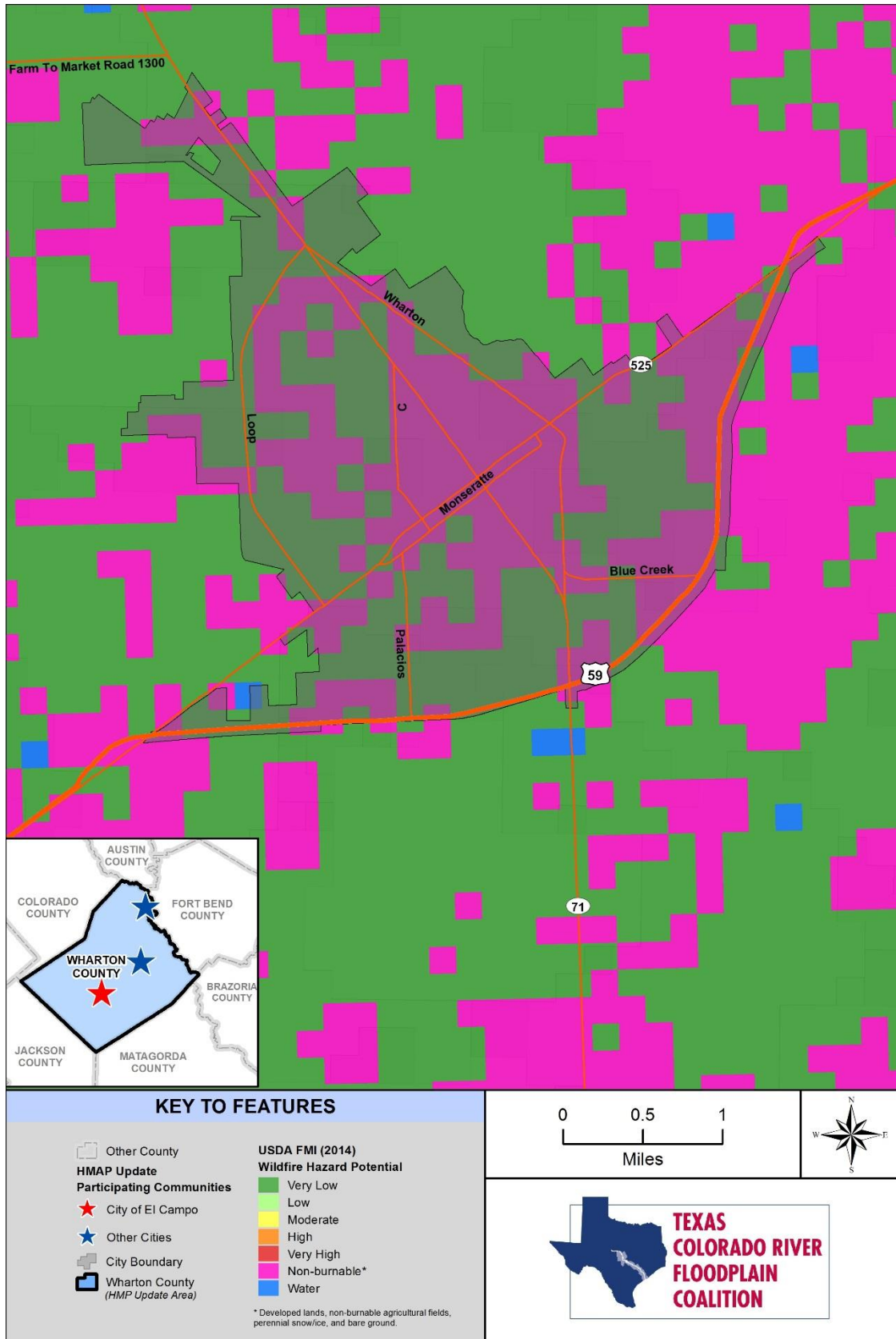


Figure 16-13. City of El Campo Wildfire Hazard Potential

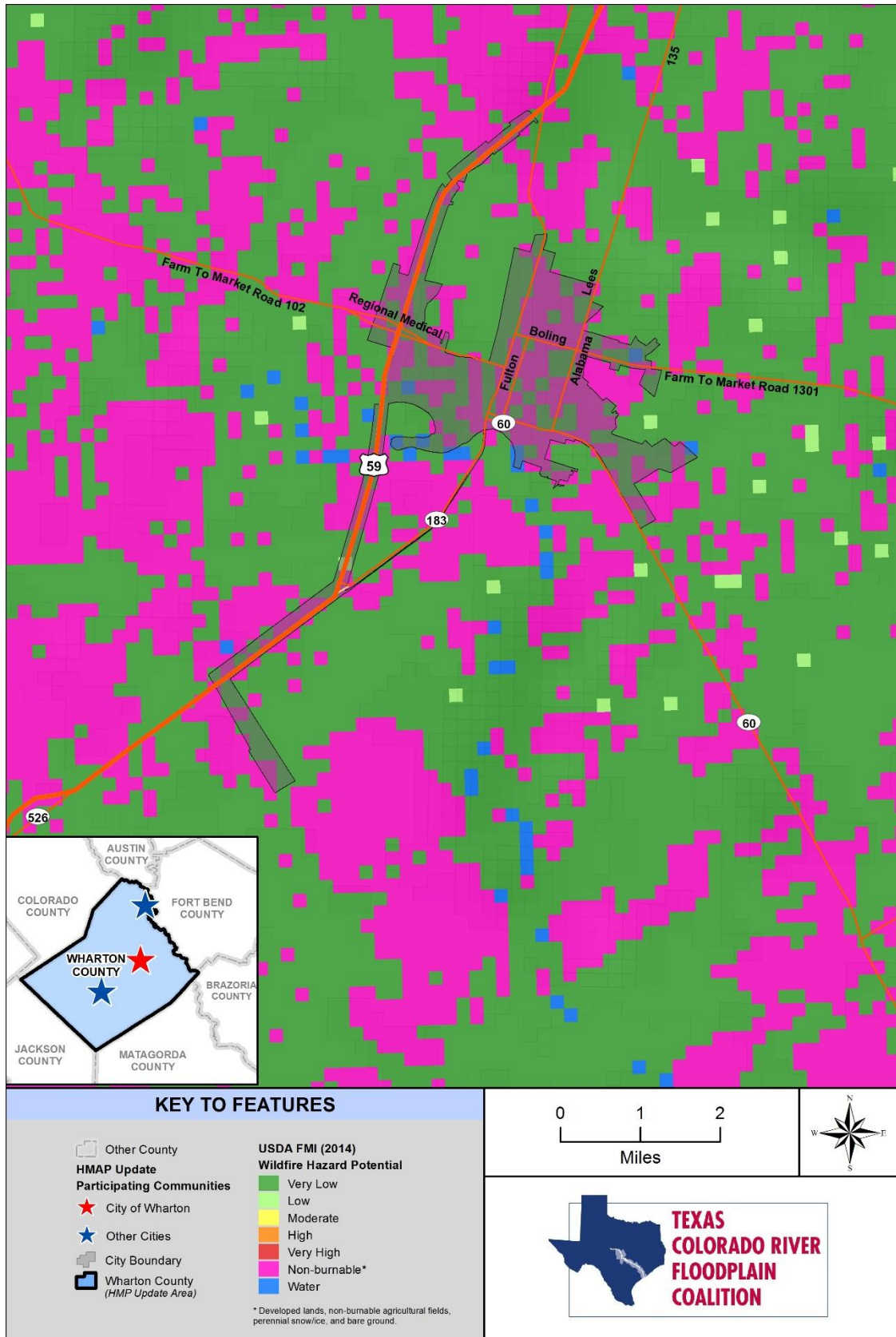


Figure 16-14. City of Wharton Wildfire Hazard Potential

### 16.2.3 Frequency

According to the TFS, there is a 100% chance that at least one wildfire will occur each year in Wharton County. Wildfires occur throughout the year and these fires are expected to be greater than 50 acres in size.

Based on previous events and historical records, there is 100% chance of an event occurring in Wharton County unincorporated areas. There is a 1% chance of an event occurring in the City of El Campo. There is a <1% chance of an event occurring in the City of East Bernard and Wharton. The probability of future events are the same for the respective participating communities. Future events are expected to be similar in size (greater than 50 acres) and strength to previous events. Previous events are listed on Table 16-3 and displayed on Figure 16-2 through Figure 16-5.

### 16.2.4 Severity

The overall significance of the hazard for Wharton County Unincorporated area is considered high (event possible in the next year). The City of El Campo, East Bernard, and Wharton have an overall unlikely event significance (event probable in next 10 years). Based on the information in this hazard profile, and the widespread impacts, the magnitude/severity of severe wildfires is considered moderate. Moderate impact indicates there are few deaths or injuries; limited property damage; interruption of essential facilities and services; or economic impact of Wharton County and the participating communities.

### 16.2.5 Warning Time

Wildfires are often caused by humans, intentionally or accidentally. There is no way to predict when one might break out. Because fireworks often cause brush fires, extra diligence is warranted around the Fourth of July when the use of fireworks is highest. Dry seasons and droughts are factors that greatly increase fire likelihood. Dry lightning may trigger wildfires. Severe weather can be predicted, so special attention can be paid during weather events that may include lightning. Reliable NWS lightning warnings are available on average 24 to 48 hours before a significant electrical storm.

If a fire does break out and spreads rapidly, residents may need to evacuate within days or hours. A fire's peak burning period generally is between 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Once a fire has started, fire alerting is reasonably rapid in most cases. The rapid spread of cellular and two-way radio communications in recent years has further contributed to a significant improvement in warning time.

## 16.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS

Wildfires can generate a range of secondary effects, which in some cases may cause more widespread and prolonged damage than the fire itself. Fires can cause direct economic losses in the reduction of harvestable timber and indirect economic losses in reduced tourism. Wildfires cause the contamination of reservoirs, destroy transmission lines, and contribute to flooding. They strip slopes of vegetation, exposing them to greater amounts of runoff. This in turn can weaken soils and cause failures on slopes. Major landslides can occur several years after a wildfire. Most wildfires burn hot and for long durations that can bake soils, especially those high in clay content, increasing the imperviousness of the ground. This increases the runoff generated by storm events, thus increasing the chance of flooding.

## 16.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Fire in western ecosystems is affected by climate variability, local topography, and human intervention. Climate change has the potential to affect multiple elements of the wildfire system: fire behavior, ignitions, fire management, and vegetation fuels. Hot, dry spells create the highest fire risk. Increased temperatures may intensify wildfire danger by warming and drying out vegetation. When climate alters fuel loads and fuel moisture, forest susceptibility to wildfires changes. Climate change also may increase winds that spread fires. Faster fires are harder to contain, and thus are more likely to expand into residential neighborhoods.



Historically, drought patterns in the West and Midwest are related to large-scale climate patterns in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The El Niño–Southern Oscillation in the Pacific varies on a 5- to 7-year cycle, the Pacific Decadal Oscillation varies on a 20- to 30-year cycle, and the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation varies on a 65- to 80-year cycle. As these large-scale ocean climate patterns vary in relation to each other, drought conditions in the U.S. shift from region to region.

Climate scenarios project summer temperature increases between 2 and 5 degrees Celsius (35.6 to 41°F) and precipitation decreases of up to 15% by 2100. Such conditions would exacerbate summer drought and further promote wildfires, releasing stores of carbon and further contributing to the buildup of greenhouse gases. Forest response to increased atmospheric carbon dioxide – the so-called “fertilization effect” – could also contribute to more tree growth and thus more fuel for fires, but the effects of carbon dioxide on mature forests are still largely unknown. High carbon dioxide levels should enhance tree recovery after fire and young forest regrowth, as long as sufficient nutrients and soil moisture are available, although the latter is in question for many parts of the western United States because of climate change.

## 16.5 EXPOSURE

Since wildfire cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. The primary data source was the updated HAZUS inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs) augmented with state and federal data sets as well as TxWRAP, USGS Federal Wildfire History, Fire Program Analysis Fire-Occurrence Database (FPA-FOD), CWPP, and the USDA WHP Data. Information for the exposure analyses provided in the sections below was based on data sources above..

### 16.5.1 Population

Population estimates within the WHP areas are shown in Table 16-4.

Jurisdiction	Non-Burnable*	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
City of East Bernard	978	1,293	0	0	0	0	2,271
City of El Campo	7,366	4,235	0	0	0	0	11,601
City of Wharton	5,658	3,064	0	0	0	0	8,722
Unincorporated Area	5,413	10,360	99	0	1	0	15,873
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>19,415</b>	<b>18,952</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38,467</b>

\* Non-Burnable classification includes developed lands, non-burnable agricultural fields, perennial snow or ice, bare ground, and permanent water areas

### 16.5.2 Property

Property damage from wildfires can be severe and can significantly alter entire communities. Table 16-5 through Table 16-9 display the number of structures in the various wildfire hazard zones within the planning area and their values. For all tables, property data are from the HAZUS 2014 data inventory (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs).

**TABLE 16-5.  
EXPOSURE AND VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN VERY LOW WILDFIRE RISK AREAS**

Jurisdiction	Exposed Buildings	Value Exposed (\$)			% of Total Assessed Value
		Structure	Contents	Total	
City of East Bernard	479	130,075,680	72,894,402	<b>202,970,082</b>	51.88
City of El Campo	1,505	462,296,185	314,375,228	<b>776,671,413</b>	35.96
City of Wharton	1,119	302,563,552	209,024,035	<b>511,587,587</b>	36.11
Unincorporated Area	4,321	927,071,650	556,189,776	<b>1,483,261,426</b>	65.75
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>7,424</b>	<b>1,822,007,067</b>	<b>1,152,483,441</b>	<b>2,974,490,508</b>	<b>47.79</b>

**TABLE 16-6.  
EXPOSURE AND VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN LOW WILDFIRE RISK AREAS**

Jurisdiction	Exposed Buildings	Value Exposed (\$)			% of Total Assessed Value
		Structure	Contents	Total	
City of East Bernard	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	Negligible
City of El Campo	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	Negligible
City of Wharton	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	Negligible
Unincorporated Area	35	6,847,689	4,005,465	<b>10,853,154</b>	0.48
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>6,547,689</b>	<b>4,005,465</b>	<b>10,553,154</b>	<b>0.17</b>

<b>TABLE 16-7. EXPOSURE AND VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN MODERATE WILDFIRE RISK AREAS</b>					
Jurisdiction	Exposed Buildings	Value Exposed (\$)			% of Total Assessed Value
		Structure	Contents	Total	
City of East Bernard	0	0	0	0	0
City of El Campo	0	0	0	0	0
City of Wharton	0	0	0	0	0
Unincorporated Area	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>TABLE 16-8. EXPOSURE AND VALUE OF STRUCTURES IN HIGH WILDFIRE RISK AREAS</b>					
Jurisdiction	Exposed Buildings	Value Exposed (\$)			% of Total Assessed Value
		Structure	Contents	Total	
City of East Bernard	0	0	0	0	0
City of El Campo	0	0	0	0	0
City of Wharton	0	0	0	0	0
Unincorporated Area	1	186,757	130,872	317,629	<0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>186,757</b>	<b>130,872</b>	<b>317,629</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

Jurisdiction	Exposed Buildings	Value Exposed (\$)			% of Total Assessed Value
		Structure	Contents	Total	
City of East Bernard	0	0	0	0	0
City of El Campo	0	0	0	0	0
City of Wharton	0	0	0	0	0
Unincorporated Area	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### ***Present Land Use***

Present land use for each wildfire risk area is described in Table 16-10.

Present Land Cover Class	Wildfire Risk Class and Area (acres)				
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	532	7	0	0	0
Deciduous Forest	22,794	417	0	4	0
Developed Land	22,343	99	0	0	0
Evergreen Forest	14,258	369	0	11	0
Grassland	319,376	1,037	4	31	0
Marshland	29,781	398	0	8	0
Mixed Forest	5,014	99	0	0	0
Open Water	1,601	18	0	0	0

### **16.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

Table 16-11 identifies critical facilities exposed to the wildfire hazard in the county.

<b>TABLE 16-11. CRITICAL FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PER WILDFIRE RISK CLASS</b>					
	Critical Facilities and Infrastructure per Wildfire Risk Class				
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Medical and Health	2	0	0	0	0
Government Functions	1	0	0	0	0
Protective Functions	1	0	0	0	0
Schools	8	0	0	0	0
Hazardous Materials	6	0	0	0	0
Bridges	202	1	0	0	0
Water Storage	1	0	0	0	0
Wastewater	4	0	0	0	0
Power	1	0	0	0	0
Communications	3	0	0	0	0
Transportation	2	0	0	0	0
Dams	5	0	0	0	0

### 16.5.4 Environment

Fire is a natural and critical ecosystem process in most terrestrial ecosystems, dictating in part the types, structure, and spatial extent of native vegetation. However, wildfires can cause severe environmental impacts:

- **Soil Erosion** – The protective covering provided by foliage and dead organic matter is removed, leaving the soil fully exposed to wind and water erosion. Accelerated soil erosion occurs, causing landslides and threatening aquatic habitats.
- **Spread of Invasive Plant Species** – Non-native woody plant species frequently invade burned areas. When weeds become established, they can dominate the plant cover over broad landscapes, and become difficult and costly to control.
- **Disease and Insect Infestations** – Unless diseased or insect-infested trees are swiftly removed, infestations and disease can spread to healthy forests and private lands. Timely active management actions are needed to remove diseased or infested trees.
- **Destroyed Endangered Species Habitat** – Catastrophic fires can have devastating consequences for endangered species.
- **Soil Sterilization** – Topsoil exposed to extreme heat can become water repellant, and soil nutrients may be lost. It can take decades or even centuries for ecosystems to recover from a fire. Some fires burn so hot that they can sterilize the soil.

Many ecosystems are adapted to historical patterns of fire occurrence. These patterns, called “fire regimes,” include temporal attributes (e.g., frequency and seasonality), spatial attributes (e.g., size and spatial complexity), and magnitude attributes (e.g., intensity and severity), each of which have ranges of natural variability. Ecosystem stability is threatened when any of the attributes for a given fire regime diverge from its range of natural variability.

## 16.6 VULNERABILITY

Structures, aboveground infrastructure, critical facilities, agricultural area (crops and structures), and natural environments are all vulnerable to the wildfire hazard. There is currently no validated damage function available to support wildfire mitigation planning. Except as discussed in this section, vulnerable populations, property, infrastructure, and environment are assumed to be the same as described in the section on exposure.

### 16.6.1 Population

Smoke and air pollution from wildfires can be a severe health hazard, especially for sensitive populations, including children, the elderly, and those with respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Smoke generated by wildfire consists of visible and invisible emissions that contain particulate matter (soot, tar, water vapor, and minerals), gases (carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides), and toxics (formaldehyde, benzene). Emissions from wildfires depend on the type of fuel, the moisture content of the fuel, the efficiency (or temperature) of combustion, and the weather. Public health impacts associated with wildfire include difficulty in breathing, odor, and reduction in visibility.

Wildfire may also threaten the health and safety of those fighting the fires. First responders are exposed to the dangers from the initial incident and after-effects from smoke inhalation and heat stroke.

The increasing demand for outdoor recreation places more people outside and in higher wildfire risk areas during holidays, weekends, and vacation periods. Table 16-4 contains more detailed information.

### 16.6.2 Property

Loss estimations for wildfire hazard are not based on damage functions, because no such damage functions have been generated. Instead, loss estimates were developed representing projected damages (annualized loss) on historical events, statistical analysis and probability factors. These were applied to the exposed values of the county and communities to create an annualized loss. Table 16-12 lists the loss estimates for the general building stock for jurisdictions that have an exposure to a wildfire risk category.

#### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.

Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$2,029,701	Negligible	<0.01
City of El Campo	\$7,766,714	Negligible	<0.01

<b>TABLE 16-12. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR WILDFIRE EVENTS</b>			
Jurisdiction	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of Wharton	\$5,115,876	Negligible	<0.01
Unincorporated Area	\$16,076,747	Negligible	<0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$30,989,038</b>	<b>Negligible</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

### 16.6.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

Critical facilities of wood frame construction are especially vulnerable during wildfire events. In the event of wildfire, there would likely be little damage to most infrastructure. Most roads and railroads would be without damage except in the worst scenarios. Power lines are the most at risk from wildfire because most poles are made of wood and susceptible to burning. Fires can create conditions that block or prevent access and can isolate residents and emergency service providers. Wildfire typically does not have a major direct impact on bridges, but it can create conditions in which bridges are obstructed. Many bridges in areas of high to moderate fire risk are important because they provide the only ingress and egress to large areas and in some cases to isolated neighborhoods.

### 16.6.4 Environment

Environmental vulnerability will typically be the same as exposure (as discussed in Section 16.5).

## 16.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT

The threat of wildfire is a constant in Texas. From the East Texas Piney Woods to the Davis Mountains of West Texas, wildfires burn thousands, if not millions, of acres each year. Wildfires become especially dangerous when wildland vegetation begins to intermix with homes.

With more and more people living in the WUI, it is increasingly important for local officials to plan and prepare for wildfires. CWPPs are a proven strategy for reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires and protecting lives and property.

TFS encourages Texas counties and communities to develop and adopt CWPPs to better prepare their region and citizens for wildfires. Planning for wildfires should take place long before a community is threatened. Once a wildfire ignites, the only option available to firefighters is to attempt to suppress the fire before it reaches a community. A CWPP is unique in that it empowers communities to share the responsibility of determining the best strategies for protection against wildfire.

The Texas CWPP calls for communities to:

- Know their environment (WUI), assets at risk, fire occurrence and behavior, and overall wildfire risks
- Adopt mitigation strategies from wildfire preventions to fuels reduction to capacity building
- Create and adopt recovery plan strategies

## 16.8 SCENARIO

A major conflagration in the planning area might begin with a wet spring, adding to fuels already present on the forest floor. Flash fuels would build throughout the spring. The summer could see the onset of insect

infestation. A dry summer could follow the wet spring, exacerbated by dry hot winds. Carelessness with combustible materials or a tossed lit cigarette, or a sudden lightning storm could trigger a multitude of small isolated fires.

The embers from these smaller fires could be carried miles by hot, dry winds. The deposition zone for these embers would be deep in the forests and interface zones. Fires that start in flat areas move slower, but wind still pushes them. It is not unusual for a wildfire pushed by wind to burn the ground fuel and later climb into the crown and reverse its track. This is one of many ways that fires can escape containment, typically during periods when response capabilities are overwhelmed. These new small fires would most likely merge. Suppression resources would be redirected from protecting the natural resources to saving more remote subdivisions.

The worst-case scenario would include an active fire season throughout Texas, spreading resources thin. Firefighting teams would be exhausted or unavailable. Many federal assets would be responding to other fires that started earlier in the season. While local fire districts would be extremely useful in the urban interface areas, they have limited wildfire capabilities or experience, and they would have a difficult time responding to the ignition zones. Even though the existence and spread of the fire is known, it may not be possible to respond to it adequately, so an initially manageable fire can become out of control before resources are dispatched.

To further complicate the problem, heavy rains could follow, causing flooding and landslides, and releasing tons of sediment into the Colorado River, San Bernard River, Tres Palacios River, and other creeks. This in turn could permanently change floodplains and damage sensitive habitat and riparian areas. Such a fire followed by rain could release millions of cubic yards of sediment into streams for years, creating new floodplains and changing existing ones. With the forests removed from the watershed, stream flows could easily double. Floods that could be expected every 50 years may occur every couple of years. With the streambeds unable to carry the increased discharge because of increased sediment, the floodplains and floodplain elevations would increase.

## **16.9 ISSUES**

The major issues for wildfire are the following:

- Public education and outreach to people living in or near the fire hazard zones should include information about and assistance with mitigation activities such as defensible space, and advance identification of evacuation routes and safe zones.
- Wildfires could cause landslides as a secondary natural hazard.
- Climate change could affect the wildfire hazard.
- Future growth into interface areas should continue to be managed.
- Area fire districts need to continue to train on WUI events.
- Vegetation management activities should be enhanced.
- Regional consistency of higher building code standards should be adopted such as residential sprinkler requirements and prohibitive combustible roof standards.
- Fire department water supply in high risk wildfire areas.
- Expand certifications and qualifications for fire department personnel. Ensure that all firefighters are trained in basic wildfire behavior, basic fire weather, and that all company officers and chief level officers are trained in the wildland command and strike team leader level.
- Both the natural and man-made conditions that contribute to the wildland fire hazard are tending to exacerbate through time.



- Conservative forestry management practices have resulted in congested forests prone to fire and disease.
- The continued migration of inhabitants to remote areas of the county increases the probability of human-caused ignitions from vehicles, grills, campfires, and electrical devices.

# CHAPTER 17. WINTER WEATHER

WINTER WEATHER RANKING	
Wharton County	Low
City of East Bernard	Low
City of El Campo	Low
City of Wharton	Low

## 17.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

Winter storms can include heavy snow, ice, and blizzard conditions. Heavy snow can immobilize a region, stranding commuters, stopping the flow of supplies, and disrupting emergency and medical services. Accumulations of snow can collapse roofs and knock down trees and power lines. In rural areas, homes and farms may be isolated for days, and unprotected livestock may be lost. The cost of snow removal, damage repair, and business losses can have a tremendous impact on cities and towns.

Heavy accumulations of ice can bring down trees, electrical wires, telephone poles and lines, and communication towers. Communications and power can be disrupted for days until damage can be repaired. Even small accumulations of ice may cause extreme hazards to motorists and pedestrians.

Some winter storms are accompanied by strong winds, creating blizzard conditions with blinding wind-driven snow, severe drifting, and dangerous wind chills. Strong winds with these intense storms and cold fronts can knock down trees, utility poles, and power lines. Blowing snow can reduce visibilities to only a few feet in areas where there are no trees or buildings. Serious vehicle accidents can result in injuries and deaths.

Winter storms in Wharton County, including strong winds and ice conditions, can result in property damage, localized power and phone outages and closures of streets, highways, schools, businesses, and nonessential government operations. People can also become isolated from essential services in their homes and vehicles. A winter storm can escalate, creating life threatening situations when emergency response is limited by severe winter conditions. Other issues associated with severe winter weather include hypothermia and the threat of physical overexertion that may lead to heart attacks or strokes. Snow and ice prevention as well as removal costs can impact budgets significantly.

### 17.1.1 Extreme Cold

Extreme cold often accompanies a winter storm or is left in its wake. It is most likely to occur in the winter months of December, January, and February. Prolonged exposure to the cold can cause frostbite or hypothermia and can become life-threatening. Infants and the elderly are most susceptible. Pipes may freeze and burst in homes or buildings that are poorly insulated or without heat. Extreme cold can disrupt or impair communications facilities.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Freezing Rain** — The result of rain occurring when the temperature is below the freezing point. The rain freezes on impact, resulting in a layer of glaze ice up to an inch thick. In a severe ice storm, an evergreen tree 60 feet high and 30 feet wide can be burdened with up to 6 tons of ice, creating a threat to power and telephone lines and transportation routes.

**Severe Local Storm** — Small-scale atmospheric systems, including tornadoes, thunderstorms, windstorms, ice storms, and snowstorms. These storms may cause a great deal of destruction and even death, but their impact is generally confined to a small area. Typical impacts are on transportation infrastructure and utilities.

**Winter Storm** — A storm having significant snowfall, ice, or freezing rain; the quantity of precipitation varies by elevation.

In 2001, the NWS implemented an updated wind chill temperature index (see Figure 17-1). This index describes the relative discomfort or danger resulting from the combination of wind and temperature. Wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by wind and cold. As the wind increases, it draws heat from the body, driving down skin temperature and eventually the internal body temperature.

Source: NOAA, NWS

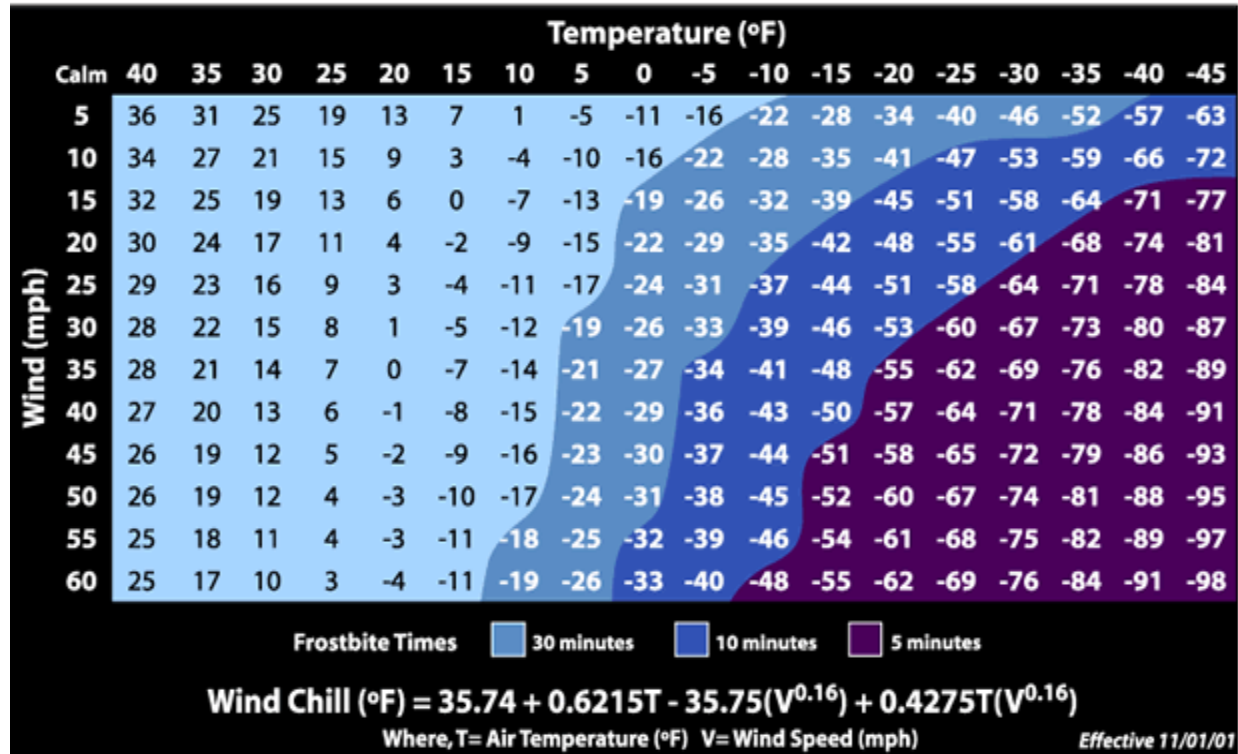


Figure 17-1. National Weather Service Wind Chill Chart

A wind chill watch is issued by the NWS when wind chill warning criteria are possible in the next 12 to 36 hours. A wind chill warning is issued for wind chills of at least -25°F on plains and -35°F in mountains and foothills.

Table 17-1 contains a summary of temperature data related to extreme cold for the Pierce 1E weather station. These temperatures apply to all of Wharton County and participating communities.

Statistic	Years	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
High Annual Minimum	1914-2013	35	43	44	54	63	70	74	72	69	55	45	38
Low Annual Minimum	1914-2013	4	8	20	28	30	50	59	58	42	27	23	7
Average Annual Minimum	1914-2013	24.4	27.7	32.2	40.7	52.6	63.0	67.8	67.0	55.8	43.0	32.3	26.3
Average Days Annually with Minimum Below 32	1904-2012	6.8	3.9	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	5.2

Note: All temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit.

Few areas of Texas escape freezing weather in any winter. Wharton County and the participating communities receives little to no snow accumulations. More often than not, snow falling in the southern half of the state melts and does not stick to the surface; snow stays on the ground only once or twice every decade. Snowfall occurs at least once every winter in the northern half of Texas.

## 17.2 HAZARD PROFILE

### 17.2.1 Past Events

The National Climatic Data Center lists 4 winter weather events that impacted Wharton County and the participating communities between 1996 and 2014. These events and estimated damage costs are outlined in Table 17-2. Wharton County and the participating communities do not experience severe winter weather events consistently, but winter storms can affect the HMP update area.

Since the winter events for Wharton County and participating communities occur on a zonal and regional scale, the winter events can be applied to all participating communities.

**TABLE 17-2.  
HISTORIC WINTER WEATHER EVENTS IN WHARTON COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING  
COMMUNITIES (1996-2014)**

Location	Date	Event Type	Estimated Damage Cost			
			Property	Crops	Injuries	Deaths
Wharton (Zone)	01/12/1997	Ice Storm	\$0	\$0	0	3
Wharton (Zone)	12/24/2004	Heavy Snow	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	01/16/2007	Ice Storm	\$3,534	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	12/04/2009	Winter Storm	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	02/03/2011	Ice Storm	\$0	\$0	0	0
Wharton (Zone)	01/23/2014	Winter Storm	\$0	\$0	0	0

Source: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/>

### 17.2.2 Location

Wharton County and the participating communities are is susceptible to severe winter storms; although severe winter weather or blizzard conditions are primarily in the form of freezing rain, sleet, or ice. Ice accumulation becomes a hazard by creating dangerous travel conditions. U.S. Highway 59 and State Highways 60 and 71 are important corridors to move people, supplies, and equipment into the region and to reach medical facilities outside of the counties. An accident on these roads can cause a major disruption in the flow of goods and services to the area.

The record lows for Texas occur during October through March. According to data recorded by NWS between 1897 and 2014, the planning area experiences an average of 10 freezing days. The average first freeze in the HMP update area usually occurs late November to early December and the last freeze occurs in late February to early March. In January 1940, Wharton County and participating communities experienced the coldest month on record with mean temperature of about 42.6°F. The coldest recorded winter for the area was in 1979, with a mean temperature of about 46.2°F. Figure 6-4 shows the annual average minimum temperature distribution in Texas.

### **17.2.3 Frequency**

Table 17-2 lists 6 winter storms from 1996 to 2014. Therefore, on average a winter storm occurs in the county and participating communities once every 3 to 4 years. In this region, the first autumn freeze ordinarily occurs in mid-December, and the last freeze in spring takes place in mid-February. There is an average of 20 to 25 days of freezes in south Texas. Since winter events are usually zonal events and affect a large area, each participating community has the same frequency and probability of future events (once every 3 to 4 years). The strength and severity of future events will be in line with previous records as listed on Table 17-1 and Table 17-2.

### **17.2.4 Severity**

The magnitude and severity of severe winter weather in Wharton County and the participating communities is low, resulting in minor injuries and illnesses; minimal property damage that does not severely threaten structural stability; or interruption of essential facilities and services for less than 48 hours.

### **17.2.5 Warning Time**

Meteorologists can often predict the likelihood of a severe winter storm. When forecasts are available, they can give several days of warning time. However, meteorologists cannot predict the exact time of onset or severity of the storm. Some storms may come on more quickly and have only a few hours of warning time.

## **17.3 SECONDARY HAZARDS**

The most significant secondary hazards associated with severe local storms are falling and downed trees, landslides, and downed power lines. Heavy rain and icy conditions can overwhelm both natural and man-made drainage systems, causing overflow and property destruction. Landslides occur when the soil on slopes becomes oversaturated and fails. Additionally, the storms may result in closed highways and blocked roads. It is not unusual for motorists and residents to become stranded. Annually, icy conditions and frozen pipes cause damage to residences and businesses. Late season winter events will typically cause some plant and crop damage.

## **17.4 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

Climate change presents a significant challenge for risk management associated with severe weather. The frequency of severe weather events has increased steadily over the last century. Nationally, the number of weather-related disasters during the 1990s was four times that of the 1950s, and cost 14 times as much in economic losses. Historical data shows that the probability for severe weather events increases in a warmer climate (see Figure 14-13). The changing hydrograph caused by climate change could have a significant impact on the intensity, duration and frequency of storm events. All of these impacts could have significant economic consequences.

## **17.5 EXPOSURE**

Because winter weather cannot be directly modeled in HAZUS, annualized losses were estimated using GIS-based analysis, historical data analysis, and statistical risk assessment methodology. Event frequency, severity indicators, expert opinions, and historical knowledge of the region were used for this assessment. The primary data source was the updated HAZUS inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs) augmented with state and federal data sets as well as the NOAA National Climatic Data Center Storm Event Database.

### **17.5.1 Population**

It can be assumed that the entire planning area is exposed to severe winter weather events to some extent. Certain areas are more exposed due to geographic location and local weather patterns.

## 17.5.2 Property

According to the HAZUS 2.2 inventory data (updated with 2010 U.S. Census data and 2014 RS Means Square Foot Costs), there are 15,781 buildings within the census blocks that define the planning area with an asset replaceable value of over \$4 million (excluding contents). About 98% of these buildings (and 78% of the building value) are associated with residential housing. Within the participating communities in the HMP update area, there are an estimated 14,741 buildings (residential, commercial, and other) with a total asset inventory (excluding contents) value of over \$3.7 million. Other types of buildings in this report include agricultural, education, religious, and governmental structures. See hazard loss tables for community-specific total assessed numbers (e.g. Table 17-5). Table 17-3 lists the exposed structures and population for the participating communities.

Residents within a city or municipality are governed by building codes and ordinances. Buildings and land in unincorporated areas of the county are not governed by building codes. Because of the less stringent regulations, all of these buildings are considered to be exposed to severe winter weather, but structures in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations (located on hilltops or exposed open areas) may risk the most damage. The frequency and degree of damage to a building will depend on specific locations.

Jurisdiction	Residential	Commercial	Other *	Total Structures	Total Population
City of East Bernard	830	10	9	849	2,272
City of El Campo	3,989	83	39	4,111	11,602
City of Wharton	3,021	92	23	3,136	8,832
Unincorporated Area	6,585	29	31	6,645	15,949
<b>Total</b>	14,425	214	102	14,741	38,655

\*Other includes industrial, agricultural, religious, governmental, and educational classifications.

## 17.5.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

All critical facilities are likely exposed to winter weather events. The most common problems associated with this hazard are utility losses. Downed power lines can cause blackouts, leaving large areas isolated. Phone, water, and sewer systems may not function. Roads may become impassable due to ice or snow. Ice accumulation on roadways can create dangerous driving conditions. There are several county roads that are available to move people and supplies throughout the region.

## 17.5.4 Environment

The environment is highly exposed to severe weather events. Natural habitats such as streams and trees risk major damage and destruction. Flooding events caused by snowmelt can produce river channel migration or damage riparian habitat.

## 17.6 VULNERABILITY

Although winter storm is a slow onset hazard with generally six to twelve hours of warning time, utility disruptions from winter storms can severely impact the delivery of services. Water pipes can freeze and crack in sub-freezing temperatures. Ice can build up on power lines and cause them to break under the

weight or ice on trees can cause tree limbs to fall on the lines. These events can disrupt electric service for long periods.

Economic impact may be felt by increased consumption of heating fuel which can lead to energy shortages and higher prices. House fires and resulting deaths tend to occur more frequently from increased and improper use of alternate heating sources. Fires during winter storms also present a greater danger because water supplies may freeze and impede firefighting efforts.

All populations, buildings, critical facilities, and infrastructure in the planning area are vulnerable to severe winter events. People and animals are subject to health risks from extended exposure to cold air. Elderly people and economically disadvantaged populations in the planning area are at greater risk of death from hypothermia during these events. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, every year hypothermia kills about 600 Americans, half of whom are 65 years of age or older.

### 17.6.1 Population

Vulnerable populations are the elderly, low income, linguistically isolated populations, people with life-threatening illnesses, and residents living in areas that are isolated from major roads. Power outages can be life threatening to those dependent on electricity for life support. Isolation of these populations is a significant concern. These populations face isolation and exposure during severe winter weather events and could suffer more secondary effects of the hazard. Commuters who are caught in storms may be particularly vulnerable. Stranded commuters may be vulnerable to carbon monoxide poisoning or hypothermia. Additionally, individuals engaged in outdoor recreation during a severe winter event may be difficult to locate and rescue. Table 17-4 contains more specific jurisdictional information.

<b>TABLE 17-4 MOST VULNERABLE POPULATION</b>						
Jurisdiction	Youth Population ( < 16 )	% of Total Population	Elderly Population ( > 65 )	% of Total Population	Economically Disadvantage (Income < \$20,000)	% of Total Population
City of East Bernard	638	28.08	342	15.05	129	5.68
City of El Campo	3,400	29.31	1,646	14.19	993	8.56
City of Wharton	2,319	26.26	1,288	14.58	1,252	14.18
Unincorporated Area	3,965	24.86	2,390	14.99	1,304	8.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,322</b>	<b>26.70</b>	<b>5,666</b>	<b>14.66</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>9.51</b>

### 17.6.2 Property

All property is vulnerable during severe winter weather events, but properties in poor condition or in particularly vulnerable locations may risk the most damage. Those that are located under or near overhead lines or near large trees may be vulnerable to falling ice or may be damaged in the event of a collapse.

Loss estimations for severe winter weather are not based on damage functions, because no such damage functions have been generated. Instead, loss estimates were developed representing projected damages

(annualized loss) on historical events, statistical analysis, and probability factors. These were applied to the participating communities reported event damages and exposed values to create an annualized loss. Annualized losses of ‘negligible’ are less than \$50 annually. The annualized loss estimated for winter storm events is shown in Table 17-5.

<b>TABLE 17-5. LOSS ESTIMATES FOR WINTER STORM EVENTS</b>			
	Exposed Value	Annualized Loss	Annualized Loss Percentage
City of East Bernard	\$391,249,566	Negligible	Negligible
City of El Campo	\$2,159,712,947	Negligible	Negligible
City of Wharton	\$1,416,664,643	Negligible	Negligible
Unincorporated Area	\$2,255,940,086	\$316	<0.01
<b>Wharton County Total</b>	<b>\$6,233,567,243</b>	<b>\$316</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

### ***Vulnerability Narrative***

Each community’s vulnerability to winter weather events are described below.

- **City of East Bernard** - Winter storms in the City of East Bernard would expose the residents to high utility bills. Roads become dangerous to travel on because of icy conditions. This can lead to schools and businesses being shut down for a day or two. Communities who implement comprehensive outreach programs to educate residents on the risks and hazards associated with severe winter weather reduce their vulnerability.
- **City of El Campo** - The City of El Campo is at a greater risk of rolling blackouts during a winter weather event due to high usage. This can expose the elderly and economically disadvantaged residents to prolonged periods of cold without heating and high utility bills. Roads become dangerous to travel on because of icy conditions. This can lead to schools and businesses being shut down for a day or two. Homes built without proper building codes could suffer from a lack of insulation and may experience deteriorating infrastructure, physical harm and property damage.
- **City of Wharton** - Winter storms in the City of Wharton would expose the residents to high utility bills. Roads become dangerous to travel on because of icy conditions. Communities who implement alternate power sources for critical facilities impacted during a winter storm help to mitigate risk associated with increased wait times for residents in need.
- **Wharton County (Unincorporated Area)** – Wharton County Unincorporated Areas are at a greater risk of rolling blackouts during a winter weather event due to high usage from other areas of the electrical grid. The more rural areas of Wharton County could experience longer wait times for emergency response actions. This could expose them to hazards such as prolonged periods of cold without heating. Also, this would have a greater effect on the young, elderly and economically disadvantaged that may not have the means to respond to such an event.

### ***Community Perception of Vulnerability***

See front page of current chapter for a summary of hazard rankings for Wharton County and participating communities in this HMP update. Chapter 18 gives a detailed description of this rankings and Chapter 19 addresses mitigations actions for this hazard vulnerability.



### **17.6.3 Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

Incapacity and loss of roads are the primary transportation failures resulting from winter weather, mostly associated with secondary hazards. Snowstorms can significantly impact the transportation system and the availability of public safety services. Of particular concern are roads providing access to isolated areas and to the elderly. Prolonged obstruction of major routes can disrupt the shipment of goods and other commerce. Large, prolonged storms can have negative economic impacts for an entire region.

Severe windstorms, downed trees, and ice can create serious impacts on power and above-ground communication lines. Freezing of power and communication lines can cause them to break, disrupting electricity and communication. Loss of electricity and phone connection would leave certain populations isolated because residents would be unable to call for assistance.

### **17.6.4 Environment**

The vulnerability of the environment to winter weather is the same as the exposure, discussed in Section 17.5.4.

## **17.7 FUTURE TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT**

All future development will be affected by winter storms. The vulnerability of community assets to severe winter storms is increasing through time as more people enter the planning area. The ability to withstand impacts lies in sound land use practices and consistent enforcement of codes and regulations for new construction. The planning partners have adopted the International Building Code. This code is equipped to deal with the impacts of severe weather events. Land use policies identified in general plans within the planning area also address many of the secondary impacts (flood and landslide) of the severe weather hazard. With these tools, the planning partnership is well equipped to deal with future growth and the associated impacts of severe weather.

## **17.8 SCENARIO**

Although severe local storms are infrequent, impacts can be significant, particularly when secondary hazards, such as flood or erosion occur. A worst-case event would involve prolonged high winds during a winter storm accompanied by thunderstorms. Such an event would have both short-term and longer-term effects. Initially, schools and roads would be closed due to power outages caused by high winds and downed tree obstructions. In more rural areas, some subdivisions could experience limited ingress and egress. Prolonged rain could produce flooding, overtopped culverts with ponded water on roads, and erosion on steep slopes. Flooding and landslides could further obstruct roads and bridges, further isolating residents.

## **17.9 ISSUES**

Important issues associated with a winter storm in the planning area include the following:

- Older building stock in the planning area is built to low code standards or none at all. These structures could be highly vulnerable to winter weather, particularly freezing temperatures, high winds, and ice.
- Redundancy of power supply must be evaluated.
- The capacity for backup power generation is limited.
- Future efforts should be made to identify populations at risk and determine special needs during winter storm event.

## CHAPTER 18. PLANNING AREA RISK RANKING

A risk ranking was performed for the hazards of concern described in this plan. This risk ranking assesses the probability of each hazard’s occurrence as well as its likely impact on the people, property, and economy of the planning area. The risk ranking was conducted by the Steering Committee based on the hazard risk assessment presented during the second Steering Committee meeting, community survey results, and personal and professional experience with hazards in the planning area. Estimates of risk were generated with data from HAZUS-MH using methodologies promoted by FEMA. The results are used in establishing mitigation priorities. The hazard rankings were used in establishing mitigation action priorities.

### 18.1 PROBABILITY OF OCCURRENCE

The probability of occurrence of a hazard is indicated by a probability factor based on likelihood of annual occurrence:

- High – Hazard event is likely to occur within 25 years (Probability Factor = 3)
- Medium – Hazard event is likely to occur within 100 years (Probability Factor = 2)
- Low – Hazard event is not likely to occur within 100 years (Probability Factor = 1)
- No exposure – There is no probability of occurrence (Probability Factor = 0)

The assessment of hazard frequency is generally based on past hazard events in the planning area. The Steering Committee assigned the probabilities of occurrence for each hazard, as shown on Table 18-1.

<b>TABLE 18-1. HAZARD PROBABILITY OF OCCURRENCE</b>								
	Wharton County		City of East Bernard		City of El Campo		City of Wharton	
Hazard	High/Med /Low/No	Probability Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Probability Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Probability Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Probability Factor
Dam/Levee Failure	L	1	N	0	N	0	N	0
Drought	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Earthquake	L	1	N	0	N	0	N	0
Expansive Soils	H	3	H	3	M	2	H	3
Extreme Heat	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Flood	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Hail	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Hurricane/ Tropical Storm	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Lightning	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Tornado	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Wildfire	H	3	M	2	M	2	M	2
Wind	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Winter Weather	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1

## 18.2 IMPACT

Hazard impacts were assessed in three categories, impacts on: people, property, and the local economy. Numerical impact factors were assigned as follows:

- **People** – Values were assigned based on the percentage of the total *population exposed* to the hazard event. The degree of impact on individuals will vary and is not measurable, so the calculation assumes for simplicity and consistency that all people who live in a hazard zone will be equally impacted when a hazard event occurs. It should be noted that planners can use an element of subjectivity when assigning values for impacts on people. Impact factors were assigned as follows:
  - High – 50% or more of the population is exposed to a hazard (Impact Factor = 3)
  - Medium – 25% to 49% of the population is exposed to a hazard (Impact Factor = 2)
  - Low – 24% or less of the population is exposed to the hazard (Impact Factor = 1)
  - No impact – None of the population is exposed to a hazard (Impact Factor = 0)
- **Property** – Values were assigned based on the percentage of the total *assessed property value* exposed to the hazard event:
  - High – 30% or more of the total assessed property value is exposed to a hazard (Impact Factor = 3)
  - Medium – 15% to 29% of the total assessed property value is exposed to a hazard (Impact Factor = 2)
  - Low – 14% or less of the total assessed property value is exposed to the hazard (Impact Factor = 1)
  - No impact – None of the total assessed property value is exposed to a hazard (Impact Factor = 0)
- **Economy** – Values were assigned based on total impact to the economy from the hazard event and activities conducted after the event to restore the community to previous functions. Values were assigned based on the number of days the hazard impacts the community, including impacts on tourism, businesses, road closures, or government response agencies.
  - High – Community impacted for more than 7 days (Impact Factor = 3)
  - Medium – Community impacted for 1 to 7 days (Impact Factor = 2)
  - Low – Community impacted for less than 1 day (Impact Factor = 1)
  - No impact – No community impacts estimated from the hazard event (Impact Factor = 0)

The impacts of each hazard category were assigned a weighting factor to reflect the significance of the impact. These weighting factors are consistent with those typically used for measuring the benefits of hazard mitigation actions: impact on people was given a weighting factor of 3; impact on property was given a weighting factor of 2; and impact on the economy was given a weighting factor of 1. The impacts for each hazard are summarized in Table 18-2 through Table 18-4. The total impact factor shown on the tables equals the impact factor multiplied by the weighting factor.

<b>TABLE 18-2. IMPACT ON PEOPLE FROM HAZARDS</b>								
	Wharton County		City of East Bernard		City of El Campo		City of Wharton	
Hazard	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor
Dam/Levee Failure	N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0
Drought	M	6	M	6	M	6	M	6
Earthquake	N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0
Expansive Soils	M	6	M	6	M	6	M	6
Extreme Heat	H	9	H	9	H	9	H	9
Flood	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3
Hail	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3
Hurricane/ Tropical Storm	H	9	H	9	H	9	H	9
Lightning	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3
Tornado	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3
Wildfire	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3
Wind	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3
Winter Weather	L	3	L	3	L	3	L	3

<b>TABLE 18-3. IMPACT ON PROPERTY FROM HAZARDS</b>								
	Wharton County		City of East Bernard		City of El Campo		City of Wharton	
Hazard	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor
Dam/Levee Failure	N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0
Drought	H	6	M	4	H	6	H	6
Earthquake	N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0
Expansive Soils	M	4	M	4	M	4	M	4
Extreme Heat	L	2	L	2	L	2	L	2
Flood	M	4	M	4	M	4	M	4
Hail	M	4	M	4	M	4	M	4
Hurricane/ Tropical Storm	H	6	H	6	H	6	H	6

<b>TABLE 18-3. IMPACT ON PROPERTY FROM HAZARDS</b>								
	Wharton County		City of East Bernard		City of El Campo		City of Wharton	
Hazard	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor
Lightning	L	2	L	2	L	2	L	2
Tornado	M	4	M	4	M	4	M	4
Wildfire	M	4	L	2	L	2	L	2
Wind	L	2	L	2	L	2	L	2
Winter Weather	L	2	L	2	L	2	L	2

<b>TABLE 18-4. IMPACT ON ECONOMY FROM HAZARDS</b>								
	Wharton County		City of East Bernard		City of El Campo		City of Wharton	
Hazard	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor	High/Med /Low/No	Total Impact Factor
Dam/Levee Failure	N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0
Drought	H	0	H	3	H	3	H	3
Earthquake	N	3	N	0	N	0	N	0
Expansive Soils	L	0	L	1	L	1	L	1
Extreme Heat	M	1	M	2	M	2	M	2
Flood	M	2	M	2	M	2	M	2
Hail	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1
Hurricane/ Tropical Storm	H	3	H	3	H	3	H	3
Lightning	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1
Tornado	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1
Wildfire	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1
Wind	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1
Winter Weather	L	1	L	1	L	1	L	1

### 18.3 RISK RATING AND RANKING

The risk rating for each hazard was calculated by multiplying the probability factor by the sum of the weighted impact factors for people, property, and operations, as summarized in Table 18-5. Based on these ratings, a priority of high, medium, or low was assigned to each hazard. The hazards ranked as being of highest concern vary by jurisdiction but generally include drought, extreme heat, and hurricane/tropical storm. Other hazards ranked as being of medium concern include expansive soil, flood, hail, tornado, and wildfire. Table 18-6 summarizes the hazard risk ranking.

TABLE 18-5. HAZARD RISK RANKING CALCULATIONS												
	Wharton County			City of East Bernard			City of El Campo			City of Wharton		
Hazard	Probability Factor	Impact Weighted Sum	Total	Probability Factor	Impact Weighted Sum	Total	Probability Factor	Impact Weighted Sum	Total	Probability Factor	Impact Weighted Sum	Total
Dam/Levee Failure	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drought	3	12	36	3	13	39	3	15	45	3	15	45
Earthquake	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expansive Soils	3	10	30	3	11	33	2	11	22	3	11	33
Extreme Heat	3	12	36	3	13	39	3	13	39	3	13	39
Flood	3	9	27	3	9	27	3	9	27	3	9	27
Hail	3	8	24	3	8	24	3	8	24	3	8	24
Hurricane/Tropical Storm	3	18	54	3	18	54	3	18	54	3	18	54
Lightning	3	6	18	3	6	18	3	6	18	3	6	18
Tornado	3	8	24	3	8	24	3	8	24	3	8	24
Wildfire	3	8	24	2	6	12	2	6	12	2	6	12
Wind	3	6	18	3	6	18	3	6	18	3	6	18
Winter Weather	1	6	6	1	6	6	1	6	6	1	6	6

Notes:  
 Impact Weighted Sum=Total Impact Factor People+ Total Impact Factor Property + Total Impact Factor Economy  
 Total = Probability x Impact Weighted Sum

**TABLE 18-6.  
HAZARD RISK SUMMARY**

Hazard	Wharton County	City of East Bernard	City of El Campo	City of Wharton
Dam/Levee Failure	No Exposure	No Exposure	No Exposure	No Exposure
Drought	Medium	High	High	High
Earthquake	Low	No Exposure	No Exposure	No Exposure
Expansive Soils	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Extreme Heat	Medium	High	High	High
Flood	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Hail	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Hurricane/ Tropical Storm	High	High	High	High
Lightning	Low	Low	Low	Low
Tornado	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Wildfire	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Wind	Low	Low	Low	Low
Winter Weather	Low	Low	Low	Low

**PART 3**  
**MITIGATION AND PLAN**  
**MAINTENANCE STRATEGY**



## **CHAPTER 19.**

### **AREA-WIDE MITIGATION ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Steering Committee reviewed a menu of hazard mitigation alternatives that present a broad range of alternatives to be considered for use in the planning area, in compliance with Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR) (Section 201.6(c)(3)(ii)). The menu provided a baseline of mitigation alternatives that are backed by a planning process, are consistent with the planning partners' goals and objectives, and are within the capabilities of the partners to implement. The Steering Committee reviewed the full range of actions as well as the county and participating cities' ability to implement the variety of mitigation actions. Hazard mitigation actions recommended in this plan were selected from among the alternatives presented in the menu as well as other projects known to be necessary.

#### **19.1 RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

The planning partners and the Steering Committee identified actions that could be implemented to provide hazard mitigation benefits. Table 19-1 lists the recommended mitigation actions and the hazards addressed by the action. All of the hazards profiled in this plan are addressed by more than one mitigation action. Individual worksheets for each recommended action are provided in Appendix E.

Table 19-2 provides more details on the mitigation actions, including the mitigation action description, action type, estimated cost, potential funding sources, timeline, and benefit to the community (high, medium or low). Mitigation types used for this categorization are as follows:

- Local Plans and Regulations (LPR) – These actions include government authorities, policies, or codes that influence the way land and buildings are being developed and built.
- Structure and Infrastructure Projects (SIP) – These actions involve modifying existing structures and infrastructure to protect them from a hazard or remove them from a hazard area. This could apply to public or private structures as well as critical facilities and infrastructure. This type of action also involves projects to construct manmade structures to reduce the impact of hazards.
- Natural Systems Protection (NSP) – These are actions that minimize damage and losses, and also preserve or restore the functions of natural systems.
- Education and Awareness Programs (EAP) – These are actions to inform and educate citizens, elected officials, and property owners about hazards and potential ways to mitigate them. These initiatives may also include participation in national programs, such as StormReady and Firewise Communities.

Mitigation action worksheets were developed to provide more information for each recommended mitigation action, including the specific problem being mitigated, alternative actions considered, whether the action applies to existing or future development, the benefits or losses avoided, the department, position, office or agency responsible for implementing the action, the local planning mechanism, and potential funding sources. These worksheets were developed to provide a tool for the planning partners to apply for grants or general funds to complete the mitigation action. An example worksheet for Wharton County is shown in Figure 19-1. Blank Mitigation Action Worksheet. These worksheets are kept on file with the county and cities and can be a valuable resource for annual progress updates and reports.

## Mitigation Action Worksheet

Please complete one worksheet per action with as much detail as possible, using the instructions beginning on page 3 and examples provided by FEMA.

Name of Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_ Mitigation Action #: \_\_\_\_\_

Mitigation Action Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessing the Risk	
<b>Hazard(s) addressed: (check all that apply)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> All Hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Erosion <input type="checkbox"/> Dam/Levee Failure <input type="checkbox"/> Drought <input type="checkbox"/> Earthquake <input type="checkbox"/> Expansive Soils <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Flood <input type="checkbox"/> Hail <input type="checkbox"/> Hurricanes/Tropical Storms <input type="checkbox"/> Land Subsidence <input type="checkbox"/> Lightning <input type="checkbox"/> Thunderstorm <input type="checkbox"/> Tornado <input type="checkbox"/> Wildfire <input type="checkbox"/> Wind <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Weather
<b>Specific problem being Mitigated (describe why action is needed)</b>	
Evaluation of Potential Alternatives	
<b>Alternatives Considered (name of project and reason for not selecting)</b>	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
Action/Project Intended for Implementation	
<b>Describe how action will be implemented (main steps involved)</b>	
<b>Action/Project Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Plans and Regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Structure and Infrastructure Project <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Systems Protection <input type="checkbox"/> Education and Awareness Programs
<b>Applicable Goals/Objectives (refer to list of goals/objectives)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Goal #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Goal #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Goal #4 <input type="checkbox"/> Goal #5 <input type="checkbox"/> Goal #6 Objective: _____
<b>Applies to existing or future development</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing Development <input type="checkbox"/> Future Development <input type="checkbox"/> Both Existing and Future Development <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
<b>Describe benefits (losses avoided)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Life Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Damage Reduction <input type="checkbox"/> Other Describe: _____
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> < \$10,000; <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 to \$100,000; <input type="checkbox"/> > \$100,000 Other Amount: \$ _____
Plan for Implementation	
<b>Responsible Department</b>	
<b>Local Planning Mechanism (check all that apply)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Capital Improvement Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Building Code <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Other: New Local Plan
<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>	General Fund
<b>Timeline for Completion</b>	_____ months
Reporting on Progress	
<b>Status/Comment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Started <input type="checkbox"/> In-progress <input type="checkbox"/> Delayed <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> No Longer Required Comment: _____
<b>Completed by: (name, title, phone #)</b>	<b>Date:</b> _____

Figure 19-1. Blank Mitigation Action Worksheet

## 19.2 BENEFIT/COST REVIEW AND PRIORITIZATION

The action plan must be prioritized according to a benefit/cost analysis of the proposed projects and their associated costs (44 CFR, Section 201.6(c)(3)(iii)). The benefits of proposed projects were weighed against estimated costs as part of the project prioritization process. The benefit/cost analysis was not of the detailed variety required by FEMA for project grant eligibility under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Program. A less formal approach was used because some projects may not be implemented for up to 10 years, and associated costs and benefits could change dramatically in that time. Therefore, a review of the apparent benefits versus the apparent cost of each project was performed. Parameters were established for assigning subjective ratings (high, medium, and low) to the costs and benefits of these projects.

Fourteen criteria were used to assist in evaluating and prioritizing the mitigation initiatives. For each mitigation action, a numeric rank (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) was assigned for each of the 14 evaluation criteria defined as follows:

- Definitely Yes - 4
- Maybe Yes - 3
- Unknown/Neutral - 2
- Probably No - 1
- Definitely No - 0

The 14 evaluation/prioritization criteria are:

1. Life Safety – How effective will the action be at protecting lives and preventing injuries? The numeric rank for this criterion is multiplied by 2 to emphasize the importance of life safety when evaluating the benefit of the action.
2. Property Protection – How significant will the action be at eliminating or reducing damage to structures and infrastructure? The numeric rank for this criterion is multiplied by 2 to emphasize the importance of property protection when evaluating the benefit of the action.
3. Cost-Effectiveness – Will the future benefits achieved by implementing the action, exceed the cost to implement the action?
4. Technical – Is the mitigation action technically feasible? Will it solve the problem independently and is it a long-term solution? Eliminate actions that, from a technical standpoint, will not meet the goals.
5. Political – Is there overall public support for the mitigation action? Is there the political will to support it?
6. Legal – Does the jurisdiction have the authority to implement the action?
7. Fiscal - Can the project be funded under existing program budgets (i.e., is this action currently budgeted for)? Or would it require a new budget authorization or funding from another source such as grants?
8. Environmental – What are the potential environmental impacts of the action? Will it comply with environmental regulations?
9. Social – Will the proposed action adversely affect one segment of the population? Will the action disrupt established neighborhoods, break up voting districts, or cause the relocation of lower income people?

10. Administrative – Does the jurisdiction have the personnel and administrative capabilities to implement the action and maintain it or will outside help be necessary?
11. Multi-hazard – Does the action reduce the risk to multiple hazards?
12. Timeline - Can the action be completed in less than 5 years (within our planning horizon)?
13. Local Champion – Is there a strong advocate for the action or project among the jurisdiction’s staff, governing body, or committees that will support the action’s implementation?
14. Other Local Objectives – Does the action advance other local objectives, such as capital improvements, economic development, environmental quality, or open space preservation? Does it support the policies of other plans and programs?

The numeric results of this exercise are shown on the mitigation action worksheets. An example worksheet for is shown in Figure 19-2. These results were used to identify the benefit of the action to the community as low, medium, or high priority. Table 19-2 shows the benefit of each mitigation action.

The Steering Committee used the results of the benefit/cost review and prioritization exercise to rank the mitigation actions in order of priority, with 1 being the highest priority. The highest priority mitigation actions are shown in red on Table 19-2, medium priority actions are shown in yellow and low priority actions are shown in green.

Prioritization Worksheet			
Mitigation Action #: _____			
Mitigation Action Title: _____			
Criteria	Numeric Rank: Definitely Yes = 4 Maybe Yes = 3 Unknown/Neutral = 2 Probably No = 1 Definitely No = 0		Provide brief rationale for numeric rank when appropriate
1. Will the action result in <u>Life Safety</u> ?		x 2 =	
2. Will the action result in <u>Property Protection</u> ?		x 2 =	
3. Will the action be <u>Cost-Effective</u> ? (future benefits exceed cost)			
4. Is the action <u>Technically</u> feasible			
5. Is the action <u>Politically</u> acceptable?			
6. Does the jurisdiction have the <u>Legal</u> authority to implement?			
7. Is <u>Funding</u> available for the action?			
8. Will the action have a positive impact on the natural <u>Environment</u> ?			
9. Is the action <u>Socially</u> acceptable?			
10. Does the jurisdiction have the <u>Administrative</u> capability to execute the action?			
11. Will the action reduce risk to more than one hazard ( <u>Multi-Hazard</u> )?			
12. Can the action be implemented <u>Quickly</u> ?			
13. Is there an Agency/Department <u>Champion</u> for the action?			
14. Will the action meet other <u>Community Objectives</u> ?			
<b>Total</b>			
Priority: Low = <35 Medium = 35-49 High = >50	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High		

Figure 19-2. Example Benefit/Cost Review and Prioritization Worksheet

**TABLE 19-1.  
MITIGATION ACTIONS DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS HAZARDS**

Action No.	Title	Dam/Levee Failure	Drought	Earthquake	Expansive Soil	Extreme Heat	Flood	Hail	Hurricane/Tropical Storms	Lightning	Tornado	Wildfire	Wind	Winter Weather
<b>WHARTON COUNTY</b>														
1	Install bridge and culvert drainage improvements throughout the County	N/A					X		X					
2	Update and adopt the Wharton County Flood Insurance Study and FIRM	N/A					X							
3	Adopt "Higher Standard" Riverine Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and Standards	N/A					X							
4	Create and Implement Drought and Expansive Soils Plan	N/A	X		X	X								
5	Establish Countywide Bench Mark Network	N/A					X							
6	Provide support to the TCRFC and San Bernard River in flood reduction projects	N/A					X							
7	Join FEMA's CRS program	N/A					X							
8	Create a Wharton Disaster Response Team	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9	Implement a Wharton County Flood Warning System	N/A					X							
10	Become a NWS Storm Ready community	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities	N/A		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	Map expansive soils in unincorporated county	N/A			X									
13	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	N/A	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
14	Provide training for CFM and CEM	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

**TABLE 19-1.  
MITIGATION ACTIONS DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS HAZARDS**

Action No.	Title	Dam/Levee Failure	Drought	Earthquake	Expansive Soil	Extreme Heat	Flood	Hail	Hurricane/Tropical Storms	Lightning	Tornado	Wildfire	Wind	Winter Weather
15	Educate homeowners on hazards	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>CITY OF EAST BERNARD</b>														
1	Create water conservation education materials	N/A	X	N/A										
2	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	N/A	X	N/A		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Organize outreach program for vulnerable populations	N/A		N/A		X	X		X					X
4	Prepare and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance	N/A		N/A			X		X					
5	Update emergency response plan	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	Educate homeowners on mitigating hazards around their home	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	Improve drainage throughout city	N/A		N/A			X		X					
8	Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan	N/A	X	N/A	X	X								
9	Install emergency generators at critical facilities	N/A		N/A		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10	Identify and map areas that are at high risk of expansive soils	N/A		N/A	X									
<b>CITY OF EL CAMPO</b>														
1	Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan	N/A	X	N/A	X	X								
2	Provide education on water conservation techniques	N/A	X	N/A										

**TABLE 19-1.  
MITIGATION ACTIONS DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS HAZARDS**

Action No.	Title	Dam/Levee Failure	Drought	Earthquake	Expansive Soil	Extreme Heat	Flood	Hail	Hurricane/Tropical Storms	Lightning	Tornado	Wildfire	Wind	Winter Weather
3	Construct regional detention ponds	N/A		N/A			X		X					
4	Adopt freeboard ordinance	N/A		N/A			X		X					
5	Adopt IBC and IRC	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	Install Blackboard Connect City-to-Resident Notification System	N/A	X	N/A		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	GIS mapping	N/A		N/A	X		X					X		
8	Outreach to vulnerable populations and cooling centers	N/A		N/A		X								
9	Install larger storm drainage on Pecan Street	N/A		N/A			X		X					
10	Install larger storm drainage at Town and Country Drive	N/A		N/A			X		X					
11	Implement Master Drainage Plan (7 projects)	N/A		N/A			X		X					
12	Educate homeowners on hazards	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>CITY OF WHARTON</b>														
1	Clean and repair storm drains routinely	N/A		N/A			X		X					
2	Increase freeboard requirements for permitting structures in the floodplain	N/A		N/A			X		X					
3	Implement a comprehensive watershed ordinance for new development	N/A		N/A			X							
4	Acquire, reuse, and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood-prone areas	N/A		N/A			X							

**TABLE 19-1.  
MITIGATION ACTIONS DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS HAZARDS**

Action No.	Title	Dam/Levee Failure	Drought	Earthquake	Expansive Soil	Extreme Heat	Flood	Hail	Hurricane/Tropical Storms	Lightning	Tornado	Wildfire	Wind	Winter Weather
5	Implement a zero discharge policy for stormwater in subdivision platting	N/A		N/A			X							
6	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	Educate homeowners on the hazards	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Minimize the impact of flooding by installing berms and levees where appropriate	N/A		N/A			X							
9	Develop a flood-use stream restoration/channelization projects to ensure adequate drainage/diversion of stormwater	N/A		N/A			X							
10	Establish a reserve fund for emergency and public mitigation measures	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11	Strengthen and harden at-risk critical facilities	N/A	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures	N/A		N/A			X							
13	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities	N/A		N/A		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
14	Use impact fees to help fund public hazard mitigation projects related to land development	N/A		N/A	X		X		X		X		X	
Notes:	CAPCOG Capital Regional Council of Governments CEM Certified Emergency Manager CFM Certified Floodplain Manager CRS Community Rating System FIRM Flood Insurance Rate Map GIS Geographic Information System IBC International Building Code IRC International Residential Code LCRA Lower Colorado River Authority N/A Not Applicable NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NWS National Weather Service													



**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
<b>WHARTON COUNTY</b>										
1	Install bridge and culvert drainage improvements throughout the County	Install larger drain improvements throughout the county. During flood and hurricane events the streams overflow. There are areas that do not pass the required 25-year flow required for emergency access during flood events.	1	SIP	G2, G6	Emergency Management	>\$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	60	High
2	Update and adopt a new Wharton County Flood Insurance Study and FIRM	Update and adopt a new Flood Insurance Study and FIRM. This would prevent new properties from developing on the floodway.	2	LPR EAP	G2	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	24	High
3	Adopt "Higher Standard" Riverine Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and Standards	This would result in a discount on insurance for new and existing properties; and mitigation damages for both new/existing buildings.	9	LPR	G2	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
4	Create and Implement Drought and Expansive Soils Plan	Create and implement a Water Conservation/Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan to address and mitigate the different degrees of drought, water shortages, and extreme heat as well as expansive soils issues on county roads and foundations. Create and implement a Water Conservation/Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan to address and mitigate the different degrees of drought, water shortages, and extreme heat as well as expansive soils issues on county roads and foundations with the use of calcium soil stabilizers techniques for example, and foundations with the management of surface drainage and the planting of vegetation measures. This will make a durable permanent roadway layer and minimize damage from expansive soil issues.	12	LPR	G3	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds State/Federal grants	24	Medium
5	Establish Countywide Bench Mark Network	Subdivision ordinance requires developers to establish a permanent survey monument in each new subdivision.	10	LPR	G2	Floodplain Management	< \$10,000	County funds	48	Medium
6	Provide support to the TCRFC and San Bernard River in flood reduction projects	Flood reduction projects should be identified in advance to prevent flood damage and loss of lives.	5	SIP	G2	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds	12	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
7	Join FEMA’s CRS program	Complete the initial steps to join FEMA’s CRS and reduce cost of insurance for new and existing buildings. It is better to protect existing properties through the development of CRS activities.	11	LPR EAP	G2, G3	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	12	Medium
8	Create a Wharton Disaster Response Team	Having a disaster response team in place that can respond quickly to a natural or man-caused event would prevent damage to existing buildings.	6	EAP	G4, G6	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	Medium
9	Implement a Wharton County Flood Warning System	Wharton County experience flooding at low-water crossings which can lead to injuries and even fatalities.	8	SIP	G2, G6	Floodplain Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	36	Medium
10	Become a NWS Storm Ready community	Complete the steps to become a NWS Storm Ready community. Storm Ready communities are better prepared to protect life and property from natural hazard events.	7	LPR	G1, G2, G3, G4, G6	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	Medium
11	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities to provide back-up power from hazard events of extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricane/tropical storms, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	3	SIP	G1, G2	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds, State/Federal grants	36	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
12	Map expansive soils in unincorporated county	Identify and map areas that are at high levels of expansive soils in Wharton County. Create a manual for emergency officials and building contractors.	15	LPR	G4	County Agri-life Agent	\$10,000 to \$100,000	County funds	48	Low
13	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	The County will purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios and distribute to citizens to be aware of the weather. County offices and schools already have them.	13	SIP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	12	Medium
14	Provide training for CFM and CEM	Better trained personnel result in better informed residents in protection structures from flooding and other severe weather events.	4	EAP	G4, G5	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	24	Medium
15	Educate homeowners on hazards	Educate homeowners of how to mitigation their homes from these hazards on county website and public forums.	14	EAP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	County funds	36	Medium
<b>CITY OF EAST BERNARD</b>										
1	Create water conservation education materials	Work with W.C.I.D. #2 to create water conservation materials to mail with utility bills and to post on our website. Water conservation would also include measures to reduce contracting soil problems around foundations.	5	EAP	G3	City Secretary	< \$10,000	City funds	36	Medium
2	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	The City will purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios and distribute to citizens to be aware of the weather.	10	SIP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City funds	12	Medium

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
3	Organize outreach program for vulnerable populations	We will use several media outlets to promote accessible heating and cooling centers and education of flood and hurricane hazards to vulnerable populations.	4	EAP	G3, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	I.T.	12	Medium
4	Prepare and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance	Prepare and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance	8	LPR	G2, G4	City Secretary	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds	24	Medium
5	Update emergency response plan	Form a committee to update the emergency response plan for emergency officials and personnel to use.	3	LPR	G1, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City and County funds	24	Medium
6	Educate homeowners on mitigating hazards around their home	Work with local chamber to set up a seminar for homeowners to attend concerning natural hazard mitigation techniques for their homes.	6	EAP	G3	City Secretary	< \$10,000	City funds	60	Medium
7	Improve drainage throughout city	Use a Strategic Plan to prioritize drainage areas and then begin construction with the most sever areas. Complete east and west sections of the drainage plan for East Bernard is in progress as identified in the 2011 plan.	7	SIP	G2	Public Works	>\$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	48	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
8	Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan	Create and implement a Water Conservation/Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan to address and mitigate the different degrees of drought, water shortages, and extreme heat as well as expansive soils issues on county roads with the use of calcium soil stabilizers techniques for example, and foundations with the management of surface drainage and the planting of vegetation measures..	1	LPR	G3	Administration	< \$10,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	36	Medium
9	Install emergency generators at critical facilities	Install emergency generators at key critical facilities to provide back-up power from hazard events of extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricane/tropical storms, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	2	LPR	G1	Administration	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	36	Medium
10	Identify and map areas that are at high risk of expansive soils	Identify and map expansive soil hazard areas to educate residents and the city about unexpected risks.	9	LPR	G4	City Secretary	< \$10,000	State/Federal grants	60	Low
<b>CITY OF EL CAMPO</b>										
1	Drought and expansive soils contingency plan	Develop and implement a drought and expansive soils contingency plan that addresses mitigation measures for drought, extreme heat, and expansive soils.	3	LPR EAP	G1, G3, G4, G6	Utility Department	< \$10,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	36	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
2	Provide education on water conservation techniques	Provide water conservation measures low-flow plumbing, etc., as mail inserts with utility bills and discuss with local media outlets.	6	EAP	G3, G4, G6	Utility Department	< \$10,000	Utility Revenue	36	High
3	Construct regional detention ponds	Construct regional detention ponds and channel widening improvements for Tres Palacios, Blue Creek, East Mustang Creek.	4	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	>\$100,000	State/Federal grants	24	High
4	Adopt freeboard ordinance	Adopt free board ordinance to reduce flood risk of structures.	1	LPR	G2, G4	Building Department	< \$10,000	N/A	12	High
5	Adopt IBC and IRC	Adopt 2015 IBC and IRC that go to mitigate identified hazards, such as tornado, high wind, and impact resistant materials (windows, doors, roof bracings); dry-proofing public buildings for flooding; upgrading to higher standard insulation for extreme heat and winter storms; installing lighting rods and grounding systems on public buildings; retrofitting to low-flow plumbing and replacing landscaping with drought and fire resistant plants; stricter codes for hail and fire resistant roofing and siding; implementing higher standards for foundations, and upgrading requirements for construction beams, brackets and foundations to mitigation impacts of earthquake and expansive soils.	5	LPR	G1, G2, G4	Building Department	< \$10,000	City funds	12	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
6	Install Blackboard Connect City-to-Resident Notification System	Install Blackboard emergency notification system. Residents will be able sign-up for the notification service from the city's website. This notification system will communicate specific information about hazard events including drought stage conservation measures.	8	LPR EAP	G1	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	Information Technology	12	High
7	GIS mapping	Use GIS mapping to overlay properties with known hazards of expansive soils, flood, and wildland interface areas. Then notify residents of at-risk structures to help residence mitigate the hazards around their property.	2	LPR	G2	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	Information Technology	36	High
8	Outreach to vulnerable populations and cooling centers	City employees providing outreach to residents on functional and access needs lists concerning hazards and availability to cooling centers during extreme heat periods.	7	EAP	G1, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	Salary	12	High
9	Install larger storm drainage on Pecan Street	Install larger storm drainage on Pecan street to prevent localized flooding.	10	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
10	Install larger storm drainage at Town and Country Drive	Install larger storm drainage at Town and Country Drive area to mitigate the repetitive flooding in the area.	9	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium



**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
11	Implement Master Drainage Plan (7 projects)	Seven areas of the city are known to be subject to flood damages because of inadequate storm drainage. Install larger storm drainage and reduce flood damage.	11	SIP	G2, G6	Public Works	>\$100,000	City funds, State/Federal grants	36	Medium
12	Educate homeowners on the hazards	Conduct homeowner awareness programs on how to mitigation their homes from hazards on city website and public forums.	12	EAP	G3, G4	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City Funds	36	Medium
<b>CITY OF WHARTON</b>										
1	Clean and repair storm drains routinely	Citywide cleaning and repairing of storm drains.	4	SIP	G1	Public Works	\$10,000 to \$100,000	Public Works Funds	24	High
2	Increase freeboard requirements for permitting structures in the floodplain	Adopt ordinance to increase freeboard requirement in 100-year floodplain. This action will result in safer structures and, thus, fewer flood damages.	12	SIP	G2	Floodplain Management	< \$10,000	City Funds	12	High
3	Implement a comprehensive watershed ordinance for new development	The city has experienced natural hazards such as floods and hurricanes.	11	LPR	G2, G6	Floodplain Management	< \$10,000	Watershed Funds	24	High
4	Acquire, reuse and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood-prone areas	Acquire, reuse and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood prone areas.	7	LPR	G2, G4, G5, G6	City Public Works	>\$100,000	FMA, PDM, HMGP	36	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
5	Zero Discharge Policy	Implement a zero discharge policy for stormwater in subdivision platting.	10	LPR	G5, G6	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	12	Medium
6	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios for critical facilities.	14	SIP	G1	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	24	Medium
7	Educate homeowners on the hazards	Conduct homeowner awareness programs on how to mitigation their homes from hazards on city website and public forums.	13	EAP	G3, G4	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	36	Medium
8	Minimize the impact of flooding by installing berms and levees where appropriate	Install berms and levees where appropriate. This action will protect existing properties from flooding and also help to reduce the cost of flood insurance. In addition the action will increase development and prevent damage to new buildings.	1	SIP	G2, G4, G6	Floodplain Administrator	>\$100,000	City Funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
9	Design flood-use stream restoration/ channelization projects to ensure adequate drainage/diversion of stormwater	Design and construct flood-use stream restoration/ channelization projects. Flood protection for existing structures and also encouragement for the development of new structures.	2	SIP	G2, G6	Planning Dept.	>\$100,000	City Funds, State/Federal grants	24	Medium
10	Establish a reserve fund for emergency and public mitigation measures	This reserve fund could be used to match federal funds on mitigation projects addressing the hazards of drought, expansive soils, extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricanes, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	6	LPR EAP	G2, G3, G4, G5	Planning Dept.	< \$10,000	City Funds	60	High

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
11	Strengthen and harden at-risk critical facilities	Strengthen and harden current critical facilities and also set policy standards for mitigation against damage for new critical facilities.	5	LPR	G1, G6	Emergency Management	< \$10,000	City Funds	48	High
12	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures	Mitigate the repetitive loss properties in the city by acquisition and elevation projects. The acquisition projects land would then be deed restricted as open space for perpetuity.	8	SIP NSP	G5, G6	Emergency Management	>\$100,000	FMA, PDM, HMGP	36	High
13	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities	The city experiences blackouts or power outages during storm events such as Hurricane Ike. Installing emergency back-up generators at critical facilities would provide back-up power from hazard events of extreme heat, flood, hail, hurricane/tropical storms, lightning, tornado, wildfire, wind, and winter weather.	3	SIP NSP	G1, G2, G6	Emergency Management	\$10,000 to \$100,000	HMGP, City Funds	24	High
14	Use impact fees to help fund public hazard mitigation projects related to land development	Flood protection for existing structures and helps increase new development as runoff will be mitigated.	9	LPR	G2, G3, G4, G5	Floodplain Administrator	< \$10,000	City Funds	24	Medium

**TABLE 19-2.  
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Action No.	Title	Description	Mitigation Action Ranking	Action Type	Applicable Goals	Responsible Department	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline in Months	Benefit
Notes:										
CEM	Community Emergency Manager		IRC	International Residential Code						
CFM	Community Floodplain Manager		LPR	Local Plans and Regulations						
CRS	Community Rating System		N/A	Not Applicable						
EAP	Education and Awareness Programs		NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program						
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency		NSP	Natural Systems Protection						
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map		NWS	National Weather Service						
FMA	Flood Mitigation Assistance		PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation						
GIS	Geographic Information System		SIP	Structure and Infrastructure Project						
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program		TCRFC	Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition						
IBC	International Building Code									

# **CHAPTER 20.**

## **PLAN ADOPTION AND MAINTENANCE**

### **20.1 PLAN ADOPTION**

A hazard mitigation plan must document that it has been formally adopted by the governing body of the jurisdiction requesting federal approval of the plan (44 CFR Section 201.6(c)(5)). For multi-jurisdictional plans, each jurisdiction requesting approval must document that it has been formally adopted. All planning partners fully met the participation requirements specified by the Steering Committee and will seek Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) compliance under this plan. The plan will be submitted for review to the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) and then to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VI for review and pre-adoption approval. Once pre-adoption approval has been provided, all planning partners will formally adopt the plan. All partners understand that DMA compliance and its benefits cannot be achieved until the plan is adopted. Copies of the resolutions adopting this plan for all planning partners can be found in Appendix D.

### **20.2 PLAN MAINTENANCE STRATEGY**

A hazard mitigation plan must present a plan maintenance process that includes the following (44 CFR Section 201.6(c)(4)):

- A section describing the method and schedule of monitoring, evaluating, and updating the mitigation plan over a 5-year cycle
- A process by which local governments incorporate the requirements of the mitigation plan into other planning mechanisms, such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans, when appropriate
- A discussion on how the community will continue public participation in the plan maintenance process.

This chapter details the formal process that will ensure that the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan remains an active and relevant document and that the planning partners maintain their eligibility for applicable funding sources. The plan maintenance process includes a schedule for monitoring and evaluating the plan annually and producing an updated plan every 5 years. This chapter also describes how public participation will be integrated throughout the plan maintenance and implementation process. It also explains how the mitigation strategies outlined in this plan will be incorporated into existing planning mechanisms and programs, such as comprehensive land-use planning processes, capital improvement planning, and building code enforcement and implementation. The plan's format allows sections to be reviewed and updated when new data become available, resulting in a plan that will remain current and relevant.

#### **20.2.1 Plan Implementation**

The effectiveness of the hazard mitigation plan depends on its implementation and incorporation of its action items into partner jurisdictions' existing plans, policies, and programs. Together, the action items in the plan provide a framework for activities that the partnership can implement over the next 5 years. The planning team and the Steering Committee have established goals and objectives and have prioritized mitigation actions that will be implemented through existing plans, policies, and programs.

The Wharton County Office of Emergency Management will have lead responsibility for overseeing the plan implementation and maintenance strategy. Plan implementation and evaluation will be a shared responsibility among Wharton County and the cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Warton. The public

will be invited to attend meetings regarding the implementation of the plan and feedback will be solicited at the end of the meeting.

### **20.2.2 Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee is a total volunteer body that oversaw the development of the plan and made recommendations on key elements of the plan, including the maintenance strategy. It was the Steering Committee's position that an implementation committee with representation similar to the initial Steering Committee should have an active role in the plan maintenance strategy. The Steering Committee and the Implementation Committee are one and the same. Therefore, it is recommended that a Steering Committee remain a viable body involved in key elements of the plan maintenance strategy. The new Steering Committee should strive to include representation from the planning partners, as well as other stakeholders in the planning area. The public will be invited to attend Steering Committee meetings regarding maintenance of the plan and will be asked for feedback or comments on the maintenance strategy.

The principal role of the new implementation committee in this plan maintenance strategy will be to review the annual progress report and provide input to the Wharton County Emergency Management Coordinator on possible enhancements to be considered at the next update. Future plan updates will be overseen by a Steering Committee similar to the one that participated in this plan development process, so keeping an interim Steering Committee intact will provide a head start on future updates. Completion of the progress report is the responsibility of each planning partner, not the responsibility of the Steering Committee. It will simply be the Steering Committee's role to review the progress report in an effort to identify issues needing to be addressed by future plan updates.

With adoption of this plan, the implementation committee will be tasked with plan monitoring, evaluation and maintenance. The participating jurisdictions and agencies, led by the Wharton County Emergency Management Coordinator, agree to:

- Meet annually, and after a disaster event, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan;
- Act as a forum for hazard mitigation issues;
- Disseminate hazard mitigation ideas and activities to all participants;
- Pursue the implementation of high priority, low- or no-cost recommended actions;
- Maintain vigilant monitoring of multi-objective, cost-share, and other funding opportunities to help the community implement the plan's recommended actions for which no current funding exists;
- Monitor and assist in implementation and update of this plan;
- Keep the concept of mitigation in the forefront of community decision making by identifying plan recommendations when other community goals, plans, and activities overlap, influence, or directly affect increased community vulnerability to disasters;
- Report on plan progress and recommended changes to the Wharton County Commissioners Court and governing bodies of participating jurisdictions; and
- Inform and solicit input from the public.

The implementation committee is an advisory body and can only make recommendations to county, city, or district elected officials. Its primary duty is to see the plan successfully carried out and to report to the community governing boards and the public on the status of plan implementation and mitigation opportunities. Other duties include reviewing and promoting mitigation proposals, hearing stakeholder concerns about hazard mitigation, passing concerns on to appropriate entities, and posting relevant information in areas accessible to the public.

### **20.2.3 Plan Maintenance Schedule**

The implementation committee will meet annually and after a state or federally declared hazard event as appropriate to monitor progress and update the mitigation strategy. The Wharton County Emergency Management Coordinator will be responsible for initiating the plan reviews with the implementation committee.

### **20.2.4 Annual Progress Report**

The minimum task of each planning partner will be the evaluation of the progress of its individual action plan during a 12-month performance period. This review will include the following:

- Summary of any hazard events that occurred during the performance period and the impact these events had on the planning area
- Review of mitigation success stories
- Review of continuing public involvement and feedback received from the community
- Brief discussion about why targeted strategies were not completed
- Re-evaluation of the action plan to evaluate whether the timeline for identified projects needs to be amended (such as changing a long-term project to a short-term one because of new funding)
- Recommendations for new projects
- Changes in or potential for new funding options (grant opportunities)
- Impact of any other planning programs or initiatives that involve hazard mitigation
- Monitor the incorporation of the Mitigation Plan into planning mechanisms

The planning team has created a template to guide the planning partners in preparing a progress report (see Appendix E). The plan maintenance Steering Committee and the public will provide feedback to the planning team on items included in the template. The planning team will then prepare a formal annual report on the progress of the plan. This report should be used to:

- Post on the Wharton County Office of Emergency Management website dedicated to the hazard mitigation plan
- Provide information for a press release that will be issued to the local media
- Inform planning partner governing bodies of the progress of actions implemented during the reporting period.

Uses of the progress report will be at the discretion of each planning partner. Annual progress reporting is not a requirement specified under 44 CFR. However, it may enhance the planning partnership's opportunities for funding. While failure to implement this component of the plan maintenance strategy will not jeopardize a planning partner's compliance under the DMA, it may jeopardize its opportunity to partner and leverage funding opportunities with the other partners.

Evaluation of progress can be achieved by monitoring changes in vulnerabilities identified in the plan. Changes in vulnerability can be identified by noting:

- Decreased vulnerability as a result of implementing recommended actions,
- Increased vulnerability as a result of failed or ineffective mitigation actions, and/or
- Increased vulnerability as a result of new development (and/or annexation).

### **20.2.5 Plan Update**

Local hazard mitigation plans must be reviewed, revised if appropriate, and resubmitted for approval in order to remain eligible for benefits under the DMA (44 CFR, Section 201.6(d)(3)). The Wharton County partnership intends to update the hazard mitigation plan on a 5-year cycle from the date of initial plan adoption. This cycle may be accelerated to less than 5 years based on the following triggers:

- A Presidential Disaster Declaration that impacts the planning area
- A hazard event that causes loss of life
- A comprehensive update of the county or participating city's comprehensive plan

It will not be the intent of future updates to develop a complete new hazard mitigation plan for the planning area. The update will, at a minimum, include the following elements:

- The update process will be convened through a Steering Committee.
- The hazard risk assessment will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated using best available information and technologies.
- The action plans will be reviewed and revised to account for any actions completed, dropped, or changed and to account for changes in the risk assessment or new partnership policies identified under other planning mechanisms (such as the comprehensive plan).
- The draft update will be sent to appropriate agencies and organizations for comment.
- The public will be given an opportunity to participate in the update process and comment on the update prior to adoption.
- The partnership governing bodies will adopt their respective portions of the updated plan.

### **20.2.6 Continuing Public Involvement**

The public will continue to be apprised of the plan's progress through the TCRFC and Wharton County Office of Emergency Management's websites and other methods as appropriate. This site will not only house the final plan, it will become the one-stop shop for information regarding the plan, the partnership and plan implementation. Copies of the plan will be distributed to the public library system in Wharton County Library. Upon initiation of future update processes, a new public involvement strategy will be initiated based on guidance from a new Steering Committee. This strategy will be based on the needs and capabilities of the planning partnership at the time of the update. This strategy will include the use of local media outlets within the planning area to notify the public of the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the plan. The public will be invited to participate in each stage by attending meetings and provide feedback to the planning team and new Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may include community stakeholders, such as prominent businesses, local action groups, etc.

### **20.2.7 Incorporation into Other Planning Mechanisms**

The information on hazard, risk, vulnerability, and mitigation contained in this plan is based on the best science and technology available at the time this plan was prepared. The existing Wharton County regulations, ordinances, and plans (including the Wharton County Emergency Operations Plan), and the comprehensive plans of the partner cities are considered to be integral parts of this plan. The county and partner cities, through adoption of comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, have planned for the impact of natural hazards.



It will be the responsibility of the county and the cities to determine additional implementation procedures when appropriate. This includes integrating the requirements of the hazard mitigation plan into other local planning documents, processes, or mechanisms.

All municipal planning partners are committed to creating a linkage between the hazard mitigation plan and their individual comprehensive plans. Other planning processes and programs to be coordinated with the recommendations of the hazard mitigation plan include the following:

- Comprehensive plans
- Strategic plans
- Partners' emergency response plans
- Capital improvement programs
- Municipal codes
- Community design guidelines
- Water-efficient landscape design guidelines
- Stormwater management programs
- Water system vulnerability assessments
- Community wildfire protection plans
- Growth management plans
- Ordinances, resolutions, and regulations
- Continuity of operations plans

The previous *TCRFC Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2011-2016* identified mitigation actions for each participating community. These mitigation actions and their current status are listed in Table 2-2. Ongoing or delayed mitigation actions identified in the previous plan were carried forward into new mitigation actions for Wharton County or the City of East Bernard, the City of El Campo, or the City of Wharton. The county and the cities did not actively track the linkage of the previous 2011 TCRFC plan into other local planning mechanisms. However, the annual progress report discussed in Chapter 20.2.4 and Appendix E will provide a framework for tracking future mitigation actions and the incorporation of this plan into other planning mechanisms.

Opportunities to integrate the requirements of this plan into other local planning mechanisms will continue to be identified through future meetings of the Steering Committee, by the individual communities and the county, and through the annual and five-year review processes as required by FEMA. The primary means for integrating mitigation strategies into other local planning mechanisms will be through the revision, update, and implementation of each jurisdiction's individual plans that require specific planning and administrative tasks (for example, plan amendments, ordinance revisions, capital improvement projects, etc.).

The previous Steering Committee representatives will remain charged with ensuring that the goals and strategies of new and updated local planning documents for their jurisdictions or agencies are consistent with the goals and actions of the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and will not contribute to increased hazard vulnerability in Wharton County, the City of East Bernard, the City of El Campo, or the City of Wharton. During the planning process for new and updated local planning documents, such as a comprehensive plan, capital improvements plan, or emergency management plan, the applicable jurisdiction will provide a copy of the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update to the appropriate parties and recommend that all goals and strategies of new and updated local planning documents are consistent with and support the goals of the Wharton County plan and will not contribute to increased hazards in the affected jurisdiction(s).

Although it is recognized that there are many possible benefits to integrating components of this plan into other local planning mechanisms, the development and maintenance of this stand-alone hazard mitigation plan is deemed by the Steering Committee to be the most effective and appropriate method to ensure

implementation of local hazard mitigation actions at this time. All organizations will incorporate the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update into existing plans in an effort to mitigate the impact of future disasters. A list of the existing plans and procedures in which mitigation activities will be integrated is listed in Table 20-1.

<b>TABLE 20-1. INCORPORATION OF MITIGATION ACTIVITIES</b>					
<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>TYPE OF PLAN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>REVIEW TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW OR EXISTING</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO BE INTEGRATED</b>
Wharton County	Wharton County Master Subdivision Policy, 2005 (as amended)	Permit and Inspection Department	5 years	Existing	Maintain current data on high risk areas via the mitigation plan and regularly incorporate information on high risk hazard areas into the subdivision requirements, thereby eliminating or reducing potential impacts on current and future development.
	Flood Damage Prevention Order signed October 22, 2001	Permit and Inspection Department	5 years	Existing	Overlay high risk/flood prone areas with current and future floodplain regulations, thereby minimizing or reducing the impacts of flooding on current and future development. Adopt "Higher Standard" Riverine Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and Standards to reduce insurance rates and mitigate flood damages for both new/existing buildings. The new county floodplain maps went into effect on May 2, 2012.
	Wharton County Basic Emergency Operations Plan	Emergency Manager, Commissioners' Court	2 years	Existing	Integrate and implement hazard mitigation plan data on high hazards and applicable mitigation actions that are affected by or will affect the emergency operations plan on an annual basis.
City of East Bernard	2005 East Bernard Comprehensive Plan	City Council	10 years	Existing	During the regular review process, the City Council will consider mitigation actions from the hazard mitigation plan for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives elements.

<b>TABLE 20-1. INCORPORATION OF MITIGATION ACTIVITIES</b>					
<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>TYPE OF PLAN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>REVIEW TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW OR EXISTING</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO BE INTEGRATED</b>
	Standard for Floodplain Management (2004)	City Secretary	Annual	Existing	During the regular review process, the City Council will review the identified actions, and will either approve or deny the actions.
	Wharton County Basic Emergency Operations Plan	City Secretary	2 years	Existing	Under the leadership of the County OEM, all appropriate planning documents will be updated to include and implement the appropriate mitigation actions as prioritized in the current hazard mitigation plan.
	Stormwater Drainage Plan and Ordinance	City Council	Annual	New	City Council will incorporate current data on high hazard areas presented in the hazard mitigation plan as they prepare/commission and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance.
	Johnson East Bernard Zoning Code (2004, as amended)	City Council	10 years	Existing	During the City's regular review and update of the City's zoning code, which includes the subdivision code, they will incorporate current data on high hazard areas, thereby reducing or eliminating the potential negative impacts of high hazards on existing and future development.
City of El Campo	El Campo 2020 Plan	City Council	20 years	Existing	During the regular review process, the Planning and Zoning Commission will consider mitigation actions from the hazard mitigation plan for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives elements, and present those actions to the City Council for approval.
	Water Conservation Plan/Drought Contingency Plan	Public Works Department	5 years	New	Water conservation/drought contingency plan is implemented and updated taking into consideration hazard mitigation plan

<b>TABLE 20-1. INCORPORATION OF MITIGATION ACTIVITIES</b>					
<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>TYPE OF PLAN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>REVIEW TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW OR EXISTING</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO BE INTEGRATED</b>
					data on extreme heat and expansive soils.
	Chapter 10, Subdivision (2014, as amended)	Inspection Department, Planning and Zoning Commission	5 years	Existing	During the City’s regular review and update of the subdivision regulations, they will incorporate current data on high hazard areas thereby reducing or eliminating the potential negative impacts of high hazards on existing and future development.
	Floodplain Ordinance, Part of the Chapter 10, Buildings (2006, as amended)	Inspection Department, Planning and Zoning Commission	5 years	Existing	During the regular review process of the Floodplain Ordinance (within the Subdivision Ordinance), bring the identified actions to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council for approval. The Council will approve or deny the actions.
	Chapter 14, Zoning (2000, as amended)	Board of Adjustment, Planning and Zoning Commission	10 years	Existing	During the City’s regular review and update of the zoning ordinance, they will incorporate current data on high hazard areas, thereby reducing or eliminating the potential negative impacts of high hazards on existing and future development.
	Site Plan Review Process	Building Official and Public Works Department	Regularly	Existing	The Building Official and Public Works Department will consider the high hazard areas within the community and make development decisions in the best interest of the community integrating the mitigation plan data and proposed actions as applicable into their decision making processes.
	Capital Improvements Plan	City Development Corporation	Annual	Existing	During the annual budget review cycle the City Development Corporation will bring the identified mitigation actions to the

**TABLE 20-1. INCORPORATION OF MITIGATION ACTIVITIES**

<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>TYPE OF PLAN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>REVIEW TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW OR EXISTING</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO BE INTEGRATED</b>
					City Council for approval as part of the capital improvements funding stream. The Council will approve or deny the actions.
	Wharton County Basic Emergency Operations Plan	Assistant Police Chief	2 years	Existing	Under the leadership of the City Police Department and the County Office of Emergency Management, all appropriate planning documents will be updated to include and implement the appropriate mitigation actions as prioritized in the current hazard mitigation plan.
City of Wharton	2009 Wharton Comprehensive Plan	City Council	30 years	Existing	During the regular review process, City Council will consider mitigation actions from the hazard mitigation plan for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives elements.
	Subdivision Ordinance (within Johnson City Zoning Code, 1997, as amended)	Code Enforcement Department	10 years	Existing	During the City’s regular review and update of the subdivision regulations, they will incorporate current data on high hazard areas thereby reducing or eliminating the potential negative impacts of high hazards on existing and future development.
	Standard for Floodplain Management (1996)	Code Enforcement Department	5 years	Existing	During the regular review process of the Floodplain Ordinance, update the ordinance to be more restrictive. Incorporate identified hazard mitigation plan actions to increase freeboard requirements for permitting structures in the floodplain. Bring proposed amendments to the City Council, which will approve or deny the actions.

<b>TABLE 20-1. INCORPORATION OF MITIGATION ACTIVITIES</b>					
<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>TYPE OF PLAN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>REVIEW TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW OR EXISTING</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO BE INTEGRATED</b>
	Wharton Code of Ordinance – Zoning (1997, as amended)	Code Enforcement Department	10 years	Existing	During the City’s regular review and update of the City’s zoning ordinance, they will incorporate current data on high hazard areas thereby reducing or eliminating the potential negative impacts of high hazards on existing and future development.
	Adopted Annual Budget	City Manager	Annual	Existing	During the annual budget review cycle, bring the identified mitigation actions to the City Council for approval. The Council will approve or deny the actions.

## REFERENCES

- Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. No date. Accessed at <http://www.c2es.org/science-impacts/basics/faqs/tornadoes>. Accessed April 2014.
- Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). 1993. Preparing for an Uncertain Climate, Vol. I. OTA–O–567. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 2001. Understanding Your Risks; Identifying Hazards and Determining your Risks. FEMA (386-2). August 2001.
- FEMA. 2002. Getting Started; Building Support for Mitigation Planning; FEMA (386-1). September.
- FEMA. 2003. Developing the Mitigation Plan; Identifying Mitigation Actions and Implementing Strategies. FEMA (386-3). April.
- FEMA. 2004. Using HAZUS-MH for Risk Assessment, How to Guide, FEMA (433). August.
- FEMA. 2007. FEMA, National Flood Insurance Program, Community Rating System; CRS Coordinator’s Manual FIA-15/2007 OMB No. 1660-0022
- FEMA 2010. <http://www.fema.gov> . Website accessed 2009, 2010, 2011.
- Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED), unemployment data, <http://m.research.stlouisfed.org/fred/>, accessed June 10, 2015.
- Hudgins, Merle R. 2010. “Wharton County,” Handbook of Texas Online. (<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcw06>), accessed June 8, 2015. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. 2008. “Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Risk Management Practices: Critical Elements for Adaptation to Climate Change.” November 11.
- McEwen, Harry F. and Crout, Jack. “Soil Survey of Wharton County, Texas” ([http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_MANUSCRIPTS/texas/whartonTX1974/whartonTX1974.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_MANUSCRIPTS/texas/whartonTX1974/whartonTX1974.pdf)), accessed June 8, 2015. Uploaded 2006. Published by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services.
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). 2004. <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/view.php?id=25145> NASA Earth Observatory News Web Site Item, dated August 2.
- National Lightning Detection Network, owned and operated by Vaisala, “Cloud-To-Ground Lightning Flashes”. ([http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/stats/97-10cloud\\_to\\_ground-state-list.pdf](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/stats/97-10cloud_to_ground-state-list.pdf)), accessed May 7, 2015. Updated July 2011. Published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). 2007. Storm Prediction Center. <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/ef-scale.html>
- NOAA. 2010. National Climatic Data Center website. Accessed at: <http://www4.ncdc.noaa.gov/cgi-win/wwcgi.dll?wwEvent~Storms>.
- Soil and Water Conservation Society. 2003. Conservation Implications of Climate Change: Soil Erosion and Runoff from Cropland. Ankeny, IA: Soil and Water Conservation Society. Available on-line at [http://www.swcs.org/en/publications/conservation\\_implications\\_of\\_climate\\_change/](http://www.swcs.org/en/publications/conservation_implications_of_climate_change/).
- Texas Division of Emergency Management. 2013. State of Texas Mitigation Plan Update. October 15.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). 1997. Hydrologic Engineering Requirements for Reservoirs, Engineer Manual. EM 1110-2-1420. October 31.
- U.S. Census. 2010. Data from 2010 U.S. Census. U.S. Census Bureau. <http://factfinder.census.gov/>.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). 2006. Excessive Heat Events Guidebook. EPA 430-B-06-005. Available online at [http://www.epa.gov/heatisld/about/pdf/EHEguide\\_final.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/heatisld/about/pdf/EHEguide_final.pdf).
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). 1989. The Severity of an Earthquake. U.S. Government Printing Office: 1989-288-913. Accessed at: [http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/earthq4/severity\\_text.html](http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/earthq4/severity_text.html)
- USGS. 2008. An Atlas of ShakeMaps for Selected Global Earthquakes. U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2008-1236. Prepared by Allen, T.I., Wald, D.J., Hotovec, A.J., Lin, K., Earle, P.S. and Marano, K.D.
- USGS. 2010. PAGER—Rapid Assessment of an Earthquake’s Impact. U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2010-3036. September.
- Wilhite, D.A, and M.H. Glantz. 1985. Understanding the Drought Phenomenon: The Role of Definitions. *Water International*. 10 (3): 111-120.



Wharton County  
**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

---

**APPENDIX A.**  
**ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS**

---

# APPENDIX A. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

## ACRONYMS

*Note: Acronyms are defined the first time they are used in each part of this plan.*

°F	Degrees Fahrenheit
°C	Degrees Celsius
%g	Percentage of gravity
44 CFR	Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations
CAPCOG	Capital Regional Council of Governments
CEPRA	Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act
CPZ	Community Protection Zone
CWA	Clean Water Act
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
CWSRF	Clean Water State Revolving Fund
DMA	Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
DPS	Department of Public Safety
EAP	Education and Awareness Program
EF	Enhanced Fujita
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESD	Emergency Services District
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FHBM	Flood Hazard Boundary Map
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FPA-FOD	Fire Program Analysis-Fire-Occurrence Database
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLF	Geophysical Log Facility
GLO	General Land Office
H-GAC	Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
HAZUS-MH	Hazards, United States-Multi Hazard

HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
KT	Knot
LCRA	Lower Colorado River Authority
LPR	Local Plans and Regulations
MLI	Midterm Levee Inventory
ML	Local Magnitude Scale
mph	Miles per Hour
M <sub>w</sub>	Moment Magnitude
NEHRP	National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NREL	National Renewable Energy Laboratory
NSP	Natural Systems Protection
NWS	National Weather Service
OSSF	On-site sewage/sewer facilities
OTA	Congressional Office of Technology Assessment
PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program
PDI	Palmer Drought Index
PGA	Peak Ground Acceleration
PHDI	Palmer Hydrological Drought Index
PMF	Probable Maximum Flood
SIP	Structure and Infrastructure Project
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Area
SPI	Standardized Precipitation Index
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
TCRFC	Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition
TDEM	Texas Division of Emergency Management
TFS	Texas Forest Service
TSSWCB	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
TWDB	Texas Water Development Board
TxWRAP	Texas State Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFS	U.S. Forest Service

USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
VFD	Volunteer Fire Department
VRI	Values Response Index
WEDC	Wharton County Economic Development Corporation
WHP	Wildfire Hazard Potential
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

## DEFINITIONS

**100-Year Flood:** The term “100-year flood” can be misleading. The 100-year flood does not necessarily occur once every 100 years. Rather, it is the flood that has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Thus, the 100-year flood could occur more than once in a relatively short period of time. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines it as the 1% annual chance flood, which is now the standard definition used by most federal and state agencies and by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

**Accredited Levee:** A levee that is shown on a FIRM as providing protection from the 1% annual chance or greater flood. A **non-accredited or de-accredited levee** is a levee that is not shown on a FIRM as providing protection from the 1% annual chance or greater flood. A **provisionally accredited levee** is a previously accredited levee that has been de-accredited for which data and/or documentation is pending that will show the levee is compliant with NFIP regulations.

**Acre-Foot:** An acre-foot is the amount of water it takes to cover 1 acre to a depth of 1 foot. This measure is used to describe the quantity of storage in a water reservoir. An acre-foot is a unit of volume. One acre foot equals 7,758 barrels; 325,829 gallons; or 43,560 cubic feet. An average household of four will use approximately 1 acre-foot of water per year.

**Asset:** An asset is any man-made or natural feature that has value, including, but not limited to, people; buildings; infrastructure, such as bridges, roads, sewers, and water systems; lifelines, such as electricity and communication resources; and environmental, cultural, or recreational features such as parks, wetlands, and landmarks.

**Base Flood:** The flood having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year, also known as the “100-year” or “1% chance” flood. The base flood is a statistical concept used to ensure that all properties subject to the NFIP are protected to the same degree against flooding.

**Basin:** A basin is the area within which all surface water, whether from rainfall, snowmelt, springs, or other sources, flows to a single water body or watercourse. The boundary of a river basin is defined by natural topography, such as hills, mountains, and ridges. Basins are also referred to as “watersheds” and “drainage basins.”

**Benefit:** A benefit is a net project outcome and is usually defined in monetary terms. Benefits may include direct and indirect effects. For the purposes of benefit-cost analysis of proposed mitigation measures, benefits are limited to specific, measurable risk reduction factors, including reduction in expected property losses (buildings, contents, and functions) and protection of human life.

**Benefit/Cost Analysis:** A benefit/cost analysis is a systematic, quantitative method of comparing projected benefits to projected costs of a project or policy. It is used as a measure of cost effectiveness.

**Breach:** An opening through which floodwaters may pass after part of a levee has given way.

**Building:** A building is defined as a structure that is walled and roofed, principally aboveground, and permanently fixed to a site. The term includes manufactured homes on permanent foundations on which the wheels and axles carry no weight.

**Capability Assessment:** A capability assessment provides a description and analysis of a community's current capacity to address threats associated with hazards. The assessment includes two components: an inventory of an agency's mission, programs, and policies, and an analysis of its capacity to carry them out. A capability assessment is an integral part of the planning process in which a community's actions to reduce losses are identified, reviewed, and analyzed, and the framework for implementation is identified. The following capabilities were reviewed under this assessment:

- Legal and regulatory capability
- Administrative and technical capability
- Fiscal capability

**Collapsible soils:** Collapsible soils consist of loose, dry, low-density materials that collapse and compact under the addition of water or excessive loading. Soil collapse occurs when the land surface is saturated at depths greater than those reached by typical rain events. This saturation eliminates the clay bonds holding the soil grains together. Similar to expansive soils, collapsible soils result in structural damage such as cracking of the foundation, floors, and walls in response to settlement.

**Community Protection Zones (CPZ):** CPZs are based on an analysis of the "Where People Live" housing density data and surrounding fire behavior potential and represent those areas considered highest priority for wildfire mitigation planning activities. "Rate of Spread" data is used to determine the areas of concern around populated areas that are within a 2-hour fire spread distance.

**Conflagration:** A fire that grows beyond its original source area to engulf adjoining regions. Wind, extremely dry or hazardous weather conditions, excessive fuel buildup, and explosions are usually the elements behind a wildfire conflagration.

**Critical Area:** An area defined by state or local regulations as deserving special protection because of unique natural features or its value as habitat for a wide range of species of flora and fauna. A sensitive/critical area is usually subject to more restrictive development regulations.

**Critical Facility:** Facilities and infrastructure that are critical to the health and welfare of the population. These become especially important after any hazard event occurs. For the purposes of this plan, critical facilities include:

- Structures or facilities that produce, use, or store highly volatile, flammable, explosive, toxic or water reactive materials.
- Hospitals, nursing homes, and housing likely to contain occupants who may not be sufficiently mobile to avoid death or injury during a hazard event.
- Police stations, fire stations, vehicle and equipment storage facilities, and emergency operations centers that are needed for disaster response before, during, and after hazard events.
- Public and private utilities, facilities and infrastructure that are vital to maintaining or restoring normal services to areas damaged by hazard events.
- Government facilities.

**Dam:** A barrier, including one for flood detention, designed to impound liquid volumes and which has a height of dam greater than six feet (Texas Administrative Code, Ch. 299, 1986).

**Dam Failure:** Dam failure refers to a partial or complete breach in a dam (or levee) that impacts its integrity. Dam failures occur for a number of reasons, such as flash flooding, inadequate spillway size, mechanical failure of valves or other equipment, freezing and thawing cycles, earthquakes, and intentional destruction.

**Debris Flow:** Dense mixtures of water-saturated debris that move down-valley; looking and behaving much like flowing concrete. They form when loose masses of unconsolidated material are saturated, become unstable, and move down slope. The source of water varies but includes rainfall, melting snow or ice, and glacial outburst floods.

**Deposition:** Deposition is the placing of eroded material in a new location.

**Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA):** The DMA is Public Law 106-390 and is the latest federal legislation enacted to encourage and promote proactive, pre-disaster planning as a condition of receiving financial assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Act. The DMA emphasizes planning for disasters before they occur. Under the DMA, a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program and new requirements for the national post-disaster hazard mitigation grant program (HMGP) were established.

**Drainage Basin:** A basin is the area within which all surface water, whether from rainfall, snowmelt, springs or other sources, flows to a single water body or watercourse. The boundary of a river basin is defined by natural topography, such as hills, mountains and ridges. Drainage basins are also referred to as **watersheds** or **basins**.

**Drought:** Drought is a period of time without substantial rainfall or snowfall from one year to the next. Drought can also be defined as the cumulative impacts of several dry years or a deficiency of precipitation over an extended period of time, which in turn results in water shortages for some activity, group, or environmental function. A hydrological drought is caused by deficiencies in surface and subsurface water supplies. A socioeconomic drought impacts the health, well-being, and quality of life or starts to have an adverse impact on a region. Drought is a normal, recurrent feature of climate and occurs almost everywhere.

**Earthquake:** An earthquake is defined as a sudden slip on a fault, volcanic or magmatic activity, and sudden stress changes in the earth that result in ground shaking and radiated seismic energy. Earthquakes can last from a few seconds to over 5 minutes, and have been known to occur as a series of tremors over a period of several days. The actual movement of the ground in an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of injury or death. Casualties may result from falling objects and debris as shocks shake, damage, or demolish buildings and other structures.

**Emergency Action Plan:** A document that identifies potential emergency conditions at a dam and specifies actions to be followed to minimize property damage and loss of life. The plan specifies actions the dam owner should take to alleviate problems at a dam. It contains procedures and information to assist the dam owner in issuing early warning and notification messages to responsible downstream emergency management authorities of the emergency situation. It also contains inundation maps to show emergency management authorities the critical areas for action in case of an emergency. (FEMA 64)

**Enhanced Fujita Scale (EF-scale):** The EF-scale is a set of wind estimates (not measurements) based on damage. It uses 3-second gusts estimated at the point of damage based on a judgment of 8 levels of damage to the 28 indicators. These estimates vary with height and exposure. Standard measurements are taken by weather stations in openly exposed area.

**Epicenter:** The point on the earth's surface directly above the hypocenter of an earthquake. The location of an earthquake is commonly described by the geographic position of its epicenter and by its focal depth.

**Expansive Soil:** Expansive soil and rock are characterized by clayey material that shrinks as it dries or swells as it becomes wet.

**Exposure:** Exposure is defined as the number and dollar value of assets considered to be at risk during the occurrence of a specific hazard.

**Extent:** The extent is the size of an area affected by a hazard.

**Extreme Heat:** Summertime weather that is substantially hotter or more humid than average for a location at that time of year.

**Fault:** A fracture in the earth's crust along which two blocks of the crust have slipped with respect to each other.

**Fire Behavior:** Fire behavior refers to the physical characteristics of a fire and is a function of the interaction between the fuel characteristics (such as type of vegetation and structures that could burn), topography, and weather. Variables that affect fire behavior include the rate of spread, intensity, fuel consumption, and fire type (such as underbrush versus crown fire).

**Fire Frequency:** Fire frequency is the broad measure of the rate of fire occurrence in a particular area. An estimate of the areas most likely to burn is based on past fire history or fire rotation in the area, fuel conditions, weather, ignition sources (such as human or lightning), fire suppression response, and other factors.

**Flash Flood:** A flash flood occurs with little or no warning when water levels rise at an extremely fast rate.

**Flood:** The inundation of normally dry land resulting from the rising and overflowing of a body of water.

**Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM):** FIRMs are the official maps on which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has delineated the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

**Flood Insurance Study:** A report published by the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration for a community in conjunction with the community's FIRM. The study contains such background data as the base flood discharges and water surface elevations that were used to prepare the FIRM. In most cases, a community FIRM with detailed mapping will have a corresponding flood insurance study.

**Floodplain:** Any land area susceptible to being inundated by flood waters from any source. A FIRM identifies most, but not necessarily all, of a community's floodplain as the SFHA.

**Floodway:** Floodways are areas within a floodplain that are reserved for the purpose of conveying flood discharge without increasing the base flood elevation more than one foot. Generally speaking, no development is allowed in floodways, as any structures located there would block the flow of floodwaters.

**Focal Depth:** The depth from the earth's surface to the hypocenter.

**Freeboard:** Freeboard is the margin of safety added to the base flood elevation.

**Freezing Rain:** The result of rain occurring when the temperature is below the freezing point. The rain freezes on impact, resulting in a layer of glaze ice up to an inch thick. In a severe ice storm, an evergreen tree 60 feet high and 30 feet wide can be burdened with up to 6 tons of ice, creating a threat to power and telephone lines and transportation routes.

**Frequency:** For the purposes of this plan, frequency refers to how often a hazard of specific magnitude, duration, or extent is expected to occur on average. Statistically, a hazard with a 100-year frequency is expected to occur about once every 100 years on average and has a 1% chance of occurring any given year. Frequency reliability varies depending on the type of hazard considered.

**Fujita Scale of Tornado Intensity:** Tornado wind speeds are sometimes estimated on the basis of wind speed and damage sustained using the Fujita Scale. The scale rates the intensity or severity of tornado events using numeric values from F0 to F5 based on tornado wind speed and damage. An F0 tornado (wind speed less than 73 miles per hour [mph]) indicates minimal damage (such as broken tree limbs), and an F5 tornado (wind speeds of 261 to 318 mph) indicates severe damage.

**Goal:** A goal is a general guideline that explains what is to be achieved. Goals are usually broad-based, long-term, policy-type statements and represent global visions. Goals help define the benefits that a plan is

trying to achieve. The success of a hazard mitigation plan is measured by the degree to which its goals have been met (that is, by the actual benefits in terms of actual hazard mitigation).

**Geographic Information System (GIS):** GIS is a computer software application that relates data regarding physical and other features on the earth to a database for mapping and analysis.

**Ground Subsidence:** Ground subsidence is the sinking of land over human-caused or natural underground voids and the settlement of native low density soils.

**Groundwater Depletion:** Groundwater depletion occurs when groundwater is pumped from pore spaces between grains of sand and gravel. If an aquifer has beds of clay or silt within or next to it, the lowered water pressure in the sand and gravel causes slow drainage of water from the clay and silt beds. The reduced water pressure is a loss of support for the clay and silt beds. Because these beds are compressible, they compact (become thinner), and the effects are seen as a lowering of the land surface.

**Hazard:** A hazard is a source of potential danger or adverse condition that could harm people or cause property damage.

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP):** Authorized under Section 202 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, the HMGP is administered by FEMA and provides grants to states, tribes, and local governments to implement hazard mitigation actions after a major disaster declaration. The purpose of the program is to reduce the loss of life and property due to disasters and to enable mitigation activities to be implemented as a community recovers from a disaster.

**Hazards U.S. Multi-Hazard (HAZUS-MH) Loss Estimation Program:** HAZUS-MH is a GIS-based program used to support the development of risk assessments as required under the DMA. The HAZUS-MH software program assesses risk in a quantitative manner to estimate damages and losses associated with natural hazards. HAZUS-MH is FEMA's nationally applicable, standardized methodology and software program and contains modules for estimating potential losses from earthquakes, floods, and wind hazards. HAZUS-MH has also been used to assess vulnerability (exposure) for other hazards.

**High Hazard Dam** — Dams where failure or operational error will probably cause loss of human life. (FEMA 333)

**Hurricane:** A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained surface winds (using the U.S. 1-minute average) of 64 knot (kt) (74 miles per hour [mph]) or more.

**Hydraulics:** Hydraulics is the branch of science or engineering that addresses fluids (especially water) in motion in rivers or canals, works and machinery for conducting or raising water, the use of water as a prime mover, and other fluid-related areas.

**Hydrology:** Hydrology is the analysis of waters of the earth. For example, a flood discharge estimate is developed by conducting a hydrologic study.

**Hypocenter:** The region underground where an earthquake's energy originates.

**Intensity:** For the purposes of this plan, intensity refers to the measure of the effects of a hazard.

**Interface Area:** An area susceptible to wildfires and where wildland vegetation and urban or suburban development occur together. An example would be smaller urban areas and dispersed rural housing in forested areas.

**Inventory:** The assets identified in a study region comprise an inventory. Inventories include assets that could be lost when a disaster occurs and community resources are at risk. Assets include people, buildings, transportation, and other valued community resources.

**Land Subsidence:** Land subsidence is the loss of surface elevation due to the removal of subsurface support. In Texas there are three types of subsidence that warrant the most concern: groundwater depletion, sinkholes in karst areas, and erosion.



**Landslide:** Landslides can be described as the sliding movement of masses of loosened rock and soil down a hillside or slope. Fundamentally, slope failures occur when the strength of the soils forming the slope exceeds the pressure, such as weight or saturation, acting upon them.

**Levee:** A man-made structure, usually an earthen embankment or concrete floodwall, designed and constructed in accordance with sound engineering practices to contain, control, or divert the flow of water so as to provide reasonable assurance of excluding temporary flooding from the leveed area.

**Lightning:** Lightning is an electrical discharge resulting from the buildup of positive and negative charges within a thunderstorm. When the buildup becomes strong enough, lightning appears as a “bolt,” usually within or between clouds and the ground. A bolt of lightning instantaneously reaches temperatures approaching 50,000°F. The rapid heating and cooling of air near lightning causes thunder. Lightning is a major threat during thunderstorms. In the United States, 75 to 100 people are struck and killed by lightning each year (see <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/thunderstorms/thunder.shtm>).

**Liquefaction:** Liquefaction is the complete failure of soils, occurring when soils lose shear strength and flow horizontally. It is most likely to occur in fine grain sands and silts, which behave like viscous fluids when liquefaction occurs. This situation is extremely hazardous to development on the soils that liquefy, and generally results in extreme property damage and threats to life and safety.

**Local Government:** Any county, municipality, city, town, township, public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under state law), regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; any Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization, or Alaska Native village or organization; and any rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.

**Magnitude:** Magnitude is the measure of the strength of an earthquake, and is typically measured by the Richter scale. As an estimate of energy, each whole number step in the magnitude scale corresponds to the release of about 31 times more energy than the amount associated with the preceding whole number value.

**Mitigation:** A preventive action that can be taken in advance of an event that will reduce or eliminate the risk to life or property.

**Mitigation Actions:** Mitigation actions are specific actions to achieve goals and objectives that minimize the effects from a disaster and reduce the loss of life and property.

**National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP):** The NFIP provides federally backed flood insurance in exchange for communities enacting floodplain regulations.

**Objective:** For the purposes of this plan, an objective is defined as a short-term aim that, when combined with other objectives, forms a strategy or course of action to meet a goal.

**Peak Ground Acceleration:** Peak Ground Acceleration is a measure of the highest amplitude of ground shaking that accompanies an earthquake, based on a percentage of the force of gravity.

**Preparedness:** Preparedness refers to actions that strengthen the capability of government, citizens, and communities to respond to disasters.

**Presidential Disaster Declaration:** These declarations are typically made for events that cause more damage than state and local governments and resources can handle without federal government assistance. Generally, no specific dollar loss threshold has been established for such declarations. A Presidential Disaster Declaration puts into motion long-term federal recovery programs, some of which are matched by state programs, designed to help disaster victims, businesses, and public entities.

**Probability of Occurrence:** The probability of occurrence is a statistical measure or estimate of the likelihood that a hazard will occur. This probability is generally based on past hazard events in the area and

a forecast of events that could occur in the future. A probability factor based on yearly values of occurrence is used to estimate probability of occurrence.

**Repetitive Loss Property:** Any NFIP-insured property that, since 1978 and regardless of any changes of ownership during that period, has experienced:

- Four or more paid flood losses in excess of \$1,000; or
- Two paid flood losses in excess of \$1,000 within any 10-year period since 1978; or
- Three or more paid losses that equal or exceed the current value of the insured property.

**Riparian Zone:** The area along the banks of a natural watercourse.

**Riverine:** Of or produced by a river. Riverine floodplains have readily identifiable channels. Floodway maps can only be prepared for riverine floodplains.

**Risk:** Risk is the estimated impact that a hazard would have on people, services, facilities, and structures in a community. Risk measures the likelihood of a hazard occurring and resulting in an adverse condition that causes injury or damage. Risk is often expressed in relative terms such as a high, moderate, or low likelihood of sustaining damage above a particular threshold due to occurrence of a specific type of hazard. Risk also can be expressed in terms of potential monetary losses associated with the intensity of the hazard.

**Risk Assessment:** Risk assessment is the process of measuring potential loss of life, personal injury, economic injury, and property damage resulting from hazards. This process assesses the vulnerability of people, buildings, and infrastructure to hazards and focuses on (1) hazard identification; (2) impacts of hazards on physical, social, and economic assets; (3) vulnerability identification; and (4) estimates of the cost of damage or costs that could be avoided through mitigation.

**Risk Ranking:** This ranking serves two purposes, first to describe the probability that a hazard will occur, and second to describe the impact a hazard will have on people, property, and the economy. Risk estimates for the jurisdiction are based on the methodology that the jurisdiction used to prepare the risk assessment for this plan. The following equation shows the risk ranking calculation:

$$\text{Risk Ranking} = \text{Probability} + \text{Impact (people + property + economy)}$$

**Robert T. Stafford Act:** The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 100-107, was signed into law on November 23, 1988. This law amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, Public Law 93-288. The Stafford Act is the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities, especially as they pertain to FEMA and its programs.

**Severe Local Storm:** Small-scale atmospheric systems, including tornadoes, thunderstorms, windstorms, ice storms, and snowstorms. These storms may cause a great deal of destruction and even death, but their impact is generally confined to a small area. Typical impacts are on transportation infrastructure and utilities.

**Significant Hazard Dam:** Dams where failure or operational error will result in no probable loss of human life but can cause economic loss, environmental damage, or disruption of lifeline facilities, or can impact other concerns. Significant hazard dams are often located in rural or agricultural areas but could be located in areas with population and significant infrastructure. (FEMA 333)

**Sinkhole:** A collapse depression in the ground with no visible outlet. Its drainage is subterranean. It is commonly vertical-sided or funnel-shaped.

**Soil Erosion:** Soil erosion is the removal and simultaneous transportation of earth materials from one location to another by water, wind, waves, or moving ice.

**Special Flood Hazard Area:** The base floodplain delineated on a FIRM. The SFHA is mapped as a Zone A in riverine situations. The SFHA may or may not encompass all of a community's flood problems.

**Stakeholder:** Business leaders, civic groups, academia, non-profit organizations, major employers, managers of critical facilities, farmers, developers, special purpose districts, and others whose actions could impact hazard mitigation.

**Stream Bank Erosion:** Stream bank erosion is common along rivers, streams, and drains where banks have been eroded, sloughed, or undercut. However, it is important to remember that a stream is a dynamic and constantly changing system. It is natural for a stream to want to meander, so not all eroding banks are “bad” and in need of repair. Generally, stream bank erosion becomes a problem where development has limited the meandering nature of streams, where streams have been channelized, or where stream bank structures (like bridges, culverts, etc.) are located in places where they can actually cause damage to downstream areas. Stabilizing these areas can help protect watercourses from continued sedimentation, damage to adjacent land uses, control unwanted meander, and improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife.

**Steep Slope:** Different communities and agencies define it differently, depending on what it is being applied to, but generally a steep slope is a slope in which the percent slope equals or exceeds 25%. For this study, steep slope is defined as slopes greater than 33%.

**Sustainable Hazard Mitigation:** This concept includes the sound management of natural resources, local economic and social resiliency, and the recognition that hazards and mitigation must be understood in the largest possible social and economic context.

**Thunderstorm:** A thunderstorm is a storm with lightning and thunder produced by cumulonimbus clouds. Thunderstorms usually produce gusty winds, heavy rains, and sometimes hail. Thunderstorms are usually short in duration (seldom more than 2 hours). Heavy rains associated with thunderstorms can lead to flash flooding during the wet or dry seasons.

**Tornado:** A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending between and in contact with a cloud and the surface of the earth. Tornadoes are often (but not always) visible as funnel clouds. On a local scale, tornadoes are the most intense of all atmospheric circulations, and winds can reach destructive speeds of more than 300 mph. A tornado’s vortex is typically a few hundred meters in diameter, and damage paths can be up to 1 mile wide and 50 miles long.

**Tropical Storm:** A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained surface wind speed (using the U.S. 1-minute average) ranges from 34 kt (39 mph) to 63 kt (73 mph).

**Tropical Depression:** A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained surface wind speed (using the U.S. 1-minute average) ranges from 4 kt (39 mph) to 63 kt (73 mph).

**Values Response Index (VRI):** The wildfire VRI reflects a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on values or assets. The VRI is an overall rating that combines the impact ratings for WUI (housing density) and Pine Plantations (pine age) into a single measure. VRI combines the likelihood of a fire occurring (threat) with those areas of most concern that are adversely impacted by fire to derive a single overall measure of wildfire risk.

**Vulnerability:** Vulnerability describes how exposed or susceptible an asset is to damage. Vulnerability depends on an asset’s construction, contents, and the economic value of its functions. Like indirect damages, the vulnerability of one element of the community is often related to the vulnerability of another. For example, many businesses depend on uninterrupted electrical power. Flooding of an electric substation would affect not only the substation itself but businesses as well. Often, indirect effects can be much more widespread and damaging than direct effects.

**Watershed:** A watershed is an area that drains downgradient from areas of higher land to areas of lower land to the lowest point, a common drainage basin.

**Wildfire:** Wildfire refers to any uncontrolled fire occurring on undeveloped land that requires fire suppression. The potential for wildfire is influenced by three factors: the presence of fuel, topography, and air mass. Fuel can include living and dead vegetation on the ground, along the surface as brush and small

trees, and in the air such as tree canopies. Topography includes both slope and elevation. Air mass includes temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, cloud cover, precipitation amount, duration, and the stability of the atmosphere at the time of the fire. Wildfires can be ignited by lightning and, most frequently, by human activity including smoking, campfires, equipment use, and arson.

**Wildfire Hazard Potential (WHP):** The wildfire threat or WHP is the likelihood of a wildfire occurring or burning into an area. Threat is calculated by combining multiple landscape characteristics including surface and canopy fuels, fire behavior, historical fire occurrences, weather observations, terrain conditions, and other factors.

**Windstorm:** Windstorms are generally short-duration events involving straight-line winds or gusts exceeding 50 mph. These gusts can produce winds of sufficient strength to cause property damage. Windstorms are especially dangerous in areas with significant tree stands, exposed property, poorly constructed buildings, mobile homes (manufactured housing units), major infrastructure, and aboveground utility lines. A windstorm can topple trees and power lines; cause damage to residential, commercial, critical facilities; and leave tons of debris in its wake.

**Winter Storm:** A storm having significant snowfall, ice, or freezing rain; the quantity of precipitation varies by elevation.

**Zoning Ordinance:** The zoning ordinance designates allowable land use and intensities for a local jurisdiction. Zoning ordinances consist of two components: a zoning text and a zoning map.

Wharton County  
**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

---

**APPENDIX B.**  
**LOCAL MITIGATION PLAN REVIEW TOOL**

---

## **APPENDIX B. LOCAL MITIGATION PLAN REVIEW TOOL**

This appendix presents the local mitigation action review tool for the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The review tool demonstrates how the plan meets federal regulations and offers state and FEMA planners an opportunity to provide feedback on the plan to the community.

## LOCAL MITIGATION PLAN REVIEW TOOL

The *Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool* demonstrates how the Local Mitigation Plan meets the regulation in 44 CFR §201.6 and offers States and FEMA Mitigation Planners an opportunity to provide feedback to the community.

- The Regulation Checklist provides a summary of FEMA’s evaluation of whether the Plan has addressed all requirements.
- The Plan Assessment identifies the plan’s strengths as well as documents areas for future improvement.
- The Multi-jurisdiction Summary Sheet is an optional worksheet that can be used to document how each jurisdiction met the requirements of the each Element of the Plan (Planning Process; Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment; Mitigation Strategy; Plan Review, Evaluation, and Implementation; and Plan Adoption).

The FEMA Mitigation Planner must reference this *Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide* when completing the *Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool*.

<b>Jurisdiction:</b> Wharton County, Texas	<b>Title of Plan:</b> Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update	<b>Date of Plan:</b> May 2016
<b>Local Point of Contact:</b> Mr. Andy Kirkland	<b>Address:</b> 315 E. Elm Street Wharton, TX 77488	
<b>Title:</b> Emergency Management Coordinator		
<b>Agency:</b> Wharton County Office of Emergency Management		
<b>Phone Number:</b> (979)532-4612	<b>E-Mail:</b> andy.kirkland@co.wharton.tx.us	

<b>State Reviewer:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
------------------------	---------------	--------------

<b>FEMA Reviewer:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Date Received in FEMA Region VIII</b>		
<b>Plan Not Approved</b>		
<b>Plan Approvable Pending Adoption</b>		
<b>Plan Approved</b>		

**SECTION 1:  
MULTI-JURISDICTION SUMMARY SHEET**

MULTI-JURISDICTION SUMMARY SHEET									
#	Jurisdiction Name	Jurisdiction Type	Jurisdiction Contact	Email	Requirements Met (Y/N)				
					A. Planning Process	B. HIRA	C. Mitigation Strategy	D. Update Rqmts.	E. Adoption Resolution
1	Wharton County	County	Andy Kirkland	andy.kirkland@co.wharton.tx.us					
2	City of East Bernard	Incorporated City	Audrey Wessels	ebcityhall@gmail.com					
3	City of El Campo	Incorporated City	Gary Williamson	gwilliamson@cityofelcampo.org					
4	City of Wharton	Incorporated City	Stephen Johnson	sjohnson@cityofwharton.com					



**SECTION 2:  
REGULATION CHECKLIST**

<b>REGULATION CHECKLIST</b>		<b>Location in Plan (section and/or page number)</b>	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>
<b>Regulation (44 CFR 201.6 Local Mitigation Plans)</b>				
<b>ELEMENT A. PLANNING PROCESS</b>				
A1. Does the Plan document the planning process, including how it was prepared and who was involved in the process for each jurisdiction? (Requirement §201.6(c)(1))	Pages ES-1 to ES-4 (Executive Summary) Pages 3-1 to 3-2 (Section 3.2) and 3-4 to 3-5 (Section 3.4)			
A2. Does the Plan document an opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, agencies that have the authority to regulate development as well as other interests to be involved in the planning process? (Requirement §201.6(b)(2))	Pages 3-4 to 3-6 (Sections 3.4 and 3.5); Page 3-7 (Section 3.7.1)			
A3. Does the Plan document how the public was involved in the planning process during the drafting stage? (Requirement §201.6(b)(1))	Pages 3-7 through 3-10 (Section 3.7)			
A4. Does the Plan describe the review and incorporation of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information? (Requirement §201.6(b)(3))	Page 3-6 to 3-7 (Section 3.6); Pages 6-31 to 6-45 (Section 6.9); Pages 7-1 to 7-11 (Chapter 7)			
A5. Is there discussion of how the community(ies) will continue public participation in the plan maintenance process? (Requirement §201.6(c)(4)(iii))	Pages 20-1 through 20-3 (Sections 20.2.1 through 20.2.6); Page 20-4 to 20-10 (Section 20.2.7)			
A6. Is there a description of the method and schedule for keeping the plan current (monitoring, evaluating and updating the mitigation plan within a 5-year cycle)? (Requirement §201.6(c)(4)(i))	Pages 20-1 through 20-10 (Section 20.2), and Pages E-1 through E-6 (Appendix E)			
<b>ELEMENT A: REQUIRED REVISIONS</b>				
<b>ELEMENT B. HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT</b>				
B1. Does the Plan include a description of the type, location, and extent of all natural hazards that can affect each jurisdiction(s)? (Requirement §201.6(c)(2)(i))	Chapters 8 through 17, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 1 of each chapter (General Background) describes the type of hazard</li> <li>• Section 2.2 of each chapter (Location); and</li> <li>• Sections 2.3 (Frequency); and 2.4 (Severity) of each chapter, which describe the extent of the hazard</li> </ul>			

<b>REGULATION CHECKLIST</b>		<b>Location in Plan</b> (section and/or page number)	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>
<b>Regulation (44 CFR 201.6 Local Mitigation Plans)</b>				
B2. Does the Plan include information on previous occurrences of hazard events and on the probability of future hazard events for each jurisdiction? (Requirement §201.6(c)(2)(i))	<p>Previous occurrences: Pages 6-2 and 6-3 (Section 6.2); Chapters 8 through 17, Section 2.1 (Past Events) of each chapter</p> <p>Probability of future events: Chapters 8 through 17, Section 2.3 (Frequency) of each chapter</p>			
B3. Is there a description of each identified hazard's impact on the community as well as an overall summary of the community's vulnerability for each jurisdiction? (Requirement §201.6(c)(2)(ii))	Chapters 8 through 17; specifically Section 2.4 (Severity), Section 5 (Exposure and Vulnerability) and Section 6 (Exposure) of each chapter			
B4. Does the Plan address NFIP insured structures within the jurisdiction that have been repetitively damaged by floods? (Requirement §201.6(c)(2)(ii))	Page 12-31 through 12-35 (Section 12.6.2, Property); including Figure 12-16			
<b>ELEMENT B: REQUIRED REVISIONS</b>				
<b>ELEMENT C. MITIGATION STRATEGY</b>				
C1. Does the plan document each jurisdiction's existing authorities, policies, programs and resources and its ability to expand on and improve these existing policies and programs? (Requirement §201.6(c)(3))	Pages 6-31 to 6-45 (Section 6.9); Pages 7-1 through 7-11 (Chapter 7); Pages 20-4 through 20-10 (Section 20.2.7)			
C2. Does the Plan address each jurisdiction's participation in the NFIP and continued compliance with NFIP requirements, as appropriate? (Requirement §201.6(c)(3)(ii))	<p>Page 6-33;</p> <p>Pages 6-36 through 6-45 (description of laws, ordinances, and programs for each jurisdiction);</p> <p>Pages 7-1 through 7-11 (floodplain ordinances and availability of DFIRMs);</p> <p>Pages 12-32 through 12-34</p>			
C3. Does the Plan include goals to reduce/avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards? (Requirement §201.6(c)(3)(i))	Pages 4-1 through 4-2 (Chapter 4)			
C4. Does the Plan identify and analyze a comprehensive range of specific mitigation actions and projects for each jurisdiction being considered to reduce the effects of hazards, with emphasis on new and existing buildings and infrastructure? (Requirement §201.6(c)(3)(ii))	Pages 19-1 through 19-20; specifically Tables 19-1 and 19-2			

<b>REGULATION CHECKLIST</b>		<b>Location in Plan</b> (section and/or page number)	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>
<b>Regulation (44 CFR 201.6 Local Mitigation Plans)</b>				
C5. Does the Plan contain an action plan that describes how the actions identified will be prioritized (including cost benefit review), implemented, and administered by each jurisdiction? (Requirement §201.6(c)(3)(iv)); (Requirement §201.6(c)(3)(iii))	Pages 19-3 and 19-4 (Section 19.2)			
C6. Does the Plan describe a process by which local governments will integrate the requirements of the mitigation plan into other planning mechanisms, such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans, when appropriate? (Requirement §201.6(c)(4)(ii))	Pages 20-4 through 20-10 (Section 20.2.7)			
<b><u>ELEMENT C: REQUIRED REVISIONS</u></b>				
<b>ELEMENT D. PLAN REVIEW, EVALUATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION</b> (applicable to plan updates only)				
D1. Was the plan revised to reflect changes in development? (Requirement §201.6(d)(3))	Chapter 6.8 (pages 6-27 through 6-33) and Chapters 8 through 17, Section 7 of each chapter (Future Trends in Development)			
D2. Was the plan revised to reflect progress in local mitigation efforts? (Requirement §201.6(d)(3))	Pages 2-1 through 2-11			
D3. Was the plan revised to reflect changes in priorities? (Requirement §201.6(d)(3))	Pages 1-1 through 1-3; Pages 2-1 through 2-11			
<b><u>ELEMENT D: REQUIRED REVISIONS</u></b>				
<b>ELEMENT E. PLAN ADOPTION</b>				
E1. Does the Plan include documentation that the plan has been formally adopted by the governing body of the jurisdiction requesting approval? (Requirement §201.6(c)(5))	Pre-adoption review. Documentation to be provided upon issuance of pre-adoption approval by TDEM and FEMA Region VI			
E2. For multi-jurisdictional plans, has each jurisdiction requesting approval of the plan documented formal plan adoption? (Requirement §201.6(c)(5))	Pre-adoption review. Documentation to be provided upon issuance of pre-adoption approval by TDEM and FEMA Region VI			
<b><u>ELEMENT E: REQUIRED REVISIONS</u></b>				

<b>REGULATION CHECKLIST</b>		<b>Location in Plan</b>		
<b>Regulation (44 CFR 201.6 Local Mitigation Plans)</b>	<b>(section and/or page number)</b>	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>	
<b>ELEMENT F. ADDITIONAL STATE REQUIREMENTS (OPTIONAL FOR STATE REVIEWERS ONLY; NOT TO BE COMPLETED BY FEMA)</b>				
F1.				
F2.				
<b><u>ELEMENT F: REQUIRED REVISIONS</u></b>				

**SECTION 3:  
PLAN ASSESSMENT**

**A. Plan Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement**

This section provides a discussion of the strengths of the plan document and identifies areas where these could be improved beyond minimum requirements.

**Element A: Planning Process**

**Element B: Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment**

**Element C: Mitigation Strategy**

**Element D: Plan Review, Evaluation, and Implementation (Plan Updates Only)**

**B. Resources for Implementing Your Approved Plan**

Wharton County  
**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

---

**APPENDIX C.**  
**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

---

## **APPENDIX C. PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This appendix includes the agenda, sign-in sheets, and meeting notes from each of the three Steering Committee Meetings. This appendix also include the results of the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan questionnaire, as described in Section 3.7.2.

**Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates**  
**for Colorado, Wharton, Jackson, and Matagorda Counties**  
**Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

**9:00 AM**

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Steering Committee Purpose and Responsibilities
3. Plan Partners and Signators
4. Purpose and Goals of the Update Process
5. Review and Amend Mitigation Goals and Objectives (in packet)
6. Review Mitigation Actions from TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan (in packet)
7. Critical Facilities Discussion
8. Next Steps
  - a. Capabilities Assessment
  - b. Hazard Analysis Review
  - c. Community Participation and Survey (in packet)
9. Next meeting date - ???
10. Adjournment





**TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan Update - Kickoff Meeting - Group 2B**  
**March 10, 2015**

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTY	COMMUNITY	EMAIL	SIGN-IN
Gibson	James	Matagorda	Matagorda County	pct3@co.matagorda.tx.us;	
<del>Gonzales</del>	<del>Ruben</del>	<del>Matagorda</del>	<del>Matagorda County</del>	<del>rgonzales@co.matagorda.tx.us;</del>	
Krobot	Lisa	Matagorda	Matagorda County	lkrobot@co.matagorda.tx.us;	<i>Lisa Krobot</i>
Putska	Dan	Matagorda	Matagorda County	mcpct1@sbcglobal.net;	
Watts	Beb	Matagorda	Matagorda County	bwatts1946@yahoo.com;	
<i>Emergency Mgr.</i> Mathes	<i>Doug</i>	<i>Matagorda</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>dmathes@co.matagorda.tx.us</i>	
Holub	Marvin	Wharton	City of East Bernard	mayorholub@gmail.com	
Salcido	John	Wharton	City of East Bernard	AldermanSalcido@gmail.com	
Wessels	<i>Audrey</i> Audra	Wharton	City of East Bernard	ebcityhall@elc.net;	<i>Audrey Wessels</i>
<del>Collins</del>	<del>Anthony</del>	<del>Wharton</del>	<del>City of El Campo</del>		
Harris	Clay	Wharton	City of El Campo	charris@cityofelcampo.org	<i>Clayton</i>
Popp	Wayne	Wharton	City of El Campo	wpopp@cityofelcampo.org;	
Snyder	Mindi	Wharton	City of El Campo	msnyder@cityofelcampo.org;	<i>Mindi Snyder</i>
Young	Richard	Wharton	City of El Campo	ryoung@cityofelcampo.org;	
<i>Williamson Staff</i>	<i>Gary Liz</i>	<i>Wharton Wharton</i>	<i>" "</i>	<i>williamson@cityofelcampo.org</i> <i>lstaff@cityofelcampo.org</i>	<i>Williamson</i> <i>lstaff</i>



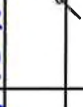
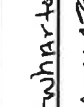
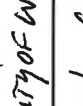



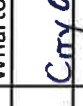
**TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan Update - Kickoff Meeting - Group 2B**  
**March 10, 2015**

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTY	COMMUNITY	EMAIL	SIGN-IN
Stein	Ford	Colorado	City of Columbus	<a href="mailto:secretary@columbustexas.net">secretary@columbustexas.net</a> ;	
Warschak	Donald	Colorado	City of Columbus	<a href="mailto:drw89@columbustexas.net">drw89@columbustexas.net</a> ;	
Cooper	Michael	Colorado	City of Eagle Lake	<a href="mailto:mcooper450@aol.com">mcooper450@aol.com</a>	
Parr	Mary	Colorado	City of Eagle Lake	<a href="mailto:mparrformayor@aol.com">mparrformayor@aol.com</a>	<i>Dan Clark</i>
Rucka	Sylvia	Colorado	City of Eagle Lake	<a href="mailto:citymanager@coeltx.net">citymanager@coeltx.net</a>	<i>Sylvia Rucka</i>
Freeman	David	Colorado	City of Eagle Lake	<a href="mailto:Police@coeltx.net">Police@coeltx.net</a>	<i>David R</i>
koller	Milton	Colorado	City of Weimar	<a href="mailto:mayor@weimartexas.org">mayor@weimartexas.org</a>	
Miller	Ray	Colorado	City of Weimar	<a href="mailto:citymgr@weimartexas.org">citymgr@weimartexas.org</a>	
Stoever	Dolores	Colorado	City of Weimar	<a href="mailto:citysec@weimartexas.org">citysec@weimartexas.org</a> ;	
Hermes	Joe D.	Jackson	City of Edna	<a href="mailto:johermescpa@yahoo.com">johermescpa@yahoo.com</a>	<i>Shirley Miller</i>
Ryan	Brad	Jackson	City of Edna	<a href="mailto:bryan@cityofedna.com">bryan@cityofedna.com</a>	<i>BR</i>

**TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan Update - Kickoff Meeting - Group 2B**  
**March 10, 2015**

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTY	COMMUNITY	EMAIL	SIGN-IN
McLennan	Lori	Jackson	Jackson County	<a href="mailto:l.mclennan@co.jackson.tx.us">l.mclennan@co.jackson.tx.us</a>	<i>Lori McLennan</i>
Simons	Dennis	Jackson	Jackson County	<a href="mailto:d.simons@co.jackson.tx.us">d.simons@co.jackson.tx.us</a>	
Friedrich	Allison			<a href="mailto:jccoc@co.jackson.tx.us">jccoc@co.jackson.tx.us</a>	<i>Allison Friedrich</i>
Bricker	Mark	Matagorda	City of Bay City	<a href="mailto:mbricker@cityofbaycity.org">mbricker@cityofbaycity.org</a>	
Clegg	Rhonda	Matagorda	City of Bay City	<a href="mailto:rjones@cityofbaycity.org">rjones@cityofbaycity.org</a>	
Jasek	Marla	Matagorda	City of Bay City	<a href="mailto:mjasek@cityofbaycity.org">mjasek@cityofbaycity.org</a>	<i>Marla Jasek</i>
Kocurek	David	Matagorda	City of Palacios	<a href="mailto:dkocurek@cityofpalacios.org">dkocurek@cityofpalacios.org</a>	
Garrett	Robert	Matagorda	City of Palacios	<a href="mailto:rlgarrett@hotmail.com">rlgarrett@hotmail.com</a>	<i>Robert Garrett</i>

**TCRFC Hazard Mitigation Plan Update - Kickoff Meeting - Group 2B**  
**March 10, 2015**

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTY	COMMUNITY	EMAIL	SIGN-IN
Jimenez	Brandi			bjimenez@cityofwharton.com	
Audel	Joan			jaudela@cityofwharton.com	
Bollom	Ronnie	Wharton	City of Wharton	rbollom@cityofwharton.com	
Garza	Andres	Wharton	City of Wharton	agarza@cityofwharton.com	
Bergstrom	Amy	Wharton	City of Wharton	abergstrom@cityofwharton.com	
LYNCH	TERRY	WHARTON	CITY OF WHARTON	TLYNCH@CITYOFWHARTON.COM	
Kowalik	John	" "	" "	JKowalik@cityofwharton.com	
Dettling	Leroy	Wharton	Wharton County	leroy.dettling@co.wharton.tx.us	
Johnson	Stephen	Wharton	Wharton County	sjohnson@cityofwharton.com	
King	Chris	Wharton	Wharton County	d.chris@co.wharton.tx.us	
Kirkland	Andy	Wharton	Wharton County	andy.kirkland@co.wharton.tx.us	
Martin	Monica	Wharton	Wharton County	monica.martin@co.wharton.tx.us	
MARCHANT	KYLE	WHARTON	CITY OF WHARTON	kmarchant@cityofwharton.com	



## **Colorado, Jackson, Matagorda, and Wharton Counties, TX**

### **Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates Kickoff Meeting – Meeting Notes**

**Caney Creek Church, Wharton, TX**

**9:00am – 11:00am**

**Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

- Welcome and Introductions – Mickey Reynolds (Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition [TCRFC]) welcomed everyone and introduced the planning team of Jeff Ward (JSW), Cindy Engelhardt (Halff Associates), Laura Johnston (Tetra Tech), Krista Jack (Tetra Tech), and Diane MacMillan (Tetra Tech). See sign in sheet for a complete list of attendees.
  1. Jeff Ward (JSW) provided the group with an overview of the Mitigation Plan Update process. TCRFC Basin and Planning Group was funded under the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant, which was awarded in Fall 2014 to update Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP).
  2. Jeff explained the roles and responsibilities of Halff and Tetra Tech. Halff will complete the hazard risk assessment and GIS mapping of hazards. Tetra Tech will complete the planning portions, including leading the steering committee meetings, and write the plan.
  3. Jeff stated that Halff will distribute a spreadsheet and instructions to attendees to document their time for these meetings for the in-kind 25% soft match.
  4. Laura Johnston (Tetra Tech) requested introductions of each of the attendees and the organization or municipality they represent.
  5. Laura provided an overview of the mitigation plan process, FEMA requirements, and the benefits to the counties and participating communities. Laura stated that a partnership with FEMA and the state is important to the planning and implementation of the HMP. Representatives from FEMA Region 6 and the State of Texas were invited to the meeting but could not attend.
- Each attendee was provided a folder, tailored to their specific community and county, with handouts, a copy of the presentation slides, and contact information for the planning team.
- Laura reviewed the purpose and responsibilities of the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members:
  1. Are leaders involved in the development of the plan
  2. Provide guidance on their specific community

3. Carry information from the meetings to their community
  4. Represent all community stakeholders (residents and businesses)
  5. Attend and actively participate in all three committee meetings (including this one)
- One attendee participated in the development of the current HMP that is being updated. Laura stated that the purpose of the plan is to identify practical, implementable, politically viable, and fundable mitigation action. Laura noted that the hazard mitigation actions from the current plan are robust.
  - Laura discussed Planning Partners and Signators. Each Planning Partner must actively participate in the Steering Committee meetings and formally adopt the plan. The sign-in sheets will be attached to the plan to demonstrate participation. Laura presented a list of participating communities within each plan and asked if the list was comprehensive. No other jurisdictions attended the kick-off meeting.
  - Laura presented the goals for each meeting of the Steering Committee:
    1. The goal of the kick-off meeting is to review the goals and objectives, briefly discuss past mitigation actions, discuss critical facilities, and review the natural hazards as ranked in the current plan;
    2. The goal of the second meeting is to present the results of the hazard risk assessment and to complete the hazard ranking process; and
    3. The goal of the third meeting is to identify actions that mitigate the identified hazards and to rank those hazards.
  - Laura discussed the project schedule.
  - Laura reviewed differentiation between goals, objectives, and mitigation actions.
    1. Laura gave attendees several minutes to review the existing goals and objectives in their current plans (provided in their folder) and make comments on these. She asked that if there are mitigation actions that the counties want to include, the attendees should make a note of those too as they go through this multi-month process because these actions will be presented and discussed in the third meeting.
  - Laura reviewed the goals and objectives from the current regional HMP and stated the updated plan would only address natural hazards. Objective 3.1 would be modified to remove the reference to “man-made” hazards. Laura read through each goal and objective and asked for comments. No comments were received during the meeting so Laura asked that *any changes or suggestions for goals and objectives should be submitted to the planning team by Friday, March 20, 2015.*
    1. Mr. Allen Friedrich (Jackson) stated that Jackson County is under a different Council of Governments (COG) and has a separate HMP. Jackson County will provide the previous plan to Cindy so it can be referenced into the HMP update.
    2. Laura stated that there will be local and county-wide mitigation actions. For the local mitigation, the local jurisdiction prioritizes the mitigation actions. FEMA and the State of Texas require HMPs be reviewed annually but updated every 5 years. However, the HMP can be updated anytime (live, dynamic document).
    3. Jeff clarified that a current HMP is necessary for counties and communities to receive FEMA grant funding.
    4. Laura encouraged attendees after the meeting to review the handout containing sample mitigation goals, objectives, and actions as well as the Mitigation Ideas document from FEMA.

- Laura explained the handout entitled Project Implementation Worksheet, which documents mitigation actions prioritized in the current plan. Laura requested that attendees update the mitigation action status spreadsheet provided in the packet. This includes updating the project status and funding. There is no punitive action from FEMA for “incomplete” or “no longer applicable” mitigation actions update. Going forward, we want only practical, fundable, and implementable mitigation actions for the HMP update. More information on the previous mitigation actions is in the 2011 TCRFC HMP, which is available on the TCRFC website. Laura asked that the *updates to the mitigation action table are returned to the team by March 20, 2015.*
- Laura explained that FEMA requires a minimum of two mitigation actions for each hazard profiled in the plan and that they must be unique to each participating community.
  1. There will be community-specific and county-wide mitigation actions. The local jurisdiction prioritizes the community-specific mitigation actions. County-wide mitigation actions will be ranked by all those representing entities within the County.
  2. Mitigation actions must be supported by at least one goal/objective. However, mitigation actions can fall under multiple goals and objectives. Mitigation actions are more likely to be funded if under more than one goal/objective.
- Laura reviewed the critical facilities analysis.
  1. There was a brief discussion on the definition of “Critical Facilities.” Laura shared the Community Rating System’s (CRS) definition of Critical Facilities because there is no definition of critical facilities in the current regional HMP nor the State of Texas HMP. Laura has a draft list of critical facilities obtained from FEMA’s HAZUS defaults but this needs to be updated.
  2. Laura handed out draft lists of the critical facilities in each county to Lisa Krobot (Matagorda County), Andy Kirkland (Wharton), Lori McLennan (Jackson), and other attendees to pass on to Chuck Rodgers, the Colorado County Emergency Manager. These points of contact will *review/update the lists and return to Laura in the next six weeks.*
  3. This updated information is needed to map the critical facilities for each jurisdiction to determine if these facilities are located in high risk areas and how they overlap with hazards. Cindy Engelhardt (Halff Associates) will provide the mapped information to the counties once completed as this detailed list of critical facilities will not be included in the HMP.
- Laura reviewed the next steps: (1) capabilities assessment; (2) hazard analysis; and (3) community participation and survey.
  1. Laura provided an overview of capabilities assessment. Jeremy Kaufman is Tetra Tech’s lead for this element. He will be contacting each of the participating jurisdictions. Tetra Tech will initiate online research and then contact the local communities to further document and verify the current resources of each county/community. This is used to determine the strengths and opportunities related to the community’s ability to implement the future mitigation actions.
  2. Halff Associates will conduct the hazards analysis in the next few months. During the next (second) meeting, the results of the hazards analysis will be presented and the attendees will rank these hazards during next meeting.
    - When ranking hazards, perception and reality are not one and the same. Perception (especially community perception) can be skewed based on recent event, even if event

is not local. When ranking hazards, we need to consider reality on a community-specific basis. Laura further explained that the hazard assessment will analyze historical information and data, rate of occurrence, and future projected losses, etc. We will provide hazard-specific information for the members to determine a prioritization ranking of high, medium, or low. Community perception will be uncovered, in part, through the community survey. However, ranking process is still subjective.

3. Laura discussed how community participation (including the online survey) is an integral part of this HMP update process. Laura discussed the benefits of full community participation in order to produce a true community plan.
  - The online surveys are already live and consists of 35 questions. There are separate surveys for each county. The survey were set up for community input; the links to the surveys were provided in the handout packets.
  - Need to get the word out into the communities. Suggest to put on local websites, TCRFC's website, mention in meetings, post announcement, word of mouth, etc.
- Laura reviewed the action items for the Steering Committee members, including:
  1. Review/update goals and objectives by March 20, 2015
  2. Update mitigation action table with current status of actions by March 20, 2015
  3. Publicize community survey link to community through website posting and other media
  4. Community points of contact will review and update as necessary the list of critical facilities and return to Laura in 6 weeks.
- The date for the next meeting of the Steering Committee has not been determined but is anticipated to be in May/April. Meeting details will be forthcoming.
- Adjournment



**Colorado, Jackson, Matagorda, and Wharton County  
Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates  
Steering Committee Meeting 2  
Tuesday, June 2, 2015**

**9:00 AM**

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Reminder: What is Hazard Mitigation and Why?
3. Reminder: Steering Committee Purpose and Responsibilities
4. Review of Completed Items
  - a. Final Goals and Objectives (in packet)
  - b. Updated Mitigation Actions (in packet)
  - c. Capabilities Assessment
5. Hazard Analysis
  - a. Community Participation and Survey Results (in packet)
  - b. Hazard Analysis Review
  - c. Hazard Ranking Exercise (in packet)
6. Mitigation Action Worksheet (in packet)
7. Next Meeting Date – August 11, 2015
8. Action Items
9. Adjournment



HMP Meeting Round 2 Group 2B

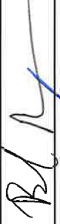
Hazard Mitigation Group	Last Name	First Name	County	Organization	Title	Sign In	Date
2B	Snyder	Mindi	Wharton	City of El Campo	City Manager	<i>Mindi Snyder</i>	6/2/2015
2B	Staff	Liz	Wharton	City of El Campo	<i>City Official</i>	<i>Liz Staff</i>	6/2/2015
2B	Williamson	Gary	Wharton	City of El Campo			6/2/2015
2B	Young	Richard	Wharton	City of El Campo			6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	Bollom	Ronnie	Wharton	City of Wharton	CFM, Building Official	<i>Bollom</i>	6/2/2015
2B	Garza	Andres	Wharton	City Wharton	City Manager		6/2/2015
	<i>Urbanovsky</i>	<i>Cheryl</i>	"	<i>City of Wharton</i>	<i>Asst to City Mgr - Special Projects</i>	<i>Cheryl Urbanovsky</i>	6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
	<i>Wileman</i>	<i>Richard</i>	<i>Wharton</i>	<i>City of Wharton</i>	<i>Asst. Chief</i>	<i>Richard Wileman</i>	6/2/2015
2B	Awdel	Joan	Wharton	Wharton County			6/2/2015
2B	Bergstrom	Amy	Wharton	Wharton County			6/2/2015
2B	Dettling	Leroy	Wharton	Wharton County			6/2/2015
2B	Jimenez	Brandi	Wharton	Wharton County			6/2/2015
2B	Johnson	Stephen	Wharton	Wharton County	<i>EMC</i>	<i>Stephen Johnson</i>	6/2/2015

Wharton County Continued on next page





HMP Meeting Round 2 Group 2B

Hazard Mitigation Group	Last Name	First Name	County	Organization	Title	Sign In	Date
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	Gertson	Darrell	Colorado	Colorado County	Commissioner		6/2/2015
2B	Kolzebue	David	Colorado	Colorado County	Floodplain Administrator		6/2/2015
2B	Kubesch	Darrell	Colorado	Colorado County	Commissioner		6/2/2015
2B	Rogers	Chuck	Colorado	Colorado County	Emergency Management Coordinator		6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	Hermes	Joe D.	Jackson	City of Edna	Mayor		6/2/2015
2B	Ryan	Brad	Jackson	City of Edna	Public Works Director		6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	Merrit	David	Jackson	City of Ganado	Police Dept		6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	Friedrich	Allen	Jackson	Jackson County	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS		6/2/2015



HMP Meeting Round 2 Group 2B

Hazard Mitigation Group	Last Name	First Name	County	Organization	Title	Sign In	Date
2B	Gibson	James	Matagorda	Matagorda County	County Commissioner Prec. 3		6/2/2015
2B	Gonzales	Ruben	Matagorda	Matagorda County	Environmental Health Director		6/2/2015
2B	Krobot	Lisa	Matagorda	Matagorda County	Floodplain Administrator	<i>Lisa Krobot</i>	6/2/2015
2B	Matthes	Doug	Matagorda	Matagorda County			6/2/2015
2B	Putiska	Dan	Matagorda	Matagorda County	County Commissioner Prec. 1		6/2/2015
2B	Watts	Bob	Matagorda	Matagorda County	Emergency Management Coordinator		6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	Holub	Marvin	Wharton	City of East Bernard			6/2/2015
2B	Salcido	John	Wharton	City of East Bernard			6/2/2015
2B	Wessels	<del>Andrew</del> <i>Andrew Wessels</i>	Wharton	City of East Bernard	City Secretary	<i>Andrew Wessels</i>	6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
							6/2/2015
2B	<del>Collins</del>	<del>Anthony</del>	Wharton	City of El Campo	<i>Not on Council</i>		6/2/2015
2B	Harris	Clay	Wharton	City of El Campo			6/2/2015
2B	<del>Pepp</del>	<del>Wayne</del>	Wharton	City of El Campo	Building-Official-C.E.M	<i>Retired</i>	6/2/2015

**TCRFC Group 2B Round 2 Meeting**  
**June 2, 2015 @ 9:00 AM**  
**Caney Creek Church**  
**Wharton, Texas**

Introductions were made by Mickey Reynolds and Laura Johnston. For participants to get to know one another we let the group introduce themselves one at a time.

Last 10 days have reminded us why we actively attempt to mitigate hazards and plan for those hazards.

**Agenda** - Laura explained the agenda, purpose of hazard mitigation planning and the active participation requirement.

**Goals and Objectives** - Very little changes from the TCRFC plan. Those are provided in the packet.

**Hazard Mitigation Action Update** - Missing Wharton County's status. If the packet included a completed form, we have received your information and it is recorded as shown.

**Capabilities Assessment** - Laura handed out the assessment and needs those back by June 14.

Today Hazard Analysis is our focus.

**Community Participation** - Wharton and Matagorda have comments. Colorado only has 2 and Jackson has 0 responses to date. Please post these in your community for your plan. Will be active for another month.

**Hazard Analysis** - Cindy went through all Hazards and the Risk Assessment of each. Explained that HAZUS was used where applicable and non-HAZUS hazards were profiled using historical information. NOAA and NCDC data was utilized to assess historical annual losses.

1. Coastal Erosion - Study from GLO and only Matagorda lists impacts and it was noted that Jackson County had bay areas that could be at risk of coastal erosion.
2. Flood - Discussed area within floodplain, # structures at risk, value of structures at risk.
3. Hurricane -Historical paths tracks were displayed and discussed HAZUS estimation of damages.
4. Dam/Levee - Displayed the inventory and discussed some of high or significant hazard structures. Lisa Krobot indicated that Matagorda ring levee needs to be included in levee/dam. Colorado County, Chuck Rogers indicated that there was a significant hazard dam that should also be included in the listing of dams/levees.
5. Drought and Extreme Temps –Briefly review previous drought record and discussed current rainfall and new drought indication.
6. Severe Weather (Hail / Wind) - Explained historical records as indicated by insurance claims of damages. There are most likely more events that are not recorded.
7. Tornadoes – Briefly discussed the historical F2 or higher events.



8. Wildfire based on the Texas Wildfire Risk Analysis Portal (TxWRAP) and then checked with the Community Wildfire Protection Plans were available. Explained the various levels of risk associated with wildfire and potential damages within these categories.

**Ranking Hazards** - Laura explained the process and asked that they all rank their hazards. They are welcome to complete individually and submit or one for each community/county.  
(Gave 15 minutes for participants to complete their hazard ranking.)

**Time keeping** - Handed out a blank timesheet to help obtain in-kind efforts for participants and explained the importance of the in-kind documentation.

**New Mitigation Actions** - Laura explained the new process is 2 actions per hazard. She explained that high ranking hazards may have a few more actions indicated. She explained the actions must be actionable actions. One action may cover multiple hazards. These are due back to Laura by June 30.

**Colorado, Jackson, Matagorda, and Wharton County  
Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates  
Steering Committee Meeting 3  
Tuesday, August 11, 2015**

**9:00 AM**

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Review and Reminders
  - What is Hazard Mitigation?
  - Steering Committee Purpose and Responsibilities
  - Mitigation Goals and Objectives (In Packet)
  - Final Hazard Ranking (In Packet)
- Review of Survey Results (Handouts)
  - Question #24 Results
- Mitigation Actions
  - General Guidelines and Requirements
  - Summary Table and Worksheets (In Packet)
  - Review and Presentation of Actions
- Review Goals and Objectives – Any Changes Needed?
- Ranking of Mitigation Actions
  - Rank Actions
  - Identify Medium and Low Ranked Actions
- Next Steps
- Adjournment







Group 2B Round 3

2B	Gertson	Darrell	Colorado	Colorado County	Commissioner		8/11/2015
2B	Kotzebue --	David	Colorado	Colorado County	Floodplain Administrator		8/11/2015
2B	Kubesch	Darrell	Colorado	Colorado County	Commissioner		8/11/2015
2B	Rogers	Chuck	Colorado	Colorado County	Emergency Management Coordinator		8/11/2015
	<i>Aueka</i>	<i>Sylvia</i>	<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Colorado County</i>	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Sylvia Aueka</i>	8/11/2015
2B	Hermes	Joe D.	Jackson	City of Edna	Mayor		8/11/2015
2B	Miller	S	Jackson	City of Edna			8/11/2015
2B	Ryan	Brad	Jackson	City of Edna			8/11/2015
2B	Woodridge	Clinton	Jackson	City of Edna			8/11/2015
	<i>Jackson</i>	<i>LORI</i>	<i>Jackson</i>	<i>City of Edna</i>	<i>City of Edna</i>		8/11/2015
							8/11/2015
2B	Martin	Curtis	Jackson	City of Ganado			8/11/2015
2B	Merrit	David	Jackson	City of Ganado	PD	<i>David Merrit</i>	8/11/2015
							8/11/2015
2B	<del>Pfeiffer</del>	Allen	Jackson	Jackson County			8/11/2015
2B	Friedrich	Allan	Jackson	Jackson County		<i>Allan Friedrich</i>	8/11/2015
2B	McLennan	Lori	Jackson	Jackson County	FPA	<i>Lori McLennan</i>	8/11/2015
2B	Simons	Dennis	Jackson	Jackson County	County Judge		8/11/2015







## **Colorado, Jackson, Matagorda, and Wharton Counties, TX**

### **Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates Kickoff Meeting – Meeting Notes**

**Caney Creek Church, Wharton, TX**

**9:00am – 11:00am**

**Tuesday, August 11, 2015**

- Welcome and Introductions – Mickey Reynolds (Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition [TCRFC]) welcomed everyone and introduced the planning team: Cindy Engelhardt (Halff Associates), Laura Johnston (Tetra Tech), Diane MacMillan (Tetra Tech), and Krista Jack (Tetra Tech). See sign in sheet for a complete list of attendees.
  1. Sign-in sheet and timesheets are required and necessary part of getting credit for participating (in-kind) in this project. Cindy handed out the timesheets and Laura requested everyone sign in for today's meeting.
  2. Each attendee was provided a folder, tailored to their specific community and county, with handouts, a copy of the presentation slides, and contact information for the planning team.
  3. Representatives from Weimer were not present today.
  4. There are more hard copies of the survey if attendees want a copy.
  5. This is the last of three meetings. After these series of meetings, the draft plan will be finalized and will be submitted to the State of Texas and subsequently submitted to FEMA. All 16 plans are planned to be submitted to the State of Texas by January 2016.
- Laura reviewed what hazard mitigation is and why this is important; the steering committee purpose and responsibilities; the final mitigation goals and objectives; and the final hazard rankings. Ranking is different than in other states because in Texas you have to develop two mitigation actions regardless of whether a hazard is ranked high, medium, or low. Only "Non Applicable" (NA) ranking is not required to have two mitigation actions. However, if there are too many NA rankings, you will need to defend these rankings to the State of Texas and FEMA reviewers.
  1. David Merritt from City of Ganado said flooding should be ranked high but it shows medium on the chart. Laura will have this change made.
  2. Under the City of Eagle Lake, the "0" ranking (for earthquake and expansive soils) should all be "NA". Laura said this will be changed.



- Laura reviewed the number of responses for each jurisdiction. One question from the survey was reviewed in particular: “What types of projects do you believe the county, state, and federal government agencies should be doing in order to reduce damage and disruption from hazard events within XXXX County? Please rank each option as a high, medium, or low priority.” Laura reviewed the slides for each jurisdiction. Acquisition of properties is usually either high or low, usually not in the middle.
- Key point from these surveys is to keep in mind what your citizens felt were most important. This will be important when the jurisdictions are prioritizing the mitigation actions later on during this meeting.
- Mitigation Actions – you need a minimum of two actions per ranked hazard. You can have more than two actions. This is encouraged especially on medium and high ranked hazards. Carrie Valentine has been working to get these mitigation actions ready for this meeting.
- The Mitigation Action Spreadsheet is in the individual folders for each jurisdiction. This lists the projects which attendees will rank during today’s meeting. Laura reviewed the significance of each column on the spreadsheet. The action number is simply a reference number, not a ranking number. The mitigation actions from the existing plan were handed out at the first meeting. The jurisdictions had previously marked whether mitigation actions would be carried forward and any actions carried forward are included in this spreadsheet. The priority column is per the mitigation action worksheet scoring that each jurisdiction prepared previously. Each jurisdiction may or may not rank these similar today, based in part on public feedback from survey. The estimated cost column is a ballpark figure. The responsible party should be a department or agency instead of an individual.
- Laura reviewed a chart showing each county and where goals or objectives were not supported by mitigation actions. Laura said if any jurisdiction within the county had an action that addressed that goal or objective then this was sufficient. Matagorda County had mitigation actions to address all the goals and objectives. Laura asked the remaining counties (Colorado, Jackson and Wharton) what they preferred:
  - Do you want to add another action to meet/address the goal or objective, or
  - Do you want to delete a goal or objective?
- Laura handed out sheets for each county that may have goals or objectives that were not addressed in mitigation actions. Carrie Valentine had already reviewed the mitigation actions from the counties and if the actions addressed goals and objectives that the counties did not mark, then they were added.
- Steve Johnson (Wharton County) said that he felt some of the mitigation actions did address certain goals and objectives. Laura said if Wharton County wants to revisit the existing mitigation actions and goals/objectives, they can revisit with Carrie Valentine.
- Jackson County and Colorado County decided to strike goals and objectives unsupported by mitigation actions rather than add additional mitigation actions. .
- Andy Kirkland (Wharton County EMC) reviewed a copy of their mitigation action with Laura. Mr. Kirkland marked up the spreadsheet and send back to Laura to show where mitigation actions cover the existing goals and objectives. Laura reminded attendees that there is no optimal number of goals or objectives so don’t try and make the mitigation actions retrofit the goals and objectives.

- Laura thanked Wharton County for the changes to the mitigation actions/goals/objectives; and said the goals/objectives will be edited for Jackson and Colorado Counties as reflected in the handout striking goals/objectives.
- Laura explained that one mitigation action can cover several hazards. Sometimes Tetra Tech combined several mitigation actions to make them a clearer, actionable action. Laura said if these modifications are not accurate to let Laura know. She reminded the attendees they can update the mitigation action list anytime up until submittal and can also modify the plan at any point after the plan is adopted.
- Cindy handed out a copy of the Mitigation Action Worksheet for Colorado County at their request (Sylvia Rucka, City of Eagle Lake) for modification. Laura said that she needs this Mitigation Action Worksheet back by the end of this week, Friday, August 14.
- Mitigation Actions – Ranking Process. Laura instructed the attendees how to rank the mitigation actions with 1 as the highest. Laura asked the jurisdictions to rank numerically all the mitigation actions.
  - For ranking: Only community representatives can vote for the mitigation actions for that community. For the county, either only the county representatives can vote, or the communities and county representatives can vote. This decision is up to each county.
  - Lisa Krobat (Matagorda County) asked if there is a mitigation action that isn't reflected on the spreadsheet what should be done. Laura said to write in the name of the project and this will be added to spreadsheet later.
  - The attendees broke into small groups. Afterwards, Laura collected all the ranked spreadsheets and said this data would be compiled.
- Next Steps in the Plan Development
  - Between September 18 and October 9 a draft plan will be submitted to the counties for their review. The counties will have two weeks to review. The tight turn-around time was dictated by a schedule set by the lapsing of the existing plan and grant delays. The schedule was not dictated by the TCRFC planning team. Laura reviewed the specific dates the plans will be given to each county.
  - Laura alerted the attendees to watch for an email with a link to an FTP site to download the draft plan.
  - The draft plan will be approximately 350 pages and is based on FEMA requirements. All State of Texas and FEMA requirements must be met in the plan.
  - The State of Texas may ask for clarification or additional questions once reviewed. Therefore, the time it takes for the state to review is outside of the planning team's control.
  - Marla (Bay City) asked if the plan has to be adopted by the jurisdiction. Laura said once the plan is accepted by the State of Texas, it is sent to FEMA for review and approval. Once FEMA approves the plan, the plan is granted an Approval Pending Adoption (APA) status. This letter usually comes from FEMA to the State, and then the State sends the letter to the county top elected official. Once this APA status is granted, there is a 6-month period during which the jurisdiction has to officially adopt the plan. According to current regulations, each participating jurisdiction has to officially adopt the plan. This adoption documentation must be submitted to FEMA within that 6-month period. Allan Fredrich (Jackson City) asked about school districts

needing to adopt the plan. Laura said that only participating jurisdictions need to approve the plan.

- Mr. Kirkland asked approximately when this APA status might be coming. Laura said usually FEMA takes 45 days to review the plans (barring a major disaster requiring response).
- Laura said the state review time is variable. Since the 16 plans are based on a similar template, the first plan hopefully will tease out issues that can be applied to the remaining 15 plans. However, since there are 16 plans being submitted at approximately the same time there may be a delay with both the State of Texas and FEMA reviews.
- If there is a disaster during this timeframe that affects the participating counties, the requirement is there is a plan in place during the release of federal funding in order to receive this particular federal disaster funding.
- Monica Martin (Wharton County) asked who to send the timesheets to. Laura said to send them to Hope Marquez with Jeff Ward's office but anyone on the team can get the timesheet to Ms. Marquez.
- Laura thanked all the attendees for coming to these meetings and all the work that the jurisdictions have done during this process. This is the last of three meetings.
- Adjournment



## **Wharton County Communities, Hazard Mitigation Plan Public Involvement/Participation**

A partnership of local governments and other stakeholders in Wharton County are working together to create a Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Community input and involvement is instrumental in the development of a mitigation plan update that truly reflects the perceptions and needs of Wharton County residents.

We have developed a community survey and would like as much input from Wharton County residents, businesses, and interested citizens as possible. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey so that your ideas may become a part of the plan to make Wharton County a safer and more resilient county!

### **Community Survey Link:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WhartonCountyHMPCommunitySurvey>

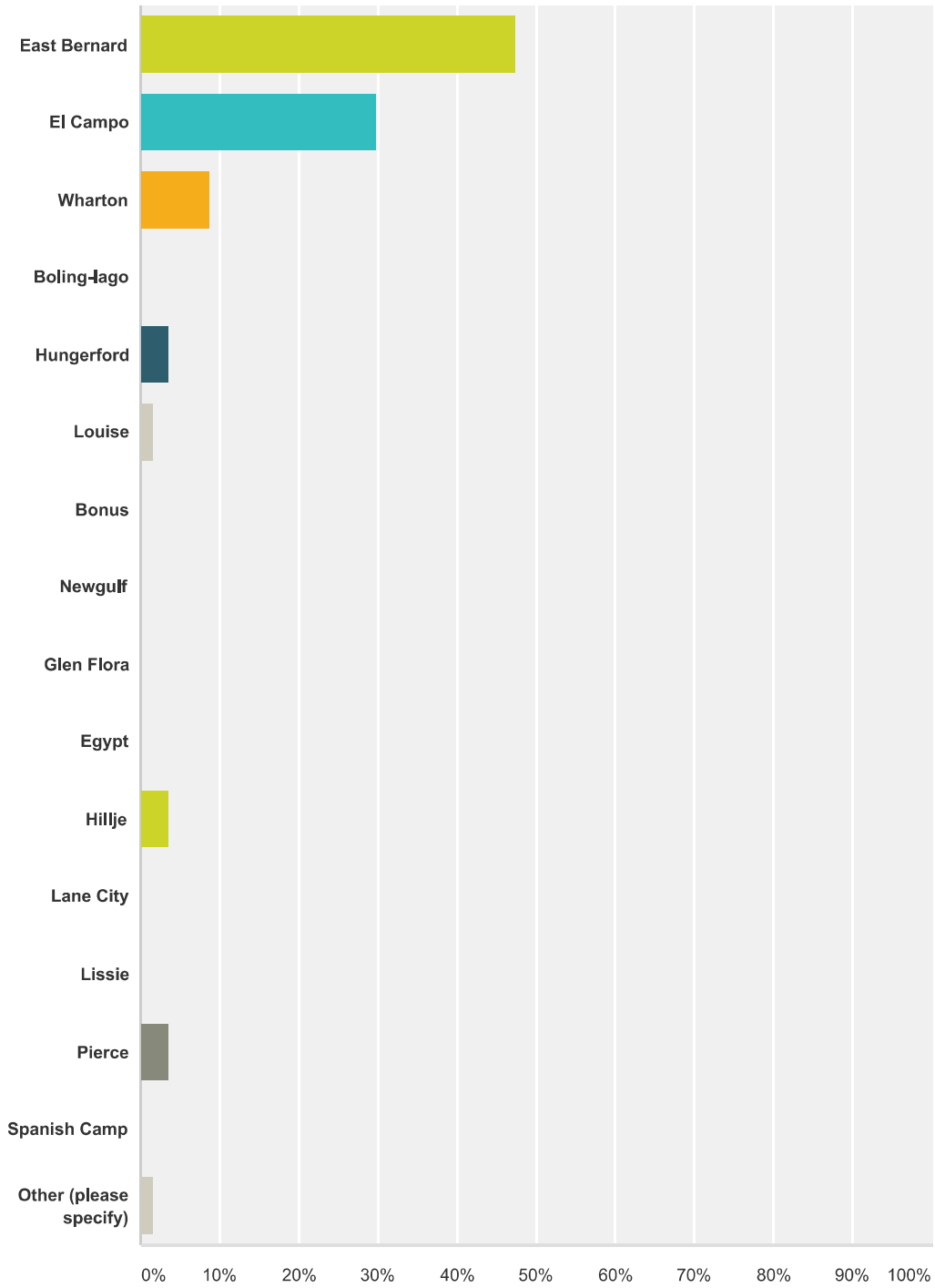
If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact:

**Laura Johnston** at [laura.johnston@tetrattech.com](mailto:laura.johnston@tetrattech.com) or 303-312-8807



### Q1 Where in Wharton County do you live?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



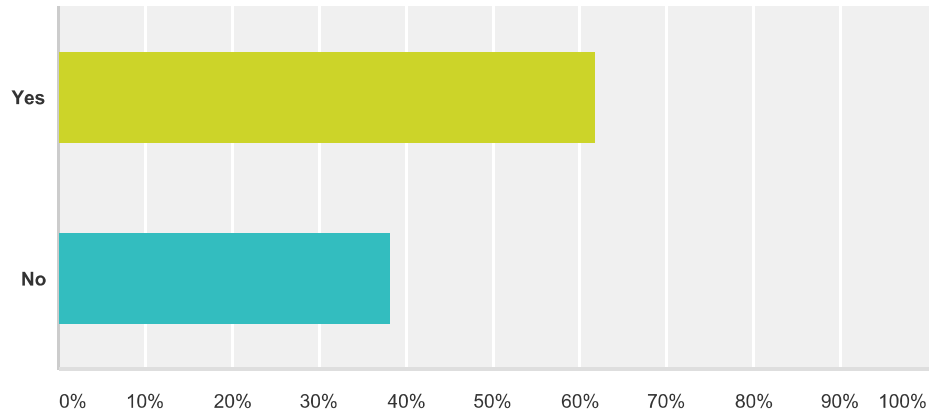
Answer Choices	Responses
East Bernard	47.37% 27
El Campo	29.82% 17
Wharton	8.77% 5

## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey

Boling-Iago	0.00%	0
Hungerford	3.51%	2
Louise	1.75%	1
Bonus	0.00%	0
Newgulf	0.00%	0
Glen Flora	0.00%	0
Egypt	0.00%	0
Hillje	3.51%	2
Lane City	0.00%	0
Lissie	0.00%	0
Pierce	3.51%	2
Spanish Camp	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	1.75%	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>57</b>

## Q2 Do you work in Wharton County?

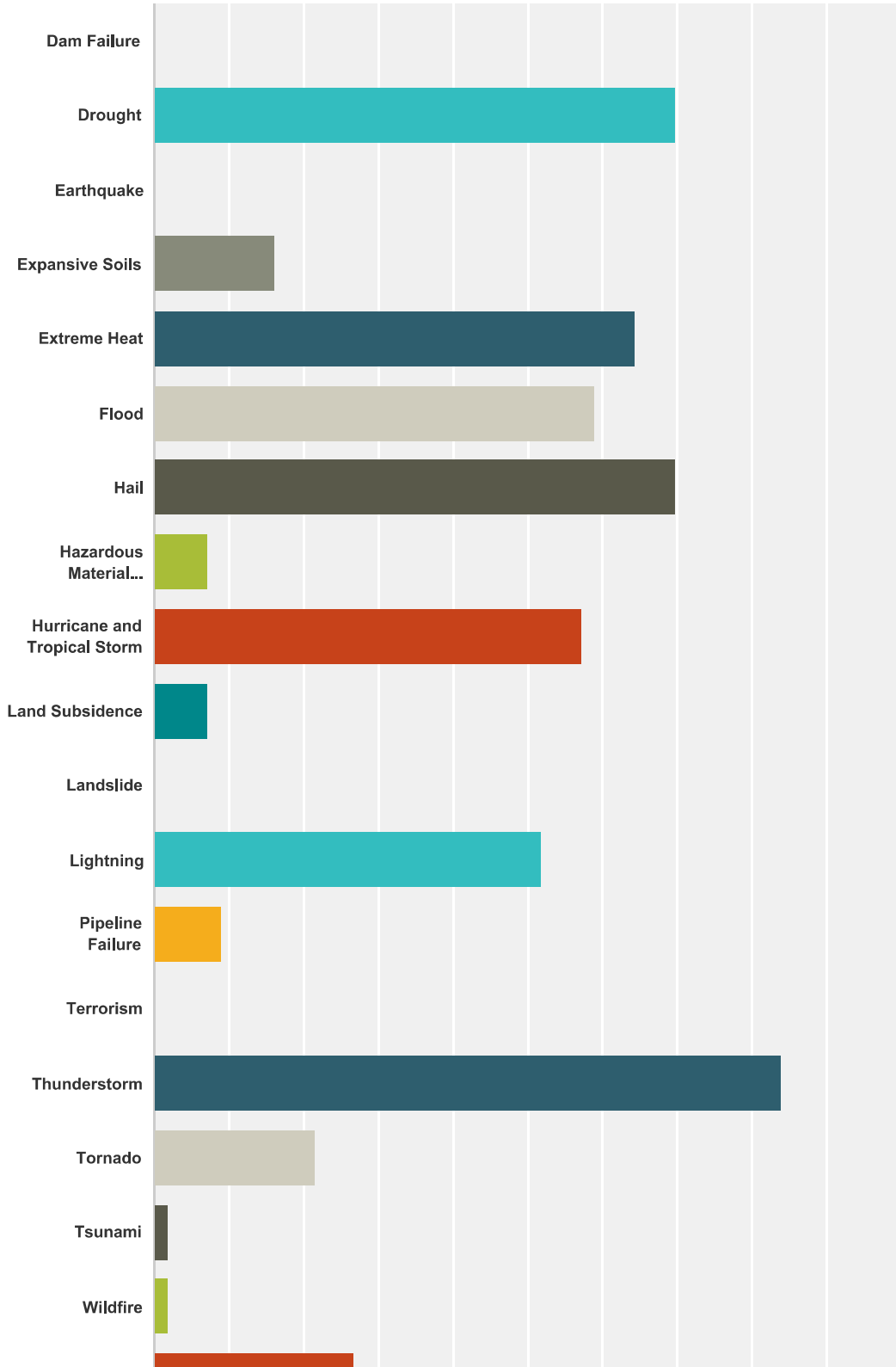
Answered: 55 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	61.82%	34
No	38.18%	21
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>

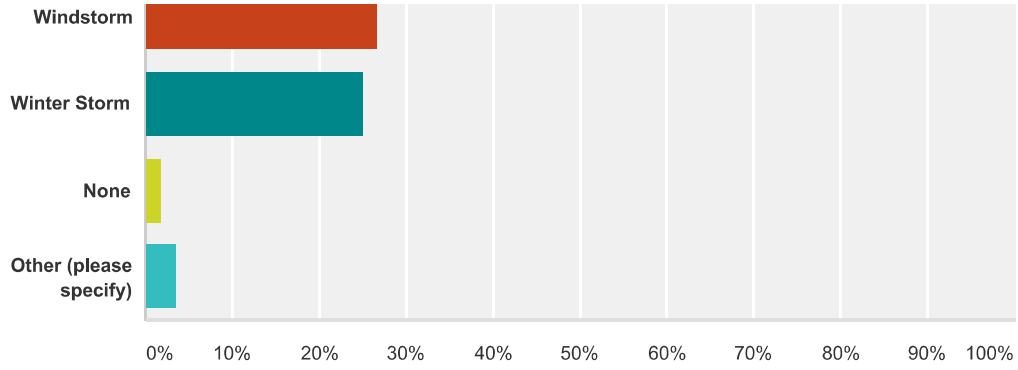
**Q3 Which of the following hazard events have you or has anyone in your household experienced in the past 20 years within Wharton County? (Check all that apply)**

Answered: 56 Skipped: 1





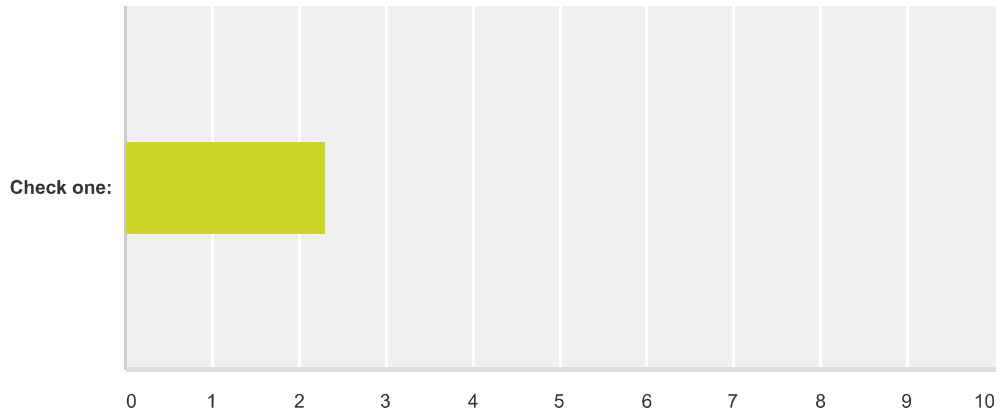
## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey



Answer Choices	Responses
Dam Failure	0.00% 0
Drought	69.64% 39
Earthquake	0.00% 0
Expansive Soils	16.07% 9
Extreme Heat	64.29% 36
Flood	58.93% 33
Hail	69.64% 39
Hazardous Material Release	7.14% 4
Hurricane and Tropical Storm	57.14% 32
Land Subsidence	7.14% 4
Landslide	0.00% 0
Lightning	51.79% 29
Pipeline Failure	8.93% 5
Terrorism	0.00% 0
Thunderstorm	83.93% 47
Tornado	21.43% 12
Tsunami	1.79% 1
Wildfire	1.79% 1
Windstorm	26.79% 15
Winter Storm	25.00% 14
None	1.79% 1
Other (please specify)	3.57% 2
<b>Total Respondents: 56</b>	

**Q4 How prepared is your household to deal with a natural hazard event?**

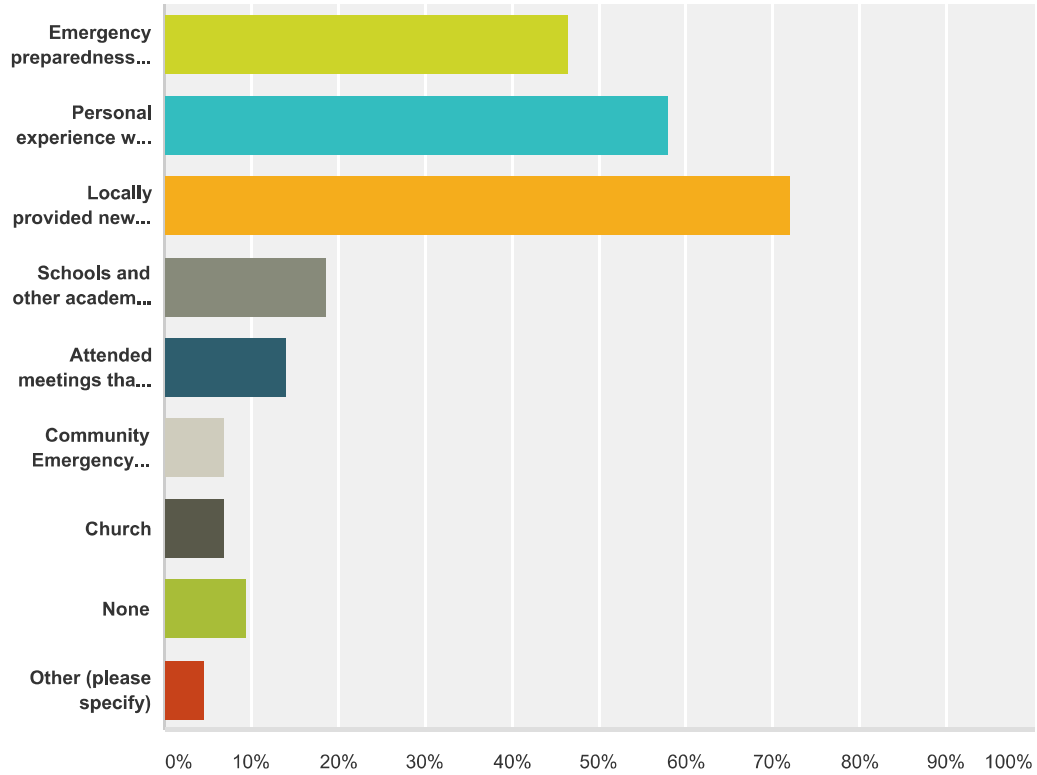
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



	Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Adequately prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Total	Weighted Average
Check one:	11.63% 5	48.84% 21	37.21% 16	2.33% 1	0.00% 0	43	2.30

**Q5 Which of the following have provided you with useful information to help you be prepared for a natural hazard event? (Check all that apply)**

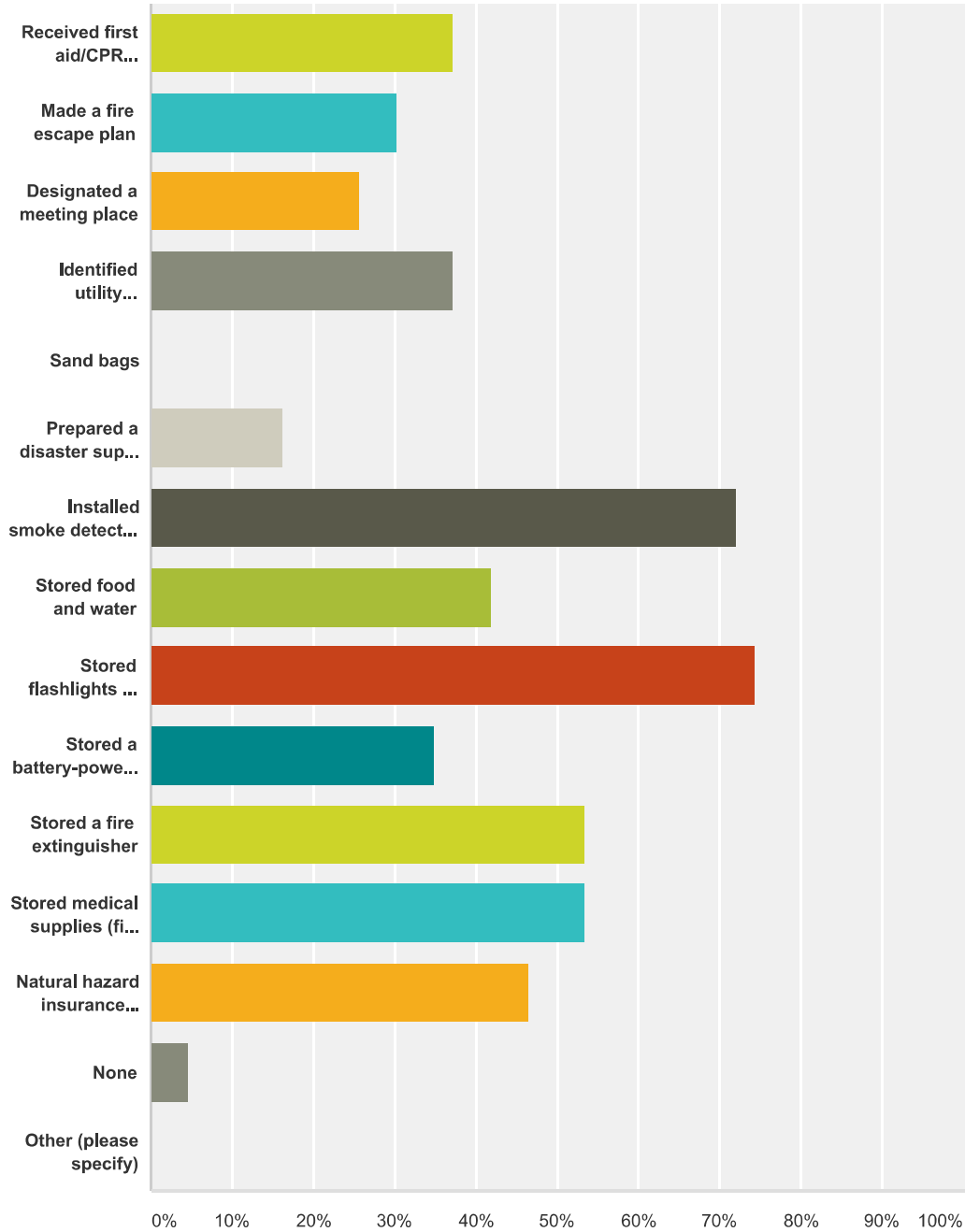
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



Answer Choices	Responses
Emergency preparedness information from a government source (e.g., federal, state, or local emergency management)	46.51% 20
Personal experience with one or more natural hazards/disasters	58.14% 25
Locally provided news or other media information	72.09% 31
Schools and other academic institutions	18.60% 8
Attended meetings that have dealt with disaster preparedness	13.95% 6
Community Emergency Response Training (CERT)	6.98% 3
Church	6.98% 3
None	9.30% 4
Other (please specify)	4.65% 2
<b>Total Respondents: 43</b>	

**Q6 Which of the following steps has your household taken to prepare for a natural hazard event? (Check all that apply)**

Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



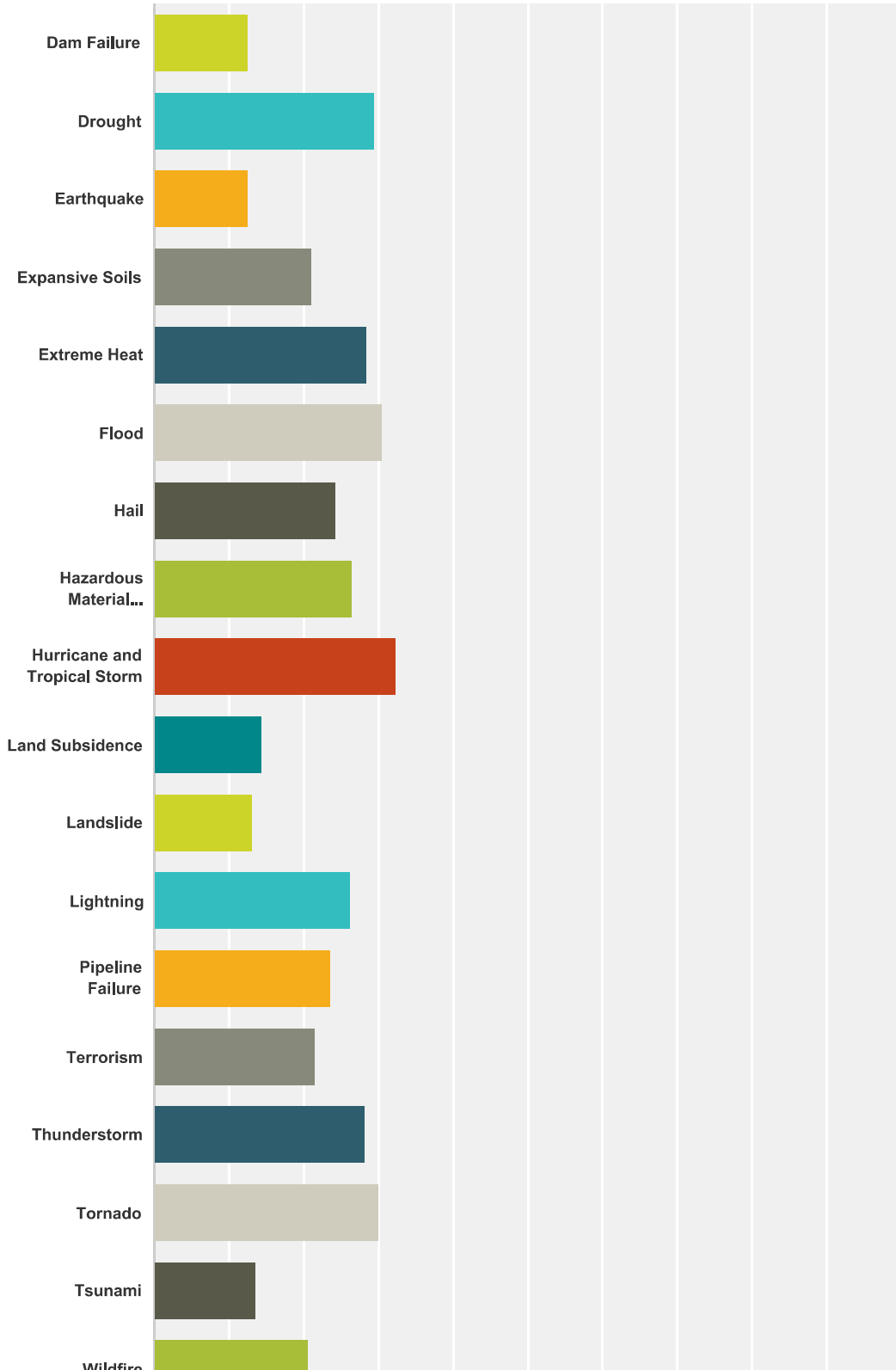
Answer Choices	Responses	
Received first aid/CPR training	37.21%	16
Made a fire escape plan	30.23%	13
Designated a meeting place	25.58%	11

## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey

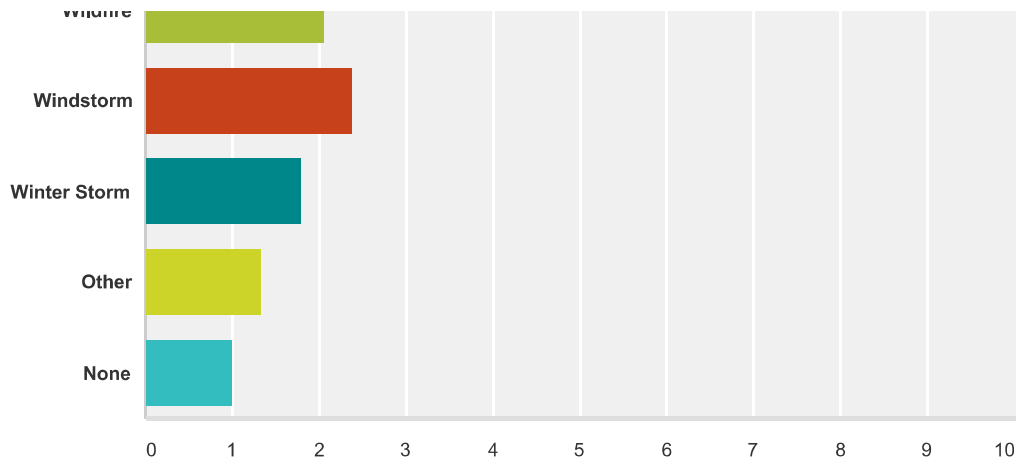
Identified utility shutoffs	37.21%	16
Sand bags	0.00%	0
Prepared a disaster supply kit	16.28%	7
Installed smoke detectors on each level of the house	72.09%	31
Stored food and water	41.86%	18
Stored flashlights and batteries	74.42%	32
Stored a battery-powered radio	34.88%	15
Stored a fire extinguisher	53.49%	23
Stored medical supplies (first aid kit, medications)	53.49%	23
Natural hazard insurance (Flood, Earthquake, Wildfire)	46.51%	20
None	4.65%	2
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
<b>Total Respondents: 43</b>		

**Q7 How concerned are you about the following natural hazards in Wharton County? (Check one response for each hazard)**

Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey



	Not Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Concerned	Very Concerned	Extremely Concerned	Total	Weighted Average
Dam Failure	76.92% 30	20.51% 8	2.56% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	39	1.26
Drought	7.14% 3	23.81% 10	40.48% 17	23.81% 10	4.76% 2	42	2.95
Earthquake	80.00% 32	15.00% 6	5.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40	1.25
Expansive Soils	40.00% 16	32.50% 13	10.00% 4	12.50% 5	5.00% 2	40	2.10
Extreme Heat	14.63% 6	26.83% 11	29.27% 12	19.51% 8	9.76% 4	41	2.83
Flood	6.98% 3	27.91% 12	30.23% 13	23.26% 10	11.63% 5	43	3.05
Hail	15.00% 6	40.00% 16	32.50% 13	12.50% 5	0.00% 0	40	2.42
Hazardous Material Release	22.50% 9	22.50% 9	30.00% 12	17.50% 7	7.50% 3	40	2.65
Hurricane and Tropical Storm	6.98% 3	18.60% 8	34.88% 15	23.26% 10	16.28% 7	43	3.23
Land Subsidence	67.50% 27	20.00% 8	12.50% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40	1.45
Landslide	79.49% 31	12.82% 5	5.13% 2	2.56% 1	0.00% 0	39	1.31
Lightning	12.20% 5	34.15% 14	34.15% 14	17.07% 7	2.44% 1	41	2.63
Pipeline Failure	33.33% 13	20.51% 8	30.77% 12	7.69% 3	7.69% 3	39	2.36
Terrorism	36.59% 15	31.71% 13	14.63% 6	14.63% 6	2.44% 1	41	2.15
Thunderstorm	9.52% 4	26.19% 11	40.48% 17	21.43% 9	2.38% 1	42	2.81
Tornado	7.14% 3	23.81% 10	40.48% 17	19.05% 8	9.52% 4	42	3.00

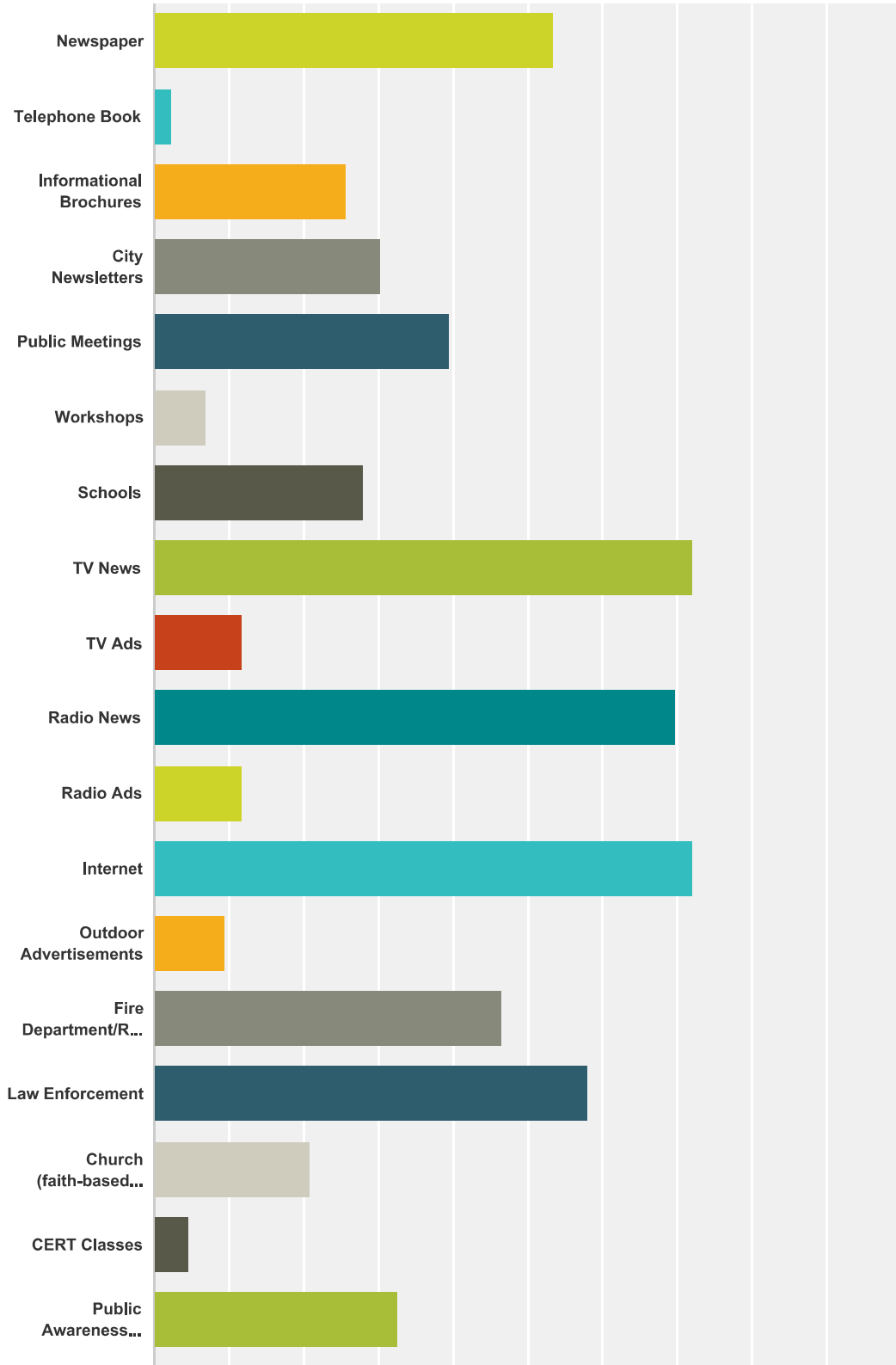
### Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey

Tsunami	<b>77.50%</b> 31	<b>12.50%</b> 5	<b>7.50%</b> 3	<b>2.50%</b> 1	<b>0.00%</b> 0	40	1.35
Wildfire	<b>43.90%</b> 18	<b>19.51%</b> 8	<b>24.39%</b> 10	<b>9.76%</b> 4	<b>2.44%</b> 1	41	2.07
Windstorm	<b>22.50%</b> 9	<b>32.50%</b> 13	<b>32.50%</b> 13	<b>10.00%</b> 4	<b>2.50%</b> 1	40	2.38
Winter Storm	<b>52.50%</b> 21	<b>25.00%</b> 10	<b>12.50%</b> 5	<b>10.00%</b> 4	<b>0.00%</b> 0	40	1.80
Other	<b>83.33%</b> 10	<b>8.33%</b> 1	<b>0.00%</b> 0	<b>8.33%</b> 1	<b>0.00%</b> 0	12	1.33
None	<b>100.00%</b> 7	<b>0.00%</b> 0	<b>0.00%</b> 0	<b>0.00%</b> 0	<b>0.00%</b> 0	7	1.00

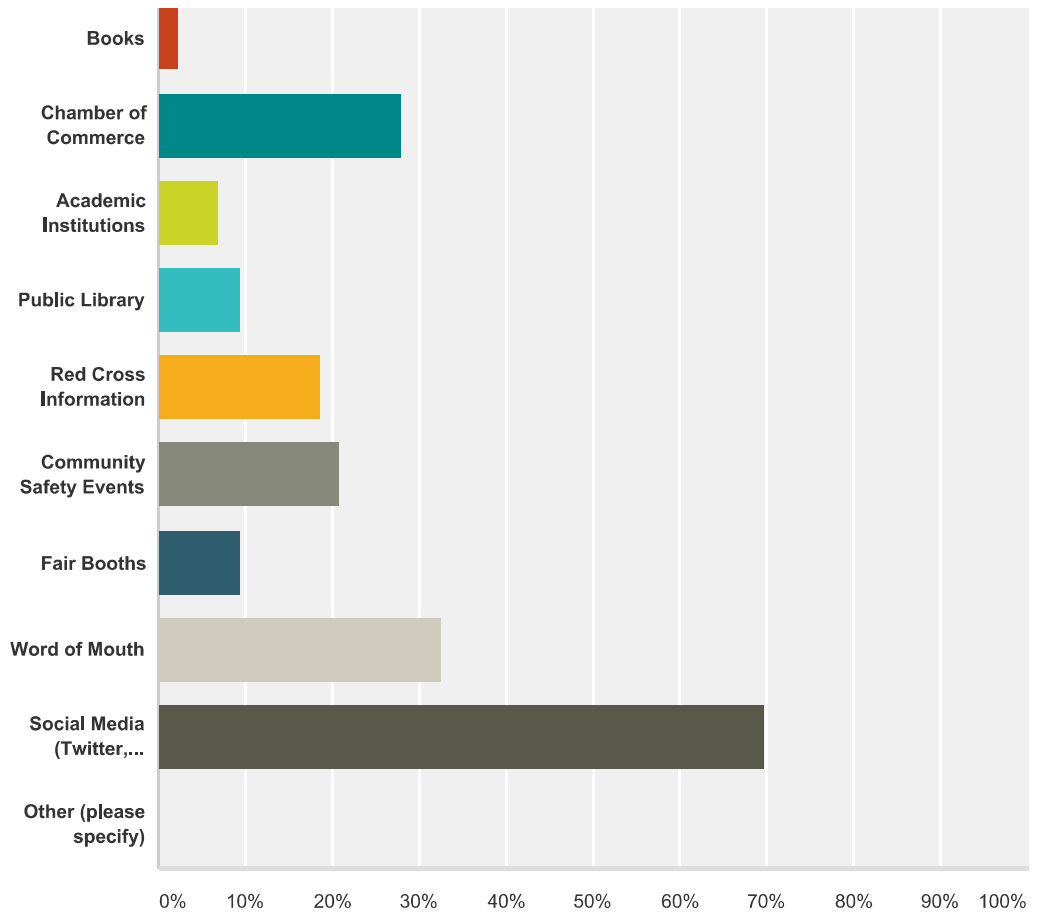


**Q8 Which of the following methods do you think are most effective for providing hazard and disaster information? (Check all that apply)**

Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey



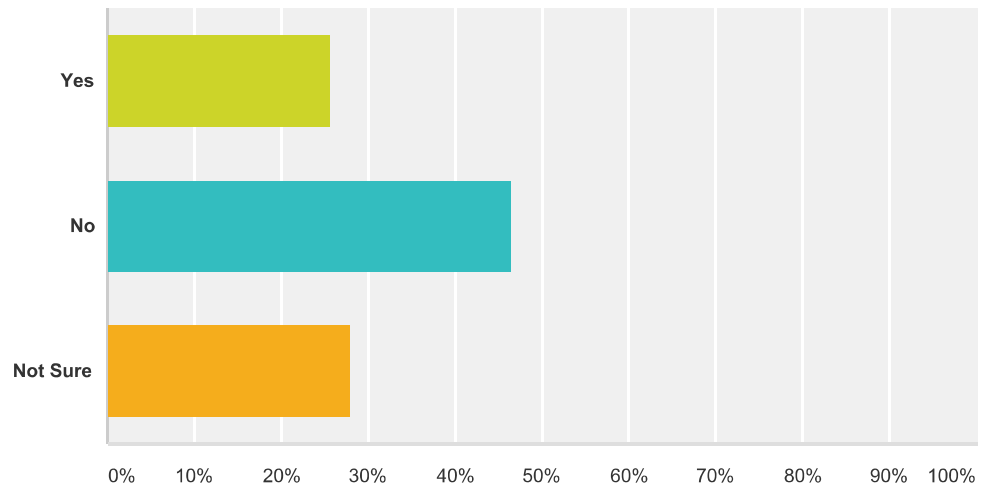
Answer Choices	Responses
Newspaper	53.49% 23
Telephone Book	2.33% 1
Informational Brochures	25.58% 11
City Newsletters	30.23% 13
Public Meetings	39.53% 17
Workshops	6.98% 3
Schools	27.91% 12
TV News	72.09% 31
TV Ads	11.63% 5
Radio News	69.77% 30
Radio Ads	11.63% 5
Internet	72.09% 31
Outdoor Advertisements	9.30% 4
Fire Department/Rescue	46.51% 20
Law Enforcement	58.14% 25

## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey

Church (faith-based institutions)	<b>20.93%</b>	9
CERT Classes	<b>4.65%</b>	2
Public Awareness Campaign (e.g., Flood Awareness Week, Winter Storm Preparedness Month)	<b>32.56%</b>	14
Books	<b>2.33%</b>	1
Chamber of Commerce	<b>27.91%</b>	12
Academic Institutions	<b>6.98%</b>	3
Public Library	<b>9.30%</b>	4
Red Cross Information	<b>18.60%</b>	8
Community Safety Events	<b>20.93%</b>	9
Fair Booths	<b>9.30%</b>	4
Word of Mouth	<b>32.56%</b>	14
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, Linkdin)	<b>69.77%</b>	30
Other (please specify)	<b>0.00%</b>	0
<b>Total Respondents: 43</b>		

**Q9 Is your property located in or near a FEMA designated floodplain?**

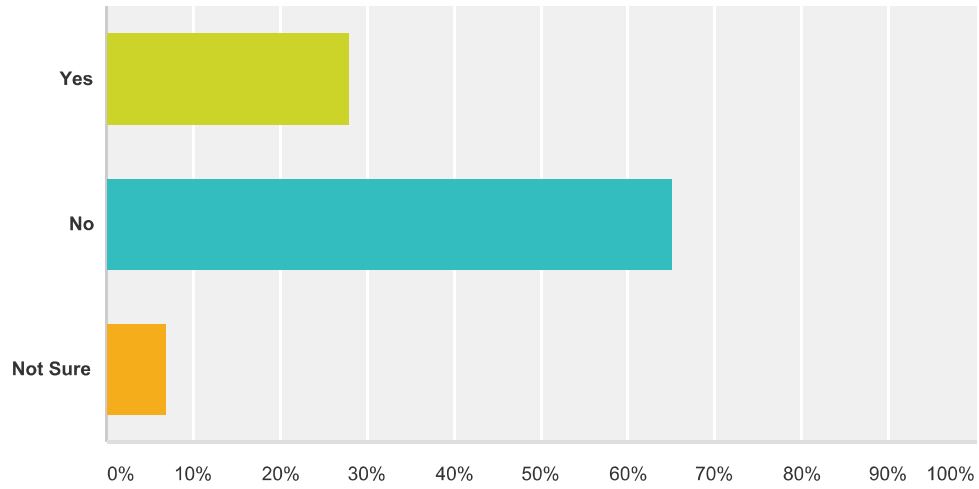
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	25.58% 11
No	46.51% 20
Not Sure	27.91% 12
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

### Q10 Do you have flood insurance?

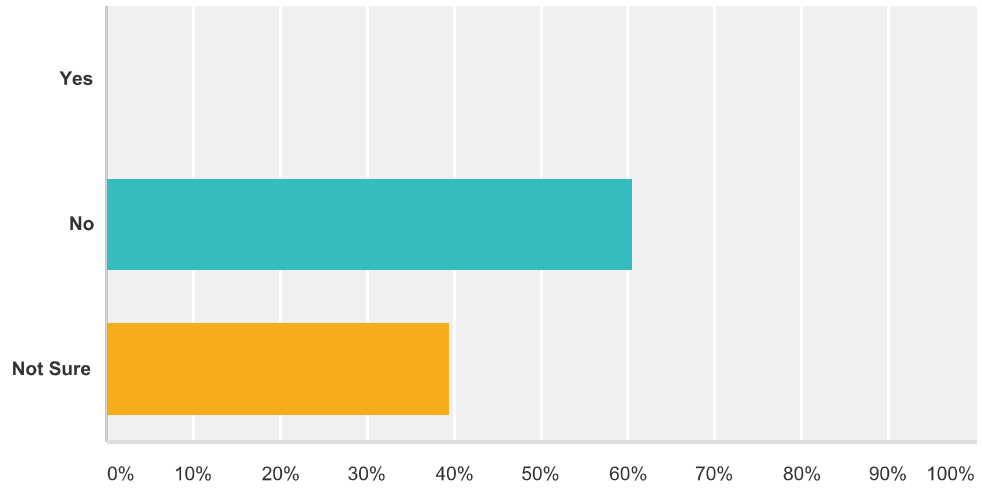
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	27.91% 12
No	65.12% 28
Not Sure	6.98% 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

### Q11 Is your property located near an earthquake fault?

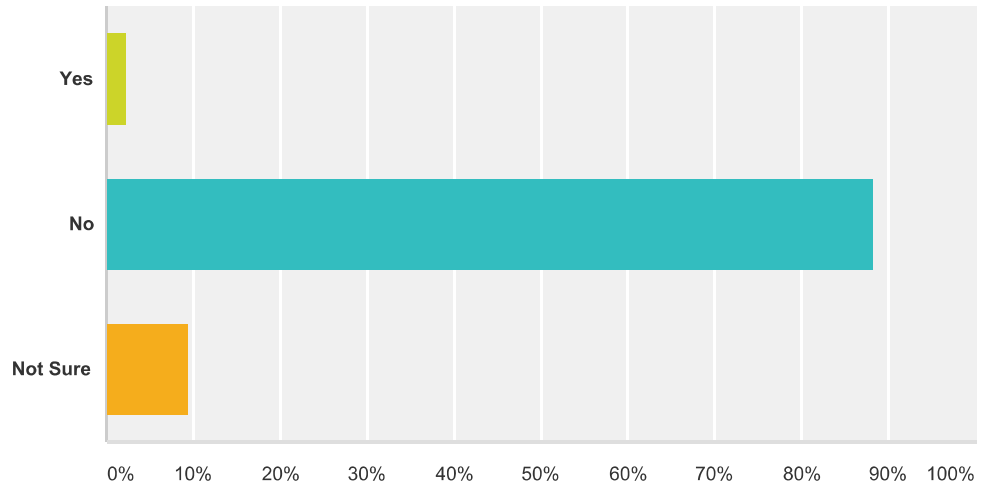
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	0.00% 0
No	60.47% 26
Not Sure	39.53% 17
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

### Q12 Do you have earthquake insurance?

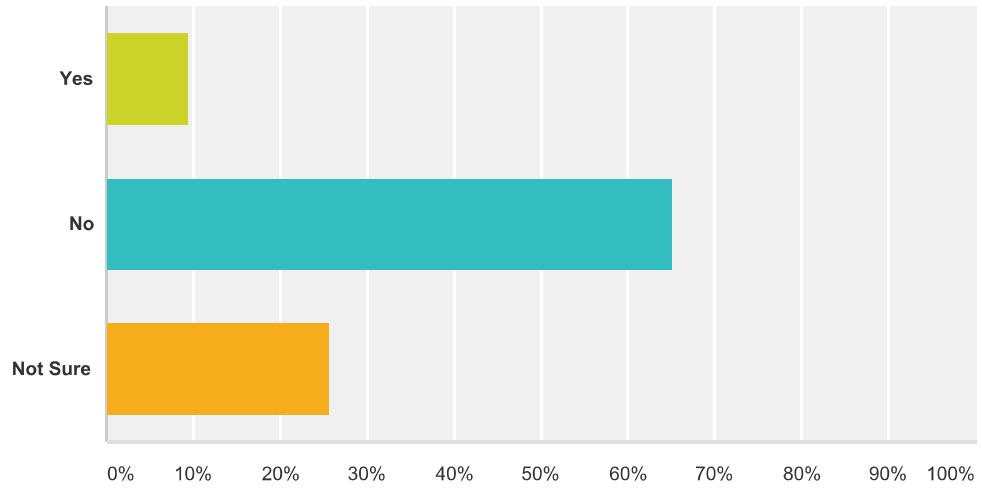
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	2.33% 1
No	88.37% 38
Not Sure	9.30% 4
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

**Q13 Is your property located in an area at risk for wildfires?**

Answered: 43 Skipped: 14

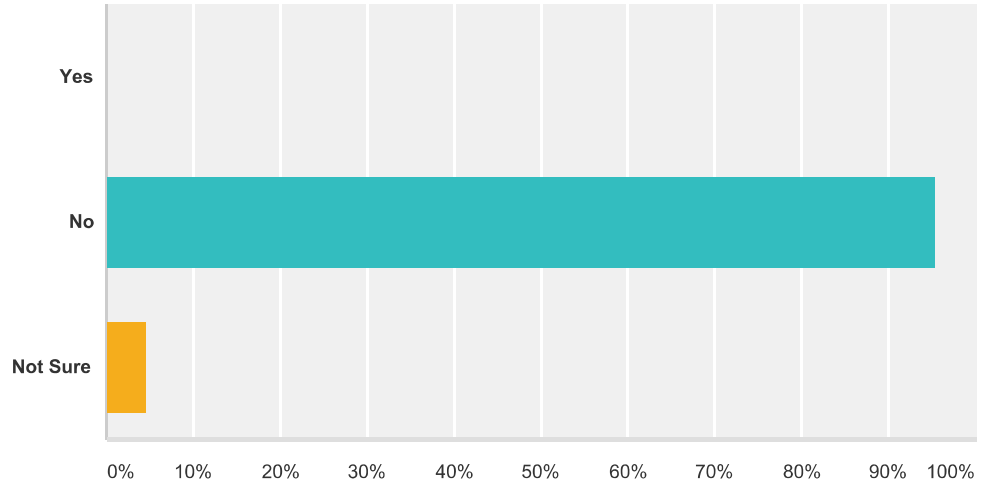


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	9.30% 4
No	65.12% 28
Not Sure	25.58% 11
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>



**Q14 Have you ever had problems getting homeowners or renters insurance due to risks from natural hazards?**

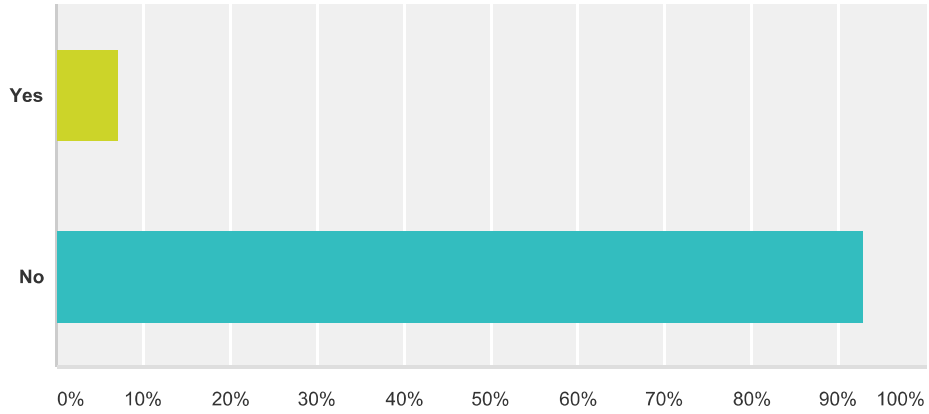
Answered: 43 Skipped: 14



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	0.00% 0
No	95.35% 41
Not Sure	4.65% 2
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

**Q15 Do you have any special access or functional needs within your household that would require early warning or specialized response during disasters?**

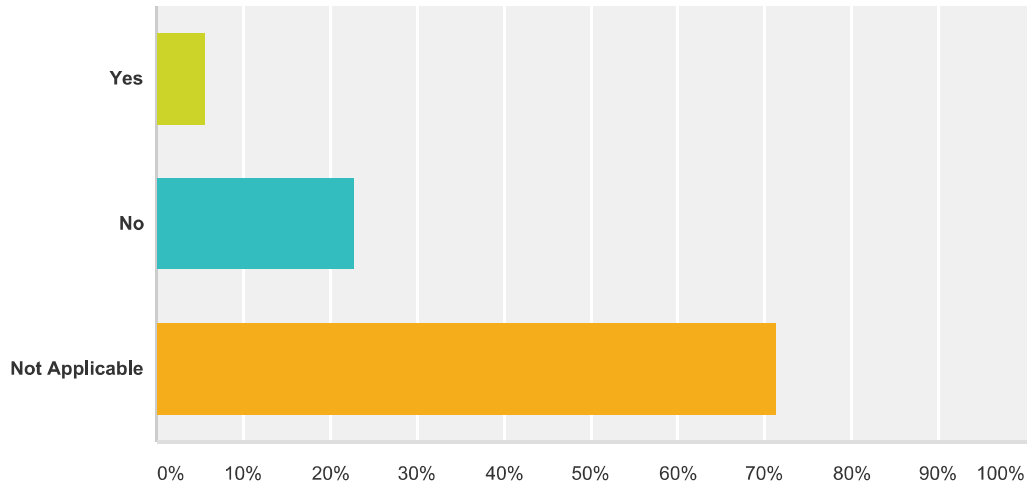
Answered: 42 Skipped: 15



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	7.14%	3
No	92.86%	39
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>

**Q16 If the answer to question # 15 was yes, would you like County Emergency Management personnel to contact you regarding your access and functional needs? If yes, please enter your contact information in the following text box.**

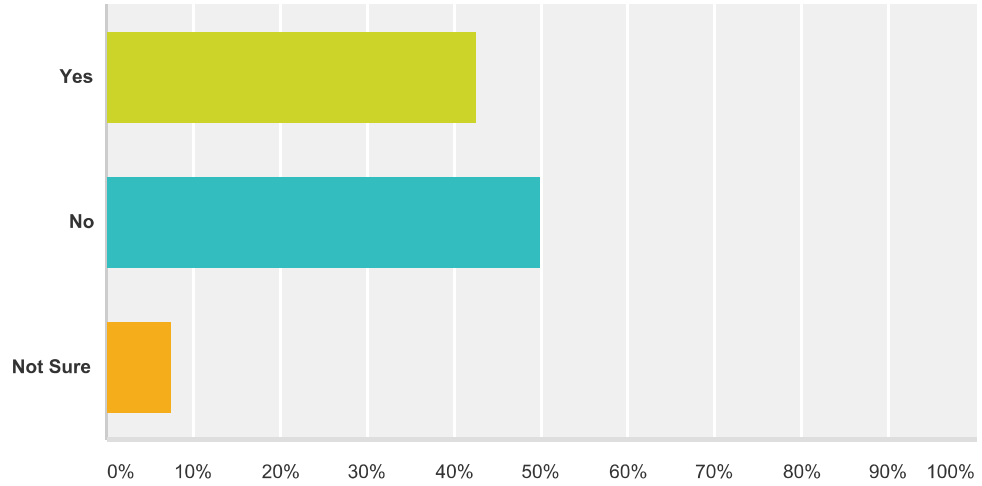
Answered: 35 Skipped: 22



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	5.71% 2
No	22.86% 8
Not Applicable	71.43% 25
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

**Q17 When you moved into your home, did you consider the impact a natural disaster could have on your home?**

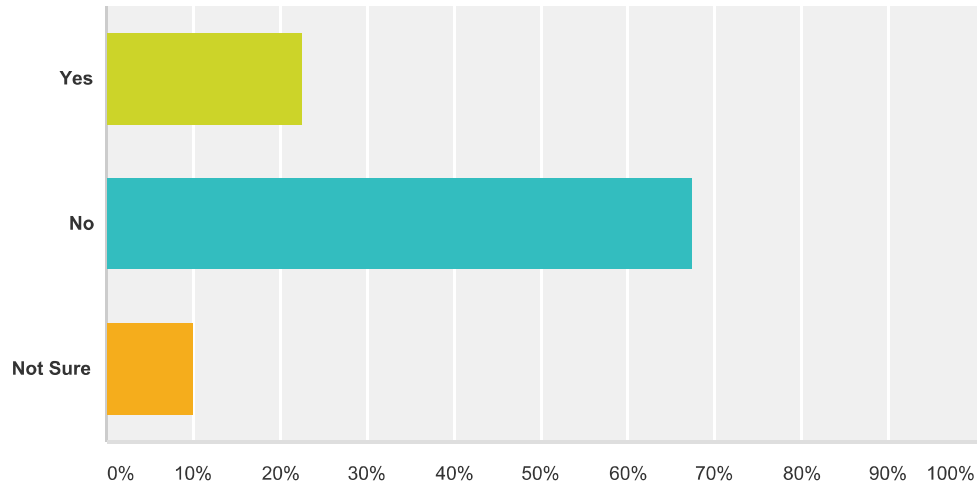
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	42.50% 17
No	50.00% 20
Not Sure	7.50% 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

**Q18 Was the presence of a natural hazard risk zone (e.g., dam failure zone, flood zone, landslide hazard area, high fire risk area) disclosed to you by a real estate agent, seller, or landlord before you purchased or moved into your home?**

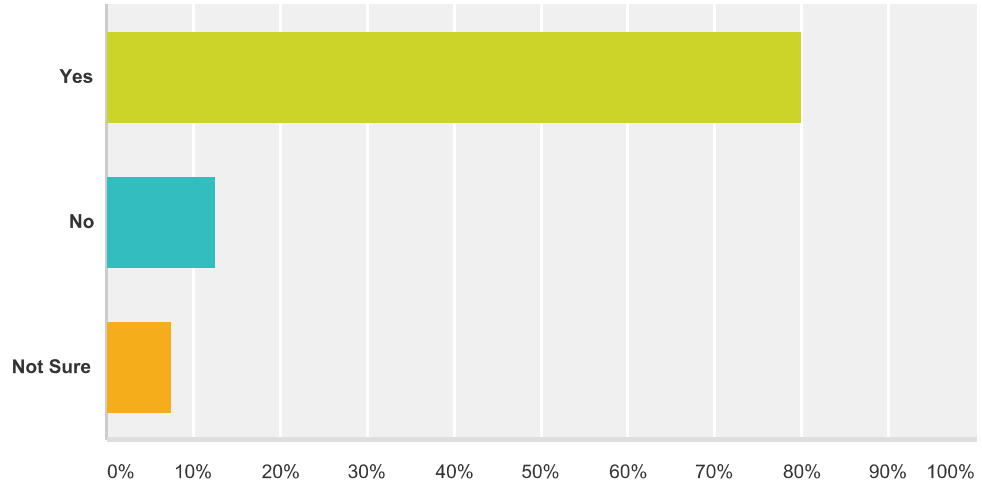
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	22.50% 9
No	67.50% 27
Not Sure	10.00% 4
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

**Q19 Would the disclosure of this type of natural hazard risk information influence your decision to buy or rent a home?**

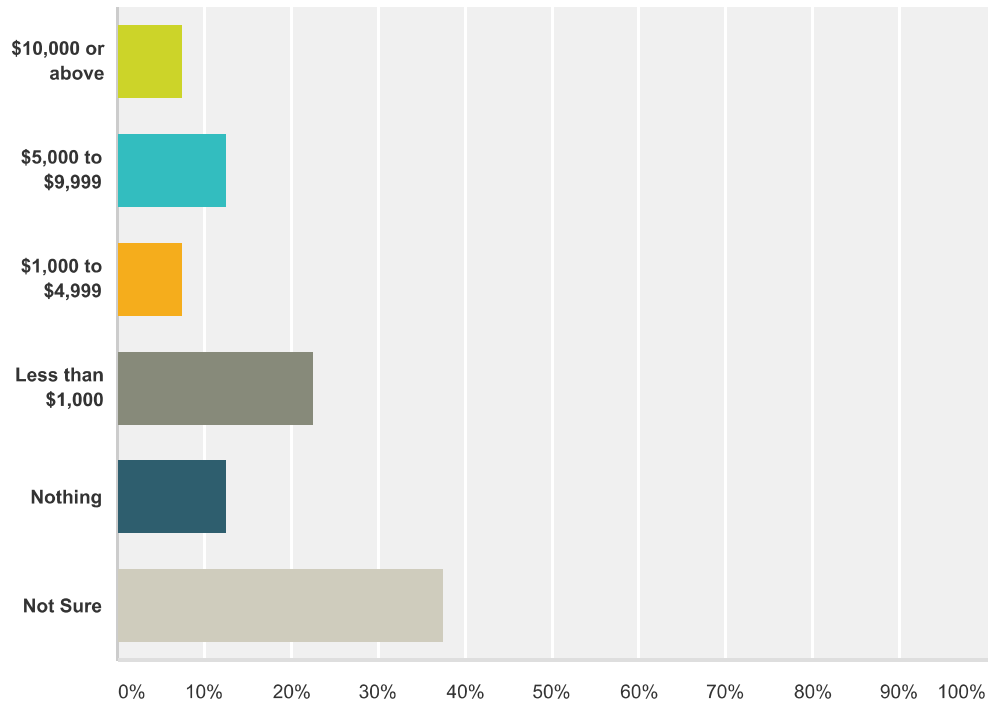
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	80.00% 32
No	12.50% 5
Not Sure	7.50% 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

**Q20 How much money would you be willing to spend to retrofit your home to reduce risks associated with natural disasters? (for example, by clearing brush and plant materials from around your home to create a "defensible space" for wildfire, performing seismic upgrades, or replacing a combustible roof with non-combustible roofing)**

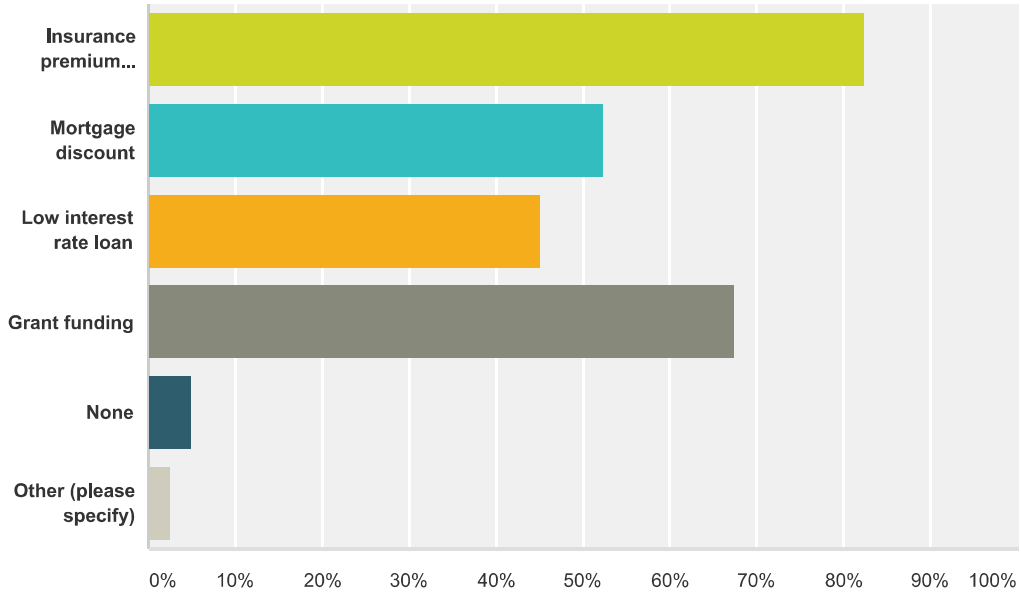
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
\$10,000 or above	7.50%	3
\$5,000 to \$9,999	12.50%	5
\$1,000 to \$4,999	7.50%	3
Less than \$1,000	22.50%	9
Nothing	12.50%	5
Not Sure	37.50%	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>

**Q21 Which of the following incentives would encourage you to spend money to retrofit your home to protect against natural disasters? (Check all that apply)**

Answered: 40 Skipped: 17

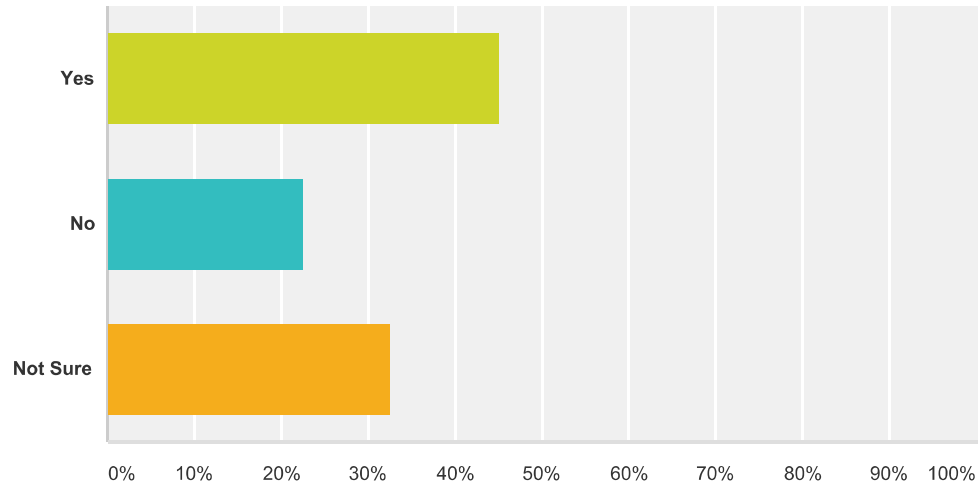


Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Insurance premium discount	82.50%	33
Mortgage discount	52.50%	21
Low interest rate loan	45.00%	18
Grant funding	67.50%	27
None	5.00%	2
Other (please specify)	2.50%	1
<b>Total Respondents: 40</b>		



**Q22 If your property were located in a designated “high hazard” area or had received repetitive damages from a natural hazard event, would you consider a ”buyout” offered by a public agency?**

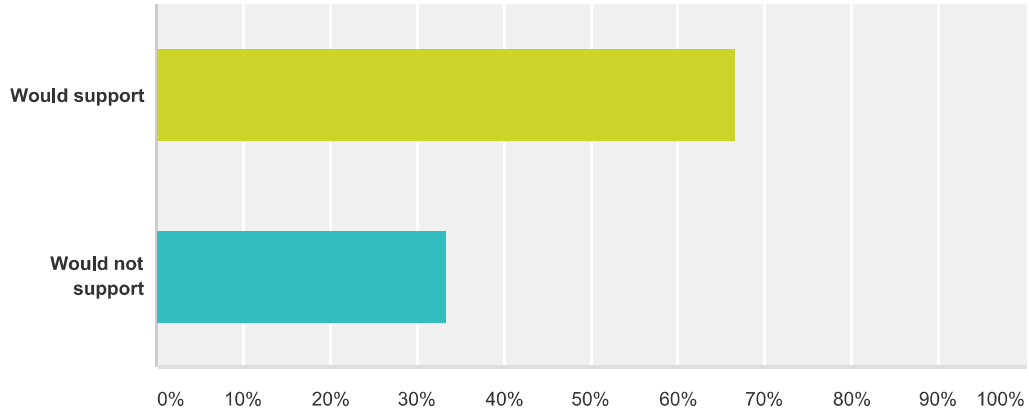
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	45.00% 18
No	22.50% 9
Not Sure	32.50% 13
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

**Q23 Would you support the regulation (restriction) of land uses within known high hazard areas?**

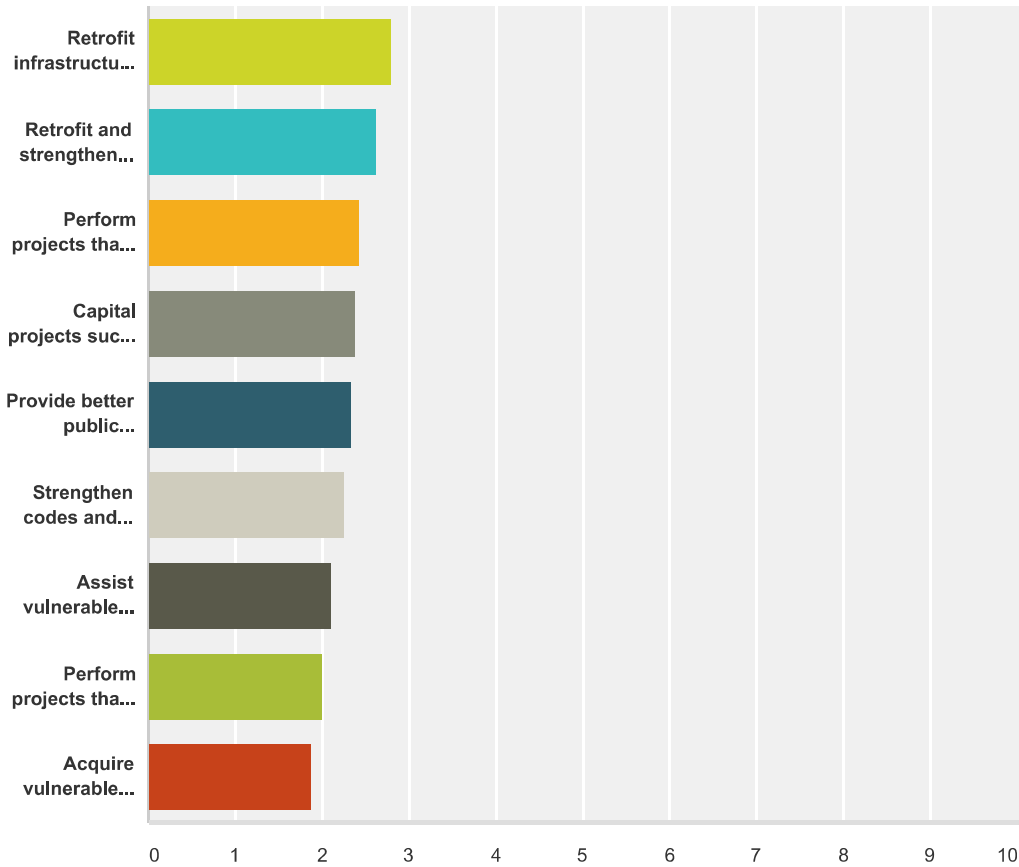
Answered: 39 Skipped: 18



Answer Choices	Responses	
Would support	66.67%	26
Would not support	33.33%	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>

**Q24 What types of projects do you believe the County, State or Federal government agencies should be doing in order to reduce damage and disruption from hazard events within Wharton County? Please rank each option as a high, medium or low priority.**

Answered: 38 Skipped: 19



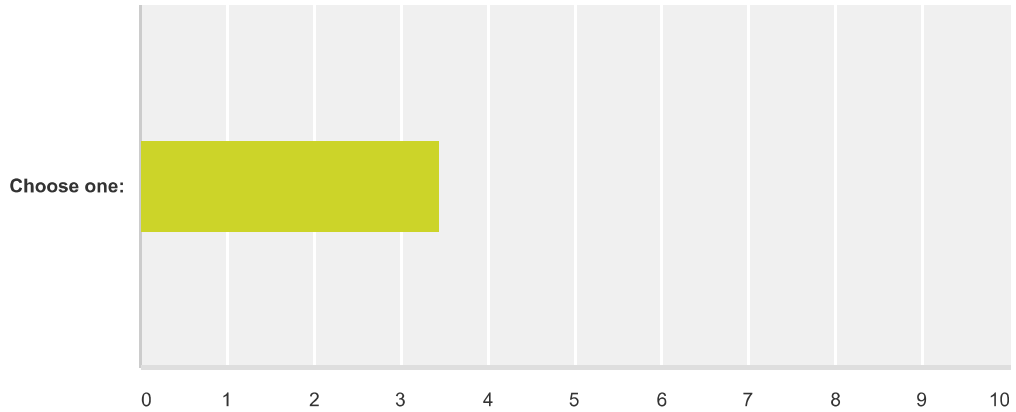
	High	Medium	Low	Total	Weighted Average
Retrofit infrastructure such as roads, bridges, drainage facilities, levees, water supply, waste water and power supply facilities.	78.95% 30	21.05% 8	0.00% 0	38	2.79
Retrofit and strengthen essential facilities such as police, fire, schools and hospitals.	65.79% 25	31.58% 12	2.63% 1	38	2.63
Perform projects that restore the natural environments capacity to absorb the impacts from natural hazards.	47.37% 18	47.37% 18	5.26% 2	38	2.42
Capital projects such as dams, levees, flood walls, drainage improvements and bank stabilization projects.	42.11% 16	52.63% 20	5.26% 2	38	2.37
Provide better public information about risk, and the exposure to hazards within the operational area.	44.74% 17	44.74% 17	10.53% 4	38	2.34
Strengthen codes and regulations to include higher regulatory standards in hazard areas.	39.47% 15	47.37% 18	13.16% 5	38	2.26

## Wharton County TX HMP Update Survey

Assist vulnerable property owners with securing funding for mitigation.	<b>31.58%</b> 12	<b>47.37%</b> 18	<b>21.05%</b> 8	38	2.11
Perform projects that mitigate the potential impacts from climate change.	<b>23.68%</b> 9	<b>52.63%</b> 20	<b>23.68%</b> 9	38	2.00
Acquire vulnerable properties and maintain as open space.	<b>21.05%</b> 8	<b>44.74%</b> 17	<b>34.21%</b> 13	38	1.87

**Q25 Please indicate how you feel about the following statement: It is the responsibility of government (local, state and federal) to provide education and programs that promote citizen actions that will reduce exposure to the risks associated with natural hazards.**

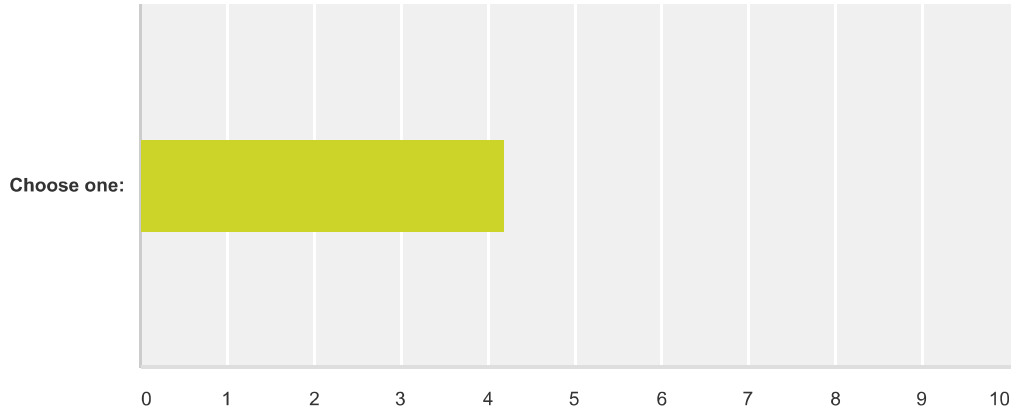
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
Choose one:	12.50% 5	7.50% 3	17.50% 7	47.50% 19	15.00% 6	40	3.45

**Q26 Please indicate how you feel about the following statement: It is my responsibility to educate myself and take actions that will reduce my exposure to the risks associated with natural hazards.**

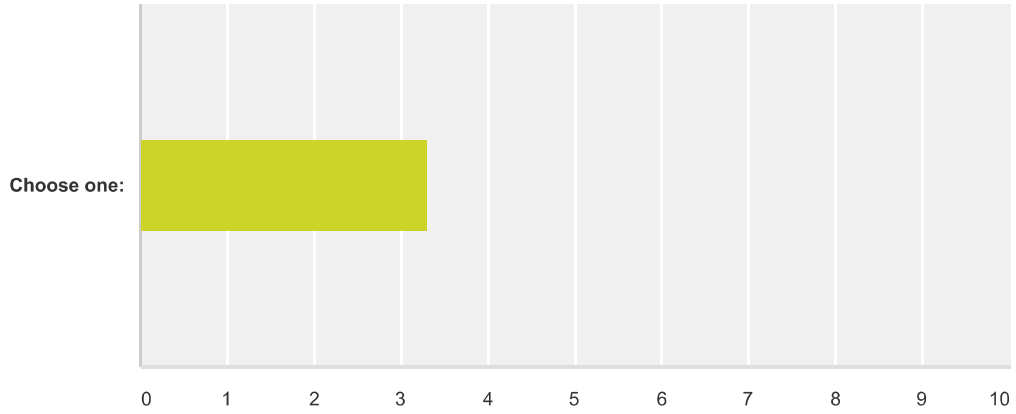
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
Choose one:	10.00% 4	0.00% 0	7.50% 3	25.00% 10	57.50% 23	40	4.20

**Q27 Please indicate how you feel about the following statement: Information about the risks associated with natural hazards is readily available and easy to locate.**

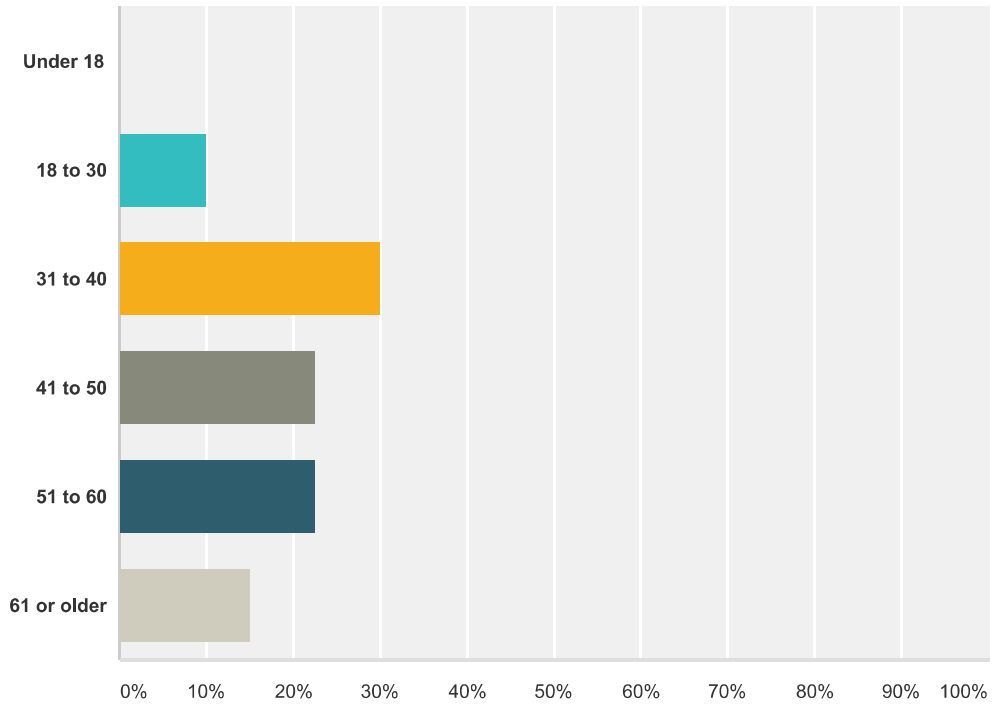
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
Choose one:	7.50% 3	17.50% 7	25.00% 10	37.50% 15	12.50% 5	40	3.30

**Q28 Please indicate your age range:**

Answered: 40 Skipped: 17

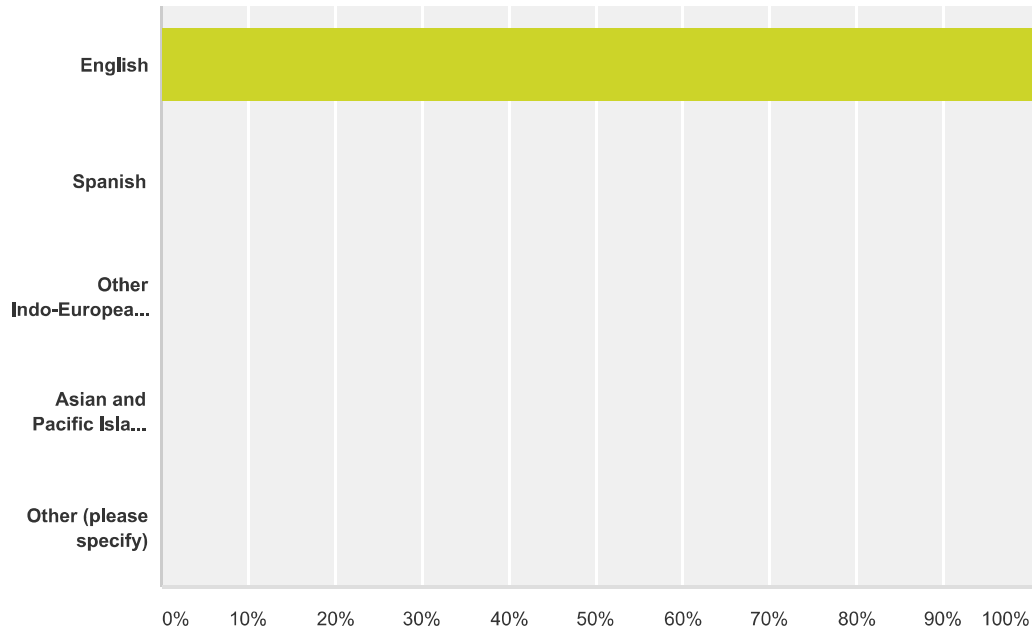


Answer Choices	Responses
Under 18	0.00% 0
18 to 30	10.00% 4
31 to 40	30.00% 12
41 to 50	22.50% 9
51 to 60	22.50% 9
61 or older	15.00% 6
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>



**Q29 Please indicate the primary language spoken in your household.**

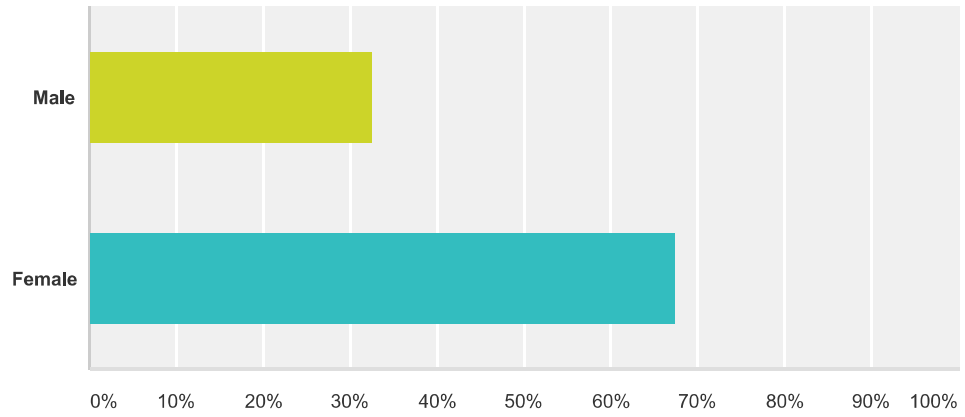
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
English	100.00%	40
Spanish	0.00%	0
Other Indo-European Languages	0.00%	0
Asian and Pacific Island Languages	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>

### Q30 Please indicate your gender:

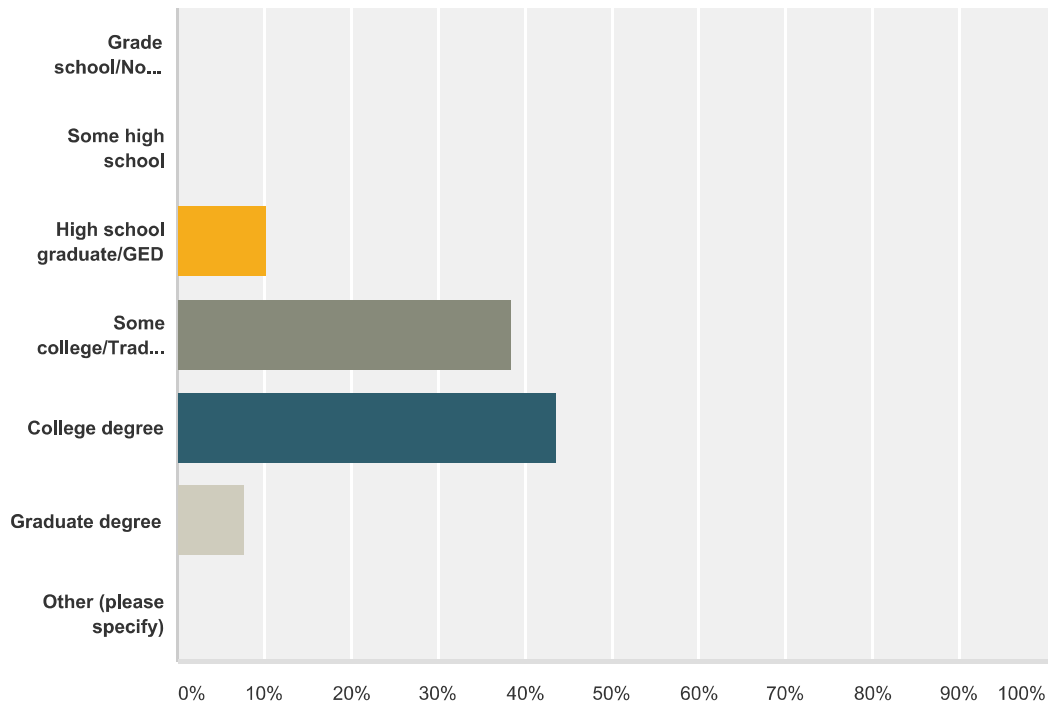
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Male	32.50% 13
Female	67.50% 27
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

### Q31 Please indicate your highest level of education.

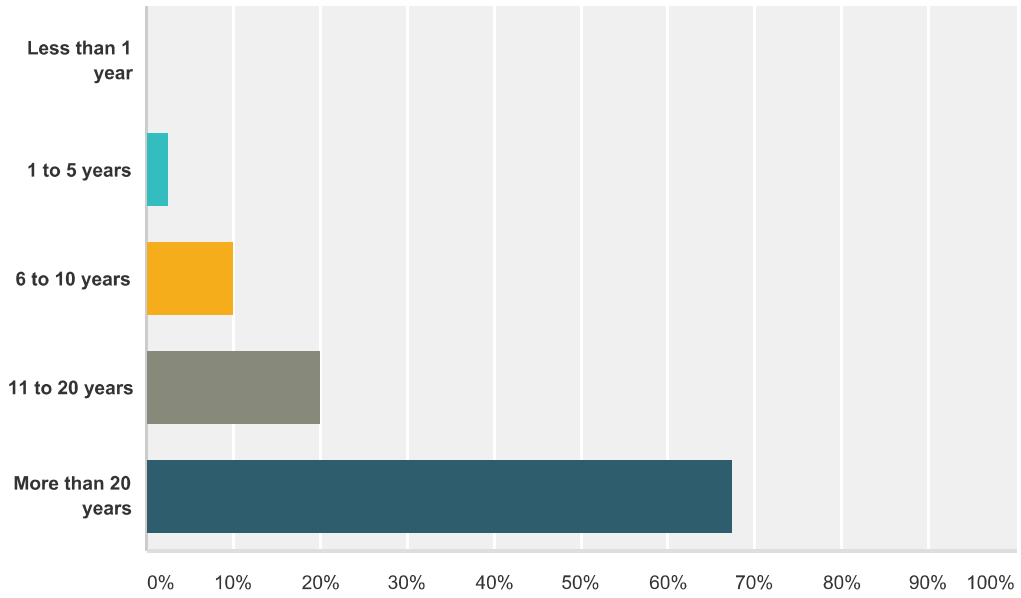
Answered: 39 Skipped: 18



Answer Choices	Responses	
Grade school/No schooling	0.00%	0
Some high school	0.00%	0
High school graduate/GED	10.26%	4
Some college/Trade school	38.46%	15
College degree	43.59%	17
Graduate degree	7.69%	3
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>

### Q32 How long have you lived in Wharton County?

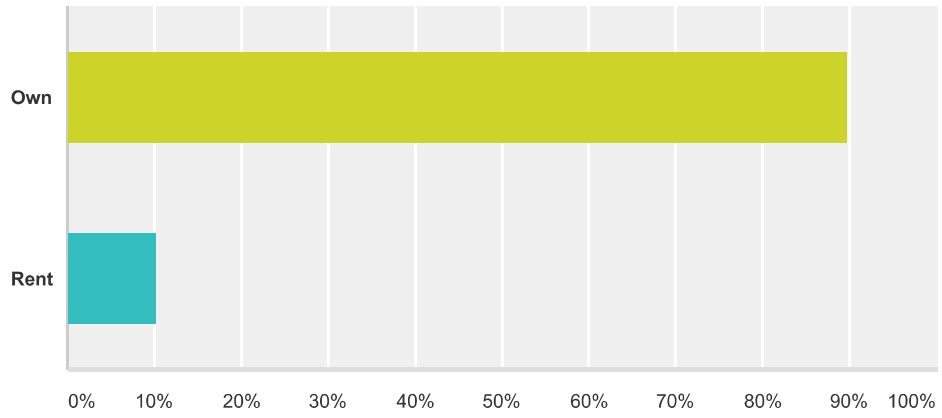
Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 1 year	0.00% 0
1 to 5 years	2.50% 1
6 to 10 years	10.00% 4
11 to 20 years	20.00% 8
More than 20 years	67.50% 27
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

### Q33 Do you own or rent your place of residence?

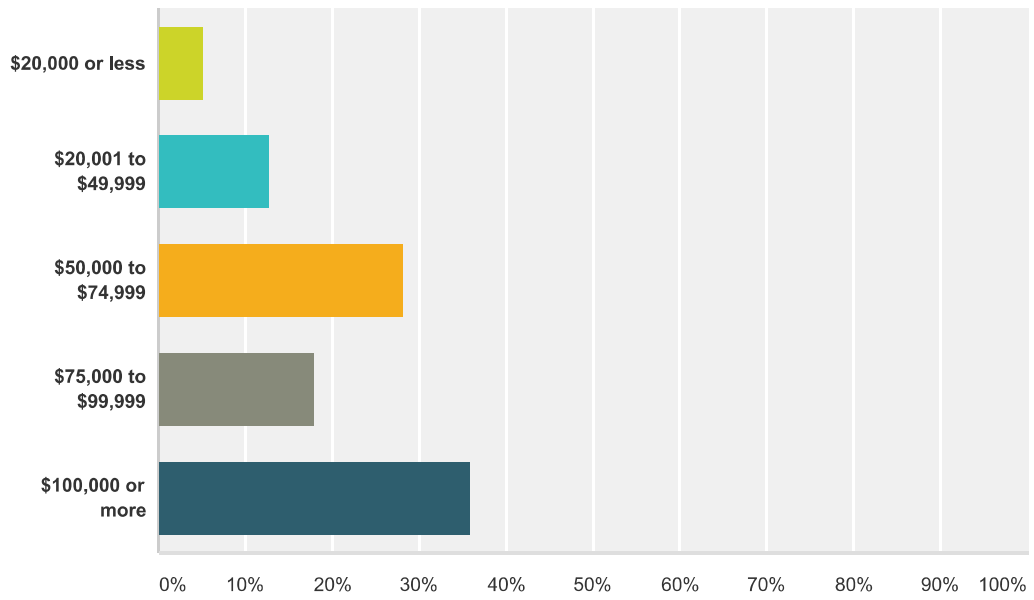
Answered: 39 Skipped: 18



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Own	89.74%	35
Rent	10.26%	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>

### Q34 How much is your gross household income?

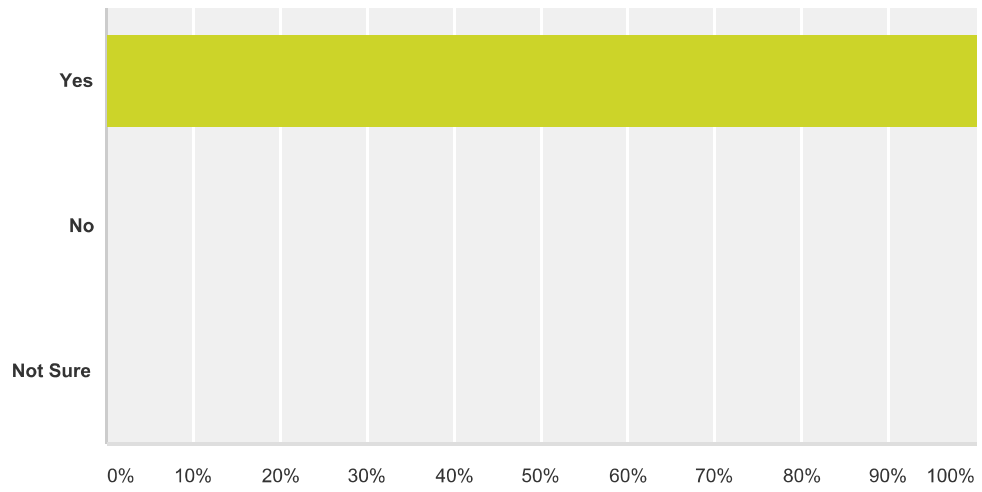
Answered: 39 Skipped: 18



Answer Choices	Responses	
\$20,000 or less	5.13%	2
\$20,001 to \$49,999	12.82%	5
\$50,000 to \$74,999	28.21%	11
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17.95%	7
\$100,000 or more	35.90%	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>

### Q35 Do you have regular access to the Internet?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 17



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	100.00% 40
No	0.00% 0
Not Sure	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

## Q36 Comments

Answered: 4 Skipped: 53



Wharton County  
**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

---

**APPENDIX D.**  
**PLAN ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS FROM PLANNING PARTNERS**

---

**APPENDIX D.  
PLAN ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS FROM PLANNING  
PARTNERS**

*To Be Provided With Final Release*

**Resolution #16-26  
Wharton County, Texas**

**WHEREAS**, Section 322 of the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165) requires local governments to develop a hazardous mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at Title 44, Chapter 1, part 201, requires the City to prepare and adopt a local mitigation plan every five years; and,

**WHEREAS**, a steering committee comprised of members of the County, and participating incorporated areas within, selected and deemed appropriate by the Commissioners Court in his authority to do so as granted by the people, as well as the local participating governments' leadership was convened in order to assess the risks of hazards facing the County and the Communities, and to make recommendations on actions to be taken to mitigate these hazards; and,

**WHEREAS**, a request for proposals was issued through the Texas Colorado Regional Floodplain Coalition to hire an experienced consulting firm to work with the County to update a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan for the County and the participating jurisdictions; and,

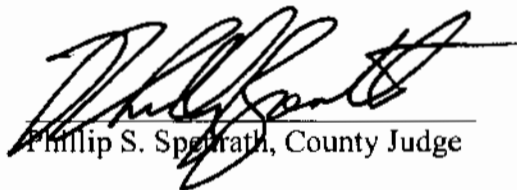
**WHEREAS**, the plan incorporates the comments, ideas and concerns of the community and of the public in general, which this plan is designed to protect, ascertained through a series of public meetings, publication of the draft plan, press releases, and other outreach activities; and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the **Wharton County Commissioners Court** that the 2016 Wharton County, Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan, dated October 2016 is hereby approved and adopted by the Commissions Court of Wharton County and resolves to execute the actions in the plan.

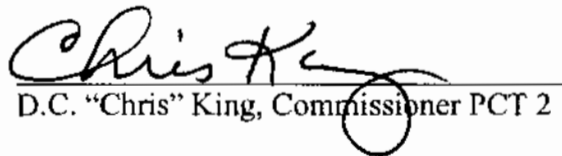
This Resolution shall take effect immediately without reconsideration.

A copy of the plan is attached to this resolution.

**ADOPTED** by the Wharton County Commissioners on this 24<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2016.


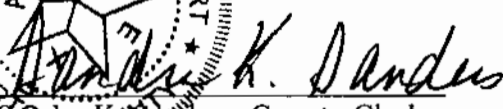
  
Phillip S. Spetrath, County Judge

  
Leroy E. Dettling, Commissioner PCT 1

  
D.C. "Chris" King, Commissioner PCT 2

  
Steven Goetsch, Commissioner PCT 3

  
Doug Mathews, Commissioner PCT 4

  
  
Sandra K. Sanders, County Clerk

**CITY OF WHARTON  
RESOLUTION NO. 2016 -70**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE WHARTON CITY COUNCIL APPROVING THE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION ACTION PLAN PREPARED BY THE TEXAS COLORADO RIVER FLOODPLAIN COALITION.**

**WHEREAS,** Section 322 of the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165) requires local governments to develop a hazardous mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects; and,

**WHEREAS,** The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at Title 44, Chapter 1, part 201, requires the City to prepare and adopt a local mitigation plan every five years; and,

**WHEREAS,** A steering committee comprised of members of the County, and the City of Wharton, selected and deemed appropriate by the Commissioners Court in his authority to do so as granted by the people, as well as the City's leadership was convened in order to assess the risks of hazards facing the County and the City, and to make recommendations on actions to be taken to mitigate these hazards; and,

**WHEREAS,** A request for proposals was issued through the Texas Colorado Regional Floodplain Coalition to hire an experienced consulting firm to work with the County to update a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan for the County and the City of Wharton; and,

**WHEREAS,** The plan incorporates the comments, ideas and concerns of the community and of the public in general, which this plan is designed to protect, ascertained through a series of public meetings, publication of the draft plan, press releases, and other outreach activities.

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WHARTON, TEXAS:**

**SECTION I.** The Wharton City Council hereby approves the 2016 Wharton County, Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan.

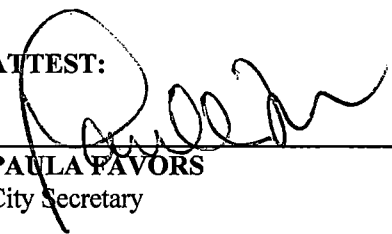
**SECTION II.** The Wharton City Council hereby authorizes the Mayor of the City of Wharton to execute all documents related to said grant.

**SECTION III.** That this resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage.

**PASSED, APPROVED, and ADOPTED** this 24<sup>th</sup> day of October 2016.

**CITY OF WHARTON, TEXAS**

By:   
**TIM BARKER**  
Mayor

**ATTEST:**  
  
**PAULA FAVORS**  
City Secretary



**RESOLUTION NO. R2016-18**

**WHEREAS**, Section 322 of the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165) requires local governments to develop a hazardous mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at Title 44, Chapter 1, part 201, requires the City to prepare and adopt a local mitigation plan every five years; and,

**WHEREAS**, a steering committee comprised of members of the County, and the City of El Campo, selected and deemed appropriate by the Commissioners Court in his authority to do so as granted by the people, as well as the City's leadership was convened in order to assess the risks of hazards facing the County and the City, and to make recommendations on actions to be taken to mitigate these hazards; and,

**WHEREAS**, a request for proposals was issued through the Texas Colorado Regional Floodplain Coalition to hire an experienced consulting firm to work with the County to update a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan for the County and the City of El Campo; and,


**WHEREAS**, the plan incorporates the comments, ideas and concerns of the community and of the public in general, which this plan is designed to protect, ascertained through a series of public meetings, publication of the draft plan, press releases, and other outreach activities; and


**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of El Campo that the 2016 Wharton County, Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan, dated October 2016 is hereby approved and adopted by the City Council of the City of El Campo and resolves to execute the actions in the plan.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately without reconsideration.

A copy of the plan is attached to this resolution.

**ADOPTED** by the City Council of the City of El Campo on this 24<sup>th</sup> day of **October 2016**.

ATTEST:  
  
Cindy Cerny, City Secretary



**CITY OF EL CAMPO, TEXAS**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**RANDY COLLINS, Mayor**



**RESOLUTION NO 2016-002**  
**ADOPTION OF WHARTON COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, Section 322 of the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165) requires local governments to develop a hazardous mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at Title 44, Chapter 1, part 201, requires the City to prepare and adopt a local mitigation plan every five years; and,

**WHEREAS**, a steering committee comprised of members of the County, and the City of East Bernard, selected and deemed appropriate by the Commissioners Court in his authority to do so as granted by the people, as well as the City's leadership was convened in order to assess the risks of hazards facing the County and the City, and to make recommendations on actions to be taken to mitigate these hazards; and,

**WHEREAS**, a request for proposals was issued through the Texas Colorado Regional Floodplain Coalition to hire an experienced consulting firm to work with the County to update a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan for the County and the City of East Bernard; and,

**WHEREAS**, the plan incorporates the comments, ideas and concerns of the community and of the public in general, which this plan is designed to protect, ascertained through a series of public meetings, publication of the draft plan, press releases, and other outreach activities; and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Alderman of the City of East Bernard that the 2016 Wharton County, Texas Hazard Mitigation Plan, dated October 2016 is hereby approved and adopted by the Board of Alderman of the City of East Bernard and resolves to execute the actions in the plan.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately without reconsideration.

A copy of the plan is attached to this resolution.

**ADOPTED** by the Board of Alderman of the City of East Bernard on this 17<sup>th</sup> day of October 2016.

**APPROVED:**

  
Marvin R. Holub, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

  
Audrey Scarce, City Secretary

Wharton County  
**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

---

**APPENDIX E.**  
**EXAMPLE PROGRESS REPORT**

---

# APPENDIX E. EXAMPLE PROGRESS REPORT

---

## Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Annual Progress Report

**Reporting Period:** 2016-2020

**Background:** Wharton County and the Cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton developed a hazard mitigation plan to reduce risk from all hazards by identifying resources, information, and strategies for risk reduction. The federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans as a condition for federal disaster grant assistance. To prepare the plan, the participating partners organized resources, assessed risks from natural hazards within the planning area, developed planning goals and objectives, reviewed mitigation alternatives, and developed an action plan to address probable impacts from natural hazards. By completing this process, these jurisdictions maintained compliance with the Disaster Mitigation Act, achieving eligibility for mitigation grant funding opportunities afforded under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants. The plan can be viewed on-line at:

<http://www.co.wharton.tx.us/>

**Summary Overview of the Plan's Progress:** The performance period for the Hazard Mitigation Plan became effective on \_\_\_\_\_, 2016, with the final approval of the plan by FEMA. The initial performance period for this plan will be 5 years, with an anticipated update to the plan to occur before \_\_\_\_\_, 2020. As of this reporting period, the performance period for this plan is considered to be \_\_\_\_% complete. The Hazard Mitigation Plan has targeted 51 hazard mitigation actions to be pursued during the 5-year performance period. As of the reporting period, the following overall progress can be reported:

- \_\_\_ out of \_\_\_ actions (\_\_\_%) reported ongoing action toward completion
- \_\_\_ out of \_\_\_ actions (\_\_\_%) were reported as being complete
- \_\_\_ out of \_\_\_ actions (\_\_\_%) reported no action taken

**Purpose:** The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the implementation of the action plan identified in the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. The objective is to ensure that there is a continuing and responsive planning process that will keep the Hazard Mitigation Plan dynamic and responsive to the needs and capabilities of the partner jurisdictions. This report discusses the following:

- Natural hazard events that have occurred within the last year
- Changes in risk exposure within the planning area (all of Wharton County)
- Mitigation success stories
- Review of the action plan
- Changes in capabilities that could impact plan implementation
- Recommendations for changes/enhancement
- Monitor the incorporation of the Mitigation Plan into planning mechanisms.

**The Hazard Mitigation Plan Steering Committee:** The Hazard Mitigation Plan Steering Committee, made up of planning partners and stakeholders within the planning area, reviewed and approved





- Is the timeline for implementation for the action still appropriate?

If the action was completed, does it need to be changed or removed from the action plan?

**TABLE 2.  
ACTION PLAN MATRIX**

Action No.	Title	Action Taken? (Yes or No)	Timeline	Priority	Status	Status (✓, O, X)
<b>WHARTON COUNTY</b>						
1	Install bridge and culvert drainage improvements throughout the County					
2	Update and adopt the Wharton County Flood Insurance Study and FIRM					
3	Adopt “Higher Standard” Riverine Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and Standards					
4	Create and Implement Drought and Expansive Soils Plan					
5	Establish Countywide Bench Mark Network					
6	Provide support to the TCRFC and San Bernard River in flood reduction projects					
7	Join FEMA’s CRS program					
8	Create a Wharton Disaster Response Team					
9	Implement a Wharton County Flood Warning System					
10	Become a NWS Storm Ready community					
11	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities					
12	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios					
13	Provide training for CFM and CEM					
14	Educate homeowners on hazards					
<b>CITY OF EAST BERNARD</b>						
1	Create water conservation education materials					
2	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios					
3	Organize outreach program for vulnerable populations					
4	Prepare and adopt a stormwater drainage plan and ordinance					
5	Update emergency response plan					
6	Educate homeowners on mitigating hazards around their home					

**TABLE 2.  
ACTION PLAN MATRIX**

Action No.	Title	Action Taken? (Yes or No)	Timeline	Priority	Status	Status (✓, O, X)
7	Improve drainage throughout city					
8	Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan					
9	Install emergency generators at critical facilities					
10	Identify and map areas that are at high risk of expansive soils					
<b>CITY OF EL CAMPO</b>						
1	Drought and Expansive Soils Contingency Plan					
2	Provide education on water conservation techniques					
3	Construct regional detention ponds					
4	Adopting free board ordinance					
5	Adopt IBC and IRC					
6	Install Blackboard Connect City-to-Resident Notification System					
7	GIS mapping					
8	Outreach to vulnerable populations and cooling centers					
9	Install storm drainage on Pecan Street					
10	Install Town and Country Drive and improve storm drainage					
11	Implement Master Drainage Plan (7 projects)					
12	Educate homeowners on hazards					
<b>CITY OF WHARTON</b>						
1	Clean and repair storm drains routinely					
2	Increase freeboard requirements for permitting structures in the floodplain					
3	Implement a comprehensive watershed ordinance for new development					
4	Acquire, reuse, and preserve open spaces adjacent to flood-prone areas					

**TABLE 2.  
ACTION PLAN MATRIX**

Action No.	Title	Action Taken? (Yes or No)	Timeline	Priority	Status	Status (✓, O, X)
5	Implement a zero discharge policy for stormwater in subdivision platting					
6	Purchase NOAA All Hazard Radios					
7	Educate homeowners on the hazards					
8	Minimize the impact of flooding by installing berms and levees when appropriate					
9	Develop a flood-use stream restoration/channelization projects to ensure adequate drainage/diversion of stormwater					
10	Establish a reserve fund for emergency and public mitigation measures					
11	Identify and assess the most at-risk critical facilities and evaluate possible mitigation techniques					
12	Acquisition and relocation, elevation and “demo-rebuild” of flood-prone structures					
13	Install emergency back-up generators at critical facilities					
14	Use impact fees to help fund public hazard mitigation projects related to land development					
<p>Completion status legend:                      ✓ = Project Completed                      O = Action ongoing toward completion                      X = No progress at this time</p>						

**Changes That May Impact Implementation of the Plan:** *(Insert brief overview of any significant changes in the planning area that would have a profound impact on the implementation of the plan. Specify any changes in technical, regulatory and financial capabilities identified during the plan's development)*

**Recommendations for Changes or Enhancements:** Based on the review of this report by the Hazard Mitigation Plan Steering Committee, the following recommendations will be noted for future updates or revisions to the plan:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Public review notice:** *The contents of this report are considered to be public knowledge and have been prepared for total public disclosure. Copies of the report have been provided to the governing boards of all planning partners and to local media outlets and the report is posted on the Wharton County Hazard Mitigation Plan website. Any questions or comments regarding the contents of this report should be directed to:*

*Insert Contact Info Here*

