

GENERAL INVESTIGATIONS

PROJECT NAME AND STATE: Lower Colorado River Basin, Texas
(Wharton/Onion) PED

AUTHORIZATION: The project was formulated in partial response to the River and Harbor Acts of 1937 and 1945, as well as other study resolutions. The project is pending construction authorization in WRDA.

<u>SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL DATA:</u>	<u>PED</u>
Estimated Federal Cost	\$ 1,780,000
Estimated Non-Federal Cost:	593,000
Total Estimated Project Cost	\$ 2,373,000

Allocation thru FY 2006	0
FY 2007 Budget	0
Tentative FY 2007 Work Plan Allocation	200,000
Budget Request for FY 2008	0
Balance to Complete After FY 2008	1,580,000
Amount that Could be Used in FY 2008	1,580,000

1/ Final amount is subject to change, and will not be known until the Joint Continuing Resolution is passed by both the House and Senate, and final allocations are provided.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION: The project would provide flood damage reduction, ecosystem restoration and recreation features to Onion Creek, located in the southern portion of the city of Austin and Travis County, and flood damage reduction for the city of Wharton. The Onion Creek component, with an estimated first cost of \$83.2 million (Oct 2006 prices), would consist of a buyout of approximately 490 structures, with the vacated area being redeveloped to produce ecosystem restoration and passive recreational outputs. The city of Wharton component, with an estimated first cost of \$27.6 million (Oct 2006 prices), would provide flood damage reduction to the city, and would consist of levees, a small channel modification and other associated drainage features. Monetary net benefits for both components are estimated at \$4.9 million annually, with a benefits-to-costs ratio of 1.9 to 1. In addition, the Onion Creek component would produce ecosystem restoration outputs estimated at 62.7 habit units annually.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR FY 2007: Funds requested as part of the Tentative FY 2007 Work Plan are being used to execute the required cost sharing agreement, and initiate the Preconstruction, Engineering and Design phase.

APPLICATION OF THE AMOUNT THAT COULD BE USED IN FY 2008: FY 2008 capability funds in the amount of \$1,580,000 could be used to complete the Preconstruction, Engineering and Design phase to include preparing the Design Documentation Report (\$600,000), conducting a detailed survey of topography and existing infrastructure within all project areas (\$300,000), and completing plans and specifications (\$680,000).

ISSUES AND OTHER INFORMATION: This project is considered to be one of the premier projects in the region. It has tremendous local support from the Lower Colorado River Authority, city of Austin, Travis County, and the city of Wharton. Feasibility studies are complete, and the project must proceed into the Preconstruction Engineering and Design phase. Section 104 credit was approved by the ASA(CW) for the city of Wharton on 26 January 2006, enabling the city to design and construct a segment of the Federal project during the late stages of the feasibility study and receive credit against its share of the project construction. Construction of this segment is currently underway. Section 104 credit was also approved on 14 September 2006 for the city of Austin, which would provide in-kind credit for acquisition and removal of homes that are a part of the Federal project. The credit is applicable for homes purchased between 14 September 2006 and the execution date of the Project Cooperation Agreement. A collaborative effort, using funding provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, is also being implemented by the city of Austin in the Yarrabee Bend/ Onion Creek Forest area. Voters in Travis County and the city of Austin have approved the sale of bonds for funding of this project. All local entities are eager for this project to move forward. A lack of capability funding for the project may reduce the remaining timeframe within which the agencies must utilize these bonds.

ADMINISTRATION POSITION: Consistent with Administration policy, but is not considered high budget priority as the benefit to cost ratio is not above 3.5 to 1.

CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST: Congressmen Paul TX-14; Doggett TX-25.