



NEWS RELEASE

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August 14, 2008

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112-Acres of Detention Ponds Help Answer Flooding Concerns for Neighborhoods

\$10.4 Million Investment at Keith-Wiess Park Adds Amenities While Subtracting From Neighborhood Flooding Concerns

On August 15, Mayor Bill White, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and the Harris County Flood Control District will unveil improvements to Keith-Wiess Park, 12300 Aldine-Westfield (KM 413M), that provide flood relief while creating wetland recreational opportunities for park visitors. The event is scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with the opening ceremony scheduled for 11:45 a.m.

"This project combines a wonderful new place for people to enjoy and protect the outdoors, and a way to help us significantly deal with flooding along Halls Bayou," said Mayor White. "Just last week during Tropical Storm Edouard we saw how it can make a difference. This is a real jewel in the heart of northwest Houston."

To create the detention ponds Harris County Flood Control had to first remove 1.7 million cubic yards of dirt enough dirt to fill 2/3rds of the Astrodome. The resulting 1,000-acre feet of floodwater storage will store storm water and slowly release it into Hall's Bayou after a flooding event occurs.

"This project is an excellent example of how collaboration and partnerships benefit communities in multiple ways," said Mike Talbott, director of the District. "For instance, we are focusing on the flood damage reduction part of the project, while our partners are contributing the land and recreational amenities to this deserving area."

In addition to the Harris County Flood Control District other partners have included Harris County Precinct 1 and Precinct 2 and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"Thanks to our partners, Keith-Wiess Park offers visitors opportunities to hike, bike, run or walk on a new 3 mile plus trail system; the fishing pier and wetlands environment is a great place for youth and seniors to work on their fishing skills; and the natural wilderness environment is great place for nature tours, picnicking and playing under the trees on a new playground," said Joe Turner, Director Houston Parks and Recreation Department.

The new development was designed to preserve the old forest habitat and most of the 140 acres of old-growth forest as possible. In addition, the new wetlands, permanent ponds, streams, meadows and trails have been sculpted and landscaped to fit in as natural parts of the surrounding forest. Approximately 2,600 native trees and 68,000 wetland plants are being planted along with hundreds of pounds of grass and wildflower seeds to create a wilderness park that will be used by both park visitors and wildlife.

Hike and bike trails and other park elements yet to come will be built around the water elements to facilitate passive use of the ponds in the park. Three soccer fields and a playground have been added to the park through a \$2 million grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and \$2 million in matching work-in-kind from the Harris County Flood Control District. In addition, the grant provides for a trail system that will connect Keith-Wiess Park to Mary Withers Park and Shady Lane Park, downstream.

Keith-Wiess Park was acquired by the city in 1979 through the benefaction of Mr. and Mrs. James Elkins. The park is named for Margaret Elkins parents' families. Flooding concerns for the area required improvements to Halls Bayou within the park's forested acreage. The creation of the detention ponds to hold and regulate the amount of water entering Halls Bayou at one time during a potential flooding event was developed with the cooperation of the Elkins family.

For more information on Keith-Wiess Park or the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (713) 865-4537 or visit www.houstonparks.org.