



May 5, 2021

DAVE MARTIN

Council Member
District E

Members of the Texas Legislature
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: HB 2525 – Lake Houston Dredging and Maintenance District

Dear Members of the Texas Legislature,

Lake Houston is the primary surface water storage facility of untreated water for Houston. The creation of the lake in 1954 did not include a plan for regular upkeep and maintenance. This oversight has allowed the buildup of sediment and debris to sit dormant within the banks of these tributaries and waterways for decades. The accumulated sediment and debris has greatly reduced Lake Houston's storage capacity, decreasing depths of channels, and blocking access to properties that were previously navigable by boat. House Bill 2525 by Rep. Dan Huberty addresses this issue by creating an entity to manage and implement the maintenance of the lake.

The San Jacinto River's west and east forks drain into Lake Houston. Sediment from the river has been accumulating in the lake since its construction, especially during extreme upstream rainfall events. In fact, since 1994, the storage capacity of the lake has been reduced by approximately 22,000 acre-feet, with approximately 384 acre-feet added each year. The sediment accumulation has also reduced the conveyance capacity of the river upstream of the lake.

Hurricane Harvey revealed the consequences of this sediment accumulation; thousands of homes and businesses bordering the lake and along the river experienced severe flooding for the first time. If we do not create an entity to manage this problem, it will only get worse.

In April 2018, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued a mission assignment to the Corps of Engineers: dredge the sediment deposited by the hurricane. Approximately 2.3 million cubic yards of sediment has already been removed from the West Fork of the San Jacinto River at a cost of over \$89 million dollars. Supplementing the federal recovery project, Governor Abbott granted the City \$50 million dollars, a portion of which was utilized to cover the local match cost of the federal project and to continue additional dredging downstream.

The 86th legislature passed SB 7, which provided an additional \$30 million dollars to Harris County to fund more dredging and to develop a comprehensive long-range dredging plan to address sediment accumulation. To date, nearly \$10 million dollars of the grant funds have been spent and the city is currently procuring consultant services for the long-range plan development.

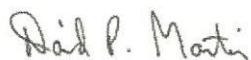
FEMA recently approved another recovery dredging project downstream from the 2018 project at the confluence of the Lake Houston and the West Fork of the San Jacinto River. The estimated cost to remove an additional 1.0 million cubic yards is \$40 million dollars. FEMA staff members posed numerous questions how the city will protect the federal investment of nearly \$130 million dollars.

Since 2018, the total combined dredging efforts have resulted in a total of 2,672,491 cubic yards of silt and sediment dredged from Lake Houston and its tributaries at a cost of \$114 million. It is imperative to implement regular, on-going maintenance and dredging of Lake Houston so that recent efforts and resources to restore storage capacity are not wasted.

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House Bill 2525 will create a Lake Houston Dredging & Maintenance District to implement the comprehensive long-range plan and serve as an essential safeguard necessary for protecting the integrity of the lake as a vital drinking water source. We urge you to support this important legislation to preserve the work already completed, protect the Lake Houston community and the regional economy, while ensuring resiliency and bolstering flood mitigation efforts for years to come.

Sincerely,



Dave Martin
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Houston
Council Member, District E



Martha Castex-Tatum
Vice Mayor Pro Tem, City of Houston
Council Member, District K



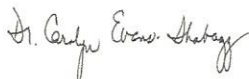
Amy Peck
Council Member, District A



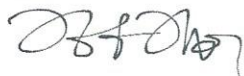
Tarsha Jackson
Council Member, District B



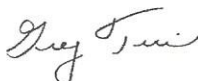
Abbie Kamin
Council Member, District C



Carolyn Evans-Shabazz
Council Member, District D



Tiffany Thomas
Council Member, District F



Greg Travis
Council Member, District G



Karla Cisneros
Council Member, District H




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Council Member, District I



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Mike Knox
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Letitia Plummer
Council Member, At-Large 4



Sally Alcorn
Council Member, At-Large 5