



Response to Joint Hearing
Hill Country Youth Event Center
3785 Highway 27, Kerrville, Texas
9:30 AM Thursday, July 31, 2025

Prepared Remarks

Greetings Chairman Perry and Chairman King, Senators and Representatives. My name is Bryan Wilson, and I'm the Burnet County Judge. Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today to share an incredible story about people who performed their duties admirably under nearly impossible circumstances, people who cared for others more than themselves.

This story began on July 4, 2025, the day after the tragic news broke in Kerr County. We were heartbroken for our neighbors, and prayers were offered for hope and strength. We continued to receive rain alerts, but after four years of persistent drought, we had no idea of the volume headed our way. I received my first alert on July 5 around 5 AM, when the emergency management coordinator warned me the rain had become dangerous. I started getting ready, and by 6 AM, the San Gabriel was beyond flood stage. I was trapped for the next several hours. That's when I received the first report about our missing Fire Chief, Michael Phillips. He was swept away in his vehicle while on a rescue call, attempting to save one of the 5 victims we lost in the flood that day. According to his friends and family, Chief Phillips was doing his job and what he loved.

In the next few hours, our sheriff, sheriff's deputies, dozens of firefighters, constables, Coast Guard personnel, and other first responders executed 63 rescues. They saved people from trees, from holes cut in house roofs, and even saved people from floating houses. It was truly amazing to witness a community so committed to saving itself and each other. There are many dramatic stories, and they will be told another day. All these individuals performed their jobs with distinction.

Initially, Burnet County had about a dozen missing people. Over the next two days, local firefighters, sheriff's deputies, and police, along with State DPS, Parks and Wildlife, and the Texas Military Department, recovered the bodies of lost victims. Special districts also sent officers and resources, including the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Capital Area Council of Governments, Texas Task Force 1, and Texas Task Force 2. We even had a few volunteers. Sheriff's investigators began seeking more information on how names were added to the missing list early on, and many were cleared. Every single person served with excellence.

Our local Disaster Recovery system, "Ark of Highland Lakes," formed after the devastating floods of 2018, sprang into action. They provided over 18,000 meals, along with food, temporary shelter, permanent housing, diapers, dry goods, gift cards, and anything else people

needed. 527 people asked for assistance, and 433 cases were opened for longer-term aid. 840 volunteers contributed over 5,500 hours, mucking out over 100 houses. Our community, and others from around the state, including several legislators, stood up and helped. Burnet County quickly opened a Multi-Agency Resource Center and Disaster Recovery Center where HEB, Red Cross, Bluebonnet Trails Community Service, Rio Grande Legal Aid, Central Texas Groundwater District, and several others set up aid booths. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality quickly provide debris site permits.

Finally, our legislators did their job. As we worked in the emergency operations center, Texas Division of Emergency Management personnel began to arrive. On that first day, I stood in the parking lot, amazed at the resources deployed: UTVs, skid steers, trucks of all sizes, boats, rafts, drones, dogs, helicopters, and a myriad of other equipment. This all had to be paid for, people had to be trained to use it, and it had to get to where it was needed. Perhaps our flood was, as they say, an "Act of God," but our recovery was undeniably an act of planning by our Governor, our Legislature, our departments, and our people.

Questions related to Burnet County –

Representative Terry Wilson asked about the impact of Tourism and what could be do to help clean the coves:

Burnet County tourism was fortunate to have avoided any significant negative effects from the July 4th flooding. Highland Haven and Granite Shoals report debris and unsafe and smelly water from algae blooms (nitrates washed into the water). Legal authority and funding could assist these communities remove dangerous debris and damaged boat docks from the lakes. Short-term rentals and tourist attractions located along the lakeside have had minimal damage reported.

Now that we have ensured the safety of our community and continue providing support for our full-time residents, we are pleased to report that the lakes are full again. Many beautiful aspects of our local tourism industry, which had suffered during years of drought, are now flourishing and the lakes are all full once again. We have united as a community during this time and are excited to continue showcasing our beloved home to all of our incoming visitors.

Representative Johnson asked about what tools or measures should be implemented to better notify and warn the general public in real time during future flooding disaster events?

Use real time or near real time measurement on all river basins - LCRA has a website called Hydromet (hydromet.lcra.org) that analyzes and distributes data in near real time regarding rainfall, river and lake levels, stream flow, flood operation reports, and river operation reports. This website allows the general public to receive invaluable information of how much rainfall has been received and the locations of current flooding. LCRA's Hydromet is a great resource within the Colorado River basin. All Texas river basins should have this type of data collected and available.

Ensure all gauges and data (regardless of source) feed into once system - There is a gap that exists between two other resources for flood gauges: USGS's National Water Dashboard (<https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/>) does not depict all of LCRA's gauges and not all USGS or LCRA gauges are depicted on the National Weather Service's National Water Dashboard (water.noaa.gov). Having all flood/rain related gauge data in a single location like the NWS National Water Dashboard would expedite data collection, analysis, and decision making by local officials to send additional warning messaging, if and when warranted.

Ensure warnings issue from gauge data - Warning messaging (Flash Flood Warnings and Flash Flood Emergencies) issued by the National Weather Service that passed through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System direct to cellular devices and echoed automatically by our regionally branded Warn Central Texas Everbridge platform was more than sufficient for the rapidly unfolding, and unprecedented, situation. Additionally, gauges on at least troublesome, high impact low water crossings would aid tremendously in building real time, easily depicted situational awareness for Emergency Management, public safety, and local officials.

Provide assistance for cleanup on Lakes after major flooding – Provide limited and specific post disaster authority and funding to river authorities (or where applicable counties) to clean up floating and submerged debris from lakes and coves.

Appendix D – iSTAT/pSTAT Information

iSTAT

Category	Dest/Major	Destroyed	Major	Minor	Affected	Minimal	Total
8/05/2025	153	41	112	124	101	0	378

pSTAT

Category	Total Cost Estimate	Necessary Cost Estimate	Emergency Repair Estimate	Category B Estimate
8/05/2025	\$5,971,286	\$5,662,574	\$350,837	ND

Appendix C – MARC/DRC Information

MARC Operations

Day	Visitors (Families/Individuals)	Volunteers (Personnel)
Friday, July 11, 2025	42	68
Saturday, July 12, 2025	43	62
Sunday, July 13, 2025	26	62
Monday, July 14, 2025	58	58
Tuesday, July 15, 2025	73	77
Wednesday, July 16, 2025	71	85
Thursday, July 17, 2025	101	69
Friday, July 18, 2025	114	61
Total:	527 (Avg. 65.8)	542 (Avg. 67.8)

Burnet County Disaster Recovery Center (DRC)

Appendix C – DRC Information

DRC Operations

Day	In Person Registrations	Total Registrations	Avg. Daily Registrations
Saturday, July 19, 2025	23	23	--
Sunday, July 20, 2025	13	36	18
Monday, July 21, 2025	39	75	26.3
Tuesday, July 22, 2025	53	128	33
Wednesday, July 23, 2025	49	177	36
Thursday, July 24, 2025	69	246	41
Friday, July 25, 2025	30	276	40
Saturday, July 26, 2025	63	339	42
Sunday, July 27, 2025	4	343	39
Monday, July 28, 2025	29	372	37
Tuesday, July 29, 2025	18	390	35
Wednesday, July 30, 2025	17	407	33
Thursday, July 31, 2025	19	426	32
Friday, August 1, 2025	16	442	31
Saturday, August 2, 2025	4	446	29
Sunday, August 3, 2025	1	447	27
Monday, August 4, 2025	16	463	27
Tuesday, August 5, 2025			
Wednesday, August 6, 2025			

Agency/Organizations at DRC

FEMA

SBA

State ONA

AgriLife Extension

Red Cross

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid

Texas Department of Insurance