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## TEXAS MEDIA

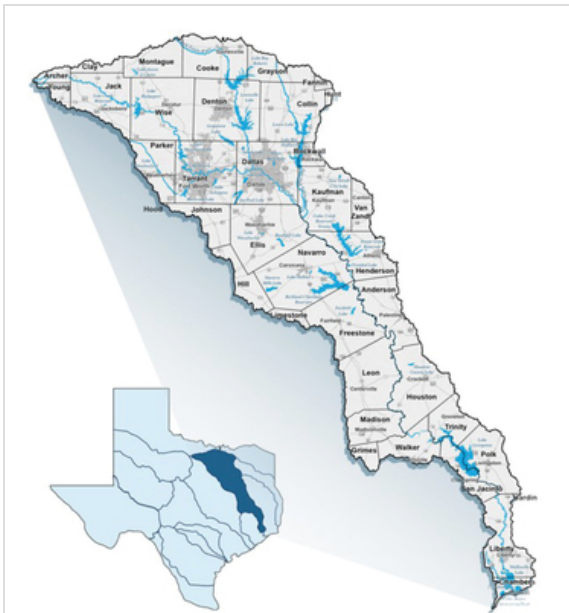
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## Texas refines its approach to flood planning

by Zach Freeman

February 06, 2026



The focus of the second regional flood plan is on increasing detail, adaptability and data quality. /Photo provided by Trinity RFGP (/rails/active\_storage/blobs/eyJfcmFpbHMiOnsi bWVzc2FnZSI6IkJBaHBBcnNIIiwZlXhwIjpu dWxsLCJwdXI6OiJibG9iX2lkIn19-- ff8d9d77c46a667f09640d16862750aacc3c792f/ 1%20flood.jpg)

Dallas County—When disaster strikes, planning can mean the difference between recovery and catastrophe.

Communities across Texas are working to strengthen regional connectivity and improve flood response as part of the state’s second-ever regional flood plan, an effort designed to coordinate resources, unify response strategies and better protect residents from future flooding.

The statewide framework divides Texas into 15 river basin regions, bringing together cities, counties, water authorities and emergency management agencies under a coordinated planning structure. The goal is to align flood preparedness efforts that were once fragmented and allow disaster response

plans to function more effectively together.

The concept for the first regional flood plan was established by legislation passed in 2019 and implemented by the Texas Water Development Board in 2024. Committees across the state are now convening to update the plan for 2028, with public input playing a key role in shaping the next iteration.

All of Dallas County falls within the Region 3 Trinity Regional Flood Planning Group, which is chaired by Glenn Clingenpeel, executive manager of the Trinity River Authority of Texas.

### **From drought to floods**

Clingenpeel, a 28-year veteran of the Trinity River Authority, said his experience in water quality management has translated naturally into flood response coordination. Ironically, he said the push for comprehensive flood planning began during a period of extreme dryness.

“It started with the drought,” Clingenpeel said. “We had a very severe drought 2010 through 2014. We went from La Nina in 2014 to El Nino in 2015 and flood after flood with these intense storm systems.

“I think the drought mentally prepared us. There were a number of very high-impact events that happened right after that drought that created the need and desire in the legislature to do something about it.”

### **Building a connected framework**

Early versions of the regional planning groups faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Clingenpeel said the process has since matured, drawing from the state’s long-established water planning model.

“The most fundamental [success] took this disparate patchwork of different flood responses, flood planning, and flood preparedness and gathered them into these regional quilts,” he said.

The first plan produced a comprehensive inventory of flood risk reduction efforts across the Trinity River basin, identifying existing gaps and opportunities for coordination. More than 700 flood mitigation projects were included, making them eligible for funding through the state's Flood Infrastructure Fund once incorporated into the statewide plan.

So far, Clingenpeel said an additional 45 projects have become eligible for funding during the early stages of the second planning cycle, with funds administered through the Texas Water Development Board.

### **Understanding flood impacts**

Clingenpeel said the program has transformed how communities across Texas understand and respond to flooding. Before the regional approach, agencies often focused only on their own jurisdictions, with limited awareness of how neighboring areas were affected.

“They were kind of in an island,” Clingenpeel said.

While urban flooding is often easier for the public to visualize, Clingenpeel said rural impacts can be just as severe and longer lasting.

“It's easy to conceptualize flooding in an urban area,” he said. “Water in a house is catastrophic. But when you have a flood that's inundating agricultural land and you have to move your livestock, you're losing crops. [Those impacts] can persist for the entire season.”

### **Refining the second plan**

As work continues on the second regional flood plan, Clingenpeel said the focus is on increasing detail, adaptability and data quality, rather than simply adding more information.

Among the key issues under discussion is whether to adopt or recommend standards tied to participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

“If we decide to adopt said standards, it essentially becomes a requirement,” said Sheena Providence, a certified floodplain manager. “It essentially limits which entities can submit certain FMXs.”

FMX categories include Flood Management Evaluations, Flood Mitigation Projects and Flood Management Solutions. While roughly 88 percent of entities in the region participate in the NFIP, some smaller jurisdictions are not eligible, raising concerns about potential exclusion.

“It seems like you might end up accidentally leaving someone out if it's a requirement,” said Rachel Ickert, chief engineering officer for the Tarrant Regional Water District. “As opposed to somebody coming in who's not [part of the NFIP], but they do need some help and some funding assistance.”

### **A matter of lives and loss**

The urgency of the work is underscored by recent tragedies. Major flooding over the summer resulted in the deaths of at least 135 people statewide.

“The tragic events of last summer are why we do this,” Clingenpeel said. “It's to save lives.”

The planning group represents 12 stakeholder interests defined by its enabling legislation, ranging from municipal governments to agricultural and environmental representatives. Local agencies, emergency responders and city officials play a crucial role in carrying out the plan's recommendations.

“There's an army of people in municipalities and counties in emergency response,” Clingenpeel said. “When they're doing their job, you don't know it. Success is quiet.”

### **Public input encouraged**

Public participation remains central to the planning process. Clingenpeel recalled community meetings following a historic 10-inch rainfall event in 2022, where residents directly affected by flooding were able to speak with experts and learn about proposed solutions.

“This is intended to be a bottoms-up approach,” he said. “Here are people who had just experienced personally flooding who were able to talk to the experts and learn about the plans that were being put into place. To provide them answers, solutions and some hope that this isn't going to happen, again, once they've got the solution in place, is very meaningful.”

Residents can learn more, submit public comments or attend the next meeting on Feb. 26 by visiting [trinityrfpg.org](http://trinityrfpg.org).

The final regional flood plan is due in January 2028, with a draft expected by February 2027. The Trinity Regional Flood Planning Group recently reached the halfway point in the process after submitting a technical memorandum to the Texas Water Development Board, completing its first five required tasks.

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