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LRGV-TPDES Storm Water Task Force Board of Directors

Jose Hinojosa, REM, Chair

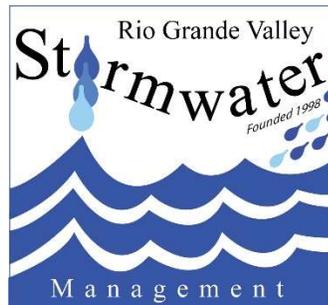
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Melissa Gonzales, Vice-Chair

Special Projects Director
City of Alamo

Roy Jimenez Secretary

Chief Building Official
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STORMWATER
CONFERENCE

Lower Rio Grande Valley 24th Annual Water Quality Management & Planning Conference Program

June 5-11, 2022
The Beach Resort
South Padre Island, Texas



RESEARCH, APPLIED TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION AND SERVICE, INC. (RATES)

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P.E., BCEE, D.WRE**
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Benjamin Vondrak
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Pete Kirkey
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Rene Estrada, Jr.
Scholarship Intern



Mitchell Scoggins
Director of Field Operations



LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force
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June 5, 2022

Greetings,

On behalf of the LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force, along with RATES/RGV and our partners, welcome to the 24th Annual *Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Quality Management & Planning Conference*. The Task Force is pleased to lead the planning and delivery of this annual event.

Our conference focuses on research topics germane to South Texas and the U.S.-Mexico border region, and stormwater topics that disseminate critical information to our region. It is our goal to develop team-based and research inspired programs to train and educate our future stormwater professionals. Working with our partners, we have brought together representatives from academia, private industries, environmental groups, research communities and state and federal agencies to be a part of a team exchanging ideas concerning environmental and engineering issues impacting coastal and semi-arid regions and the Rio Grande Valley, and transferring that information to the decision makers and stakeholders who influence the economic, social and physical infrastructure along the border region.

It is our hope that this conference serves as a platform for discussing sustainability issues that are both important and relevant to the Lower Rio Grande Valley and across the State. This year the conference includes topics on the Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Program, the Lower Laguna Madre & Port of Brownsville, low impact development, stormwater runoff flow reduction strategies, flood infrastructure programs, academia research topics, and many other interesting themes. **Our 2022 conference is pleased to announce that event topics will highlight planning, updates and working sessions associated with the TWDB Flood Infrastructure Fund Program.** We hope you consider participating in this event and hope you have an enjoyable and stimulating time at the conference.

Sincerely,

Jose Hinojosa, Chair

June 5-7, 2022 – Pre-Conference Activities		
<i>United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Steady Flow Water Surface Profile Computation Using HEC-RAS</i>		
7:30 – 8:00	Course I	Main Conference Room
		Registration and Check In
8:00 – 5:00		Main Conference Room
		HEC – RAS Course Schedule Start time: 0800 CT Break 1015 - 1030 CT Lunch 1200-1300 CT Break 1515 - 1530 End time: 1700 CT Instructor Brian M. Hall, P.E., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
		Day 1 River Hydraulics Modeling with HEC-RAS Course Introduction Water Surface Profile Calculation Geometric Data Requirements for Water Surface Profile Calculations Cross Section Layout Review Workshop Steady Flow Data Requirements Steps in Developing a Hydraulic Model with HEC-RAS Calculation of Water Surface Profiles Review Workshop
		Day 2 Viewing Results, HEC-RAS Bridge and Culvert Analysis Viewing Results Hydraulics of Bridge Waterways Selecting a Bridge Modeling Approach Application of HEC-RAS to Bridge Hydraulics Bridge Computations Review Workshop Overview of Culvert Hydraulics
		Day 3 HEC-RAS Culverts, Floodway Analysis, and Trouble Shooting Application of HEC-RAS to Culvert Hydraulics Culvert Analysis Review Workshop Trouble Shooting with HEC-RAS Output Analysis Review Workshop Floodplain and Floodway Determination Floodway Determination Review Workshop

Conference begins.	
Wednesday, June 8, 2022	
<i>Plenary – Welcome, Conference Themes, Technical Sessions</i>	
7:00 – 8:30	Hibiscus Room Registration, Check In, Breakfast
	VIRTUAL
Plenary Group Session 0	Stormwater 0 – Plenary, Welcome, and Keynote Chair: Andrew N.S. Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, D.WRE Research Applied Technology, Education & Service, Inc. Vice-Chair: Jose Hinojosa, REM Santa Cruz Irrigation District #15 Chairperson Lower Rio Grande Valley TPDES Storm Water Task Force
8:00 – 8:10	<i>“Welcome”</i> Andrew N.S. Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, D.WRE CEO & President Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. (RATES) Potsdam, NY/Edinburg, TX
8:10 – 8:20	<i>“The LRGV Stormwater TPDES Task Force – History and Beyond”</i> José Hinojosa, REM General Manager Santa Cruz Irrigation District #15 & Chairperson LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force
8:20 – 8:40	<i>“Welcome”</i> <i>and</i> <i>“Resacas: City of Brownsville Ecosystem Restoration Project”</i> Reuben Trevino, CCP, CTA Project Manager U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston, TX
8:40 – 9:10	<i>“The River and Estuary Observatory Network and Rio Grande Flood Initiative”</i> Andrew N.S. Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, D.WRE CEO & President Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. (RATES) Potsdam, NY/Edinburg, TX
Plenary Guest Speaker 9:10 – 9:25	<i>“South Texas College - Update”</i> Ali Esmaili, Ph.D. Dean of the Division of Math, Science, & Bachelor Programs South Texas College McAllen, TX
Plenary Guest Speaker 9:25-9:30	<i>“Welcome”</i> Daniel Guzman Trustee South Texas College
Plenary Keynote Speaker 9:30-10:00	<i>“Welcome”</i> Ricardo Solis, Ph.D. President South Texas College

Wednesday, June 8, 2022	
<i>Plenary – Welcome, Conference Themes, Technical Sessions</i>	
Break 10:00 – 10:15	Hibiscus Room Networking, Coffee Break, Exhibitors
	Hibiscus Room
Group Session I	Stormwater 1 – Stormwater Management Chair: Ernesto Solis, Stormwater Manager, City of Alamo Vice Chair: David De La Fuente, Asst. Stormwater Manager, City of Edinburg
10:15 – 10:45	<i>“Stormwater Reclamation Project – Conservation and Water Reuse”</i> The Honorable David Fuentes Commissioner Hidalgo County Precinct 1 Edinburg, TX
10:45 – 11:15	<i>“Texas Integrated Flooding Framework (TIFF)”</i> Dr. Mohammad “Shahidul” Islam Civil Engineer (Hydraulics) The U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers Galveston, TX
11:15 – 11:45	<i>“Watershed Assessment for the Lower Rio Grande Valley”</i> Lisa Mairs Senior Project Manager The U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers Galveston, TX
Lunch 12:00 – 1:30	Hibiscus Room Chair: The Honorable David Garza, Cameron County Commissioner Vice-Chair: Robert Valenzuela, Stormwater Manager, City of Edinburg
Keynote Speaker Virtual 12:15 – 1:00	Maria Elena Giner, Ph.D., P.E. Commissioner U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission
	Bastrop Room (3rd Floor)
Roundtable Discussion 1:15 – 2:15	Roundtable Discussion Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. South Texas College Sensor Technology Engineering Program (Attendees by invitation only)

Group Session II 1:30 – 2:00	Hibiscus Room
	Stormwater II – General Topics Chair: Megan Meidel, Stormwater Manager, City of Primera Vice Chair: Melisa Gonzales, Special Projects PM, City of Alamo
	<i>“Empowering Decision Makers in Texas with Information They Want”</i> Shonda Mace Project Manager Studies, Research, & Development Architectural Historian Regulatory Oversight Community Development & Revitalization Texas Government Land Office Austin, TX
	<i>“Cameron County Stormwater Projects – an Overview”</i> Augusto Sanchez Gonzales Director of Estuary, Environmental and Special Projects Cameron County
2:00 – 2:30	<i>“Development of 2D Base Level Engineering for Texas Watersheds”</i> Jacquelyn Campbell Cooperating Technical Partners (CTP) Coordinator Flood Science and Community Assistance Group Texas Water Development Board Austin, TX
2:30 – 3:00	
Break 3:00 – 3:15	Hibiscus Room Networking Coffee Break, Exhibitors
Group Session III 3:15 – 3:45	Hibiscus Room
	Stormwater III – General and Funding Topics Chair: Cleo Longoria, Stormwater Manager, City of San Benito Vice Chair: Roy Jimenez, Stormwater Manager, City of Donna
	<i>“Department of the Army Regulatory Program Overview”</i> Kristie Wood Corpus Christi Regulatory Field Office Supervisor U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston, TX
	<i>“Putting Clean Coast Texas To Work For Coastal Communities”</i> Jason Pinchback Manager, Coastal Resources General Land Office Austin, TX
3:45 – 4:15	
4:15 – 5:00	<i>“Evaluation, of Field-Scale Stormwater Bioretention cells Hydrology and Nutrient Removal in the Arroyo Colorado Watershed, Texas”</i> Juan C. Roman, Pamela Mugisha, and Tushar Sinha Student Texas A&M University – Kingsville

6:00 -7:00 pm	Bastrop Room (3rd Floor) Roundtable Discussion Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. City of Laredo Sensor Technology and REON (Attendees by invitation only)
Dinner 7:00 – 8:00	Hibiscus Room Chair: The Honorable David Garza, Cameron County Commissioner Vice Chair: The Honorable Eduardo Gonzales, Willacy County Commissioner
Keynote Speaker 7:30 – 8:00	“Presentation” Major O’Sullivan The U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers <i>Galveston, TX</i>
After Dinner Event 9:00 pm – 11:00 pm	Inquire about location with Task Force Members Hosted by Guzman and Munoz Engineering and Surveying, Inc.  GUZMAN & MUNOZ

Thursday, June 9, 2022	
Technical Sessions	
7:00 – 8:00	Hibiscus Room Breakfast
Group Session IV	Hibiscus Room
	Stormwater III – Non-Point Source Pollution Chair: Maribel Guerrero, Assistant Engineering and Public Works Director, City of Brownsville Vice Chair: Bernard Rodriguez, Planning Coordinator, City of San Benito
8:00 – 8:30	<i>“Show me the Money: Grant Funding for Nonpoint Source Projects”</i> Heather Robinson and Kristin DeBone Project Managers Non-Point Source Program Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Austin, TX
8:30 – 9:00	<i>“TWDB Freshwater Flows Project – Lower Laguna Madre Update”</i> Christopher Fuller, Ph.D. Chief Operations Officer Research, Applied, Technology, Education and Service, Inc. Edinburg, TX
9:00 – 10:00	Roundtable meeting Agenda download at rgvstormwater.org Lower Laguna Madre & Brownsville Ship Channel Partnership Steering Committee Chair: The Honorable David Garza, Cameron County Commissioner Vice Chair: Andrew Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., Professor, UTRGV Raymondville Drain Watershed Partnership Steering Committee Chair: The Honorable Eduardo Gonzalez, Willacy County Commissioner Vice Chair: Joe Hinojosa, General Manager, Santa Cruz Irrigation District #15 Hidalgo and Willacy County Watershed Partnership Steering Committee Chair: The Honorable David Fuentes, Hidalgo County Commissioner Vice Chair: The Honorable Eduardo Gonzalez, Willacy County Commissioner USIBWC Watershed Partnership Steering Committee Chair Andrew Ernest, P.E., Ph.D., UTRGV Vice Chair Juan Uribe, Field Operations, USIBWC
Break 10:00 – 10:15	Hibiscus Room
	Networking, Coffee Break, Exhibitors
Group Session V	Hibiscus Room
	Stormwater V– Stormwater Topics Chair: Velinda Reyes, Office of Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County Vice Chair: Rene Estrada, Commissioner, City of Combes

10:15 – 10:45	<i>“Real Time Hydrologic Stations – TWDB FIF Funded Project And Discussion on RTHS Proposed Locations”</i> William Kirkey, Ph.D. Chief Research Officer Research, Applied, Technology, Education and Services, Inc. Edinburg, TX
10:45 – 11:30	<i>“Overview of Willacy County Stormwater Projects”</i> Eduardo Gonzales, Willacy County Commissioner Oralia Cardenas, Senior Client Services Manager Shirley Rempe, CD Project Manager Grant Works Austin, TX
11:30 – 12:00	<i>“Environmental Justice & Hazard Mitigation in Texas”</i> Ashley D. Ross, Ph.D. Assistant Professor Department of Marine and Coastal Environmental Science Texas A&M University-Galveston
Lunch 12:00 – 1:30	Hibiscus Room
	Chair: The Honorable David Garza, Cameron County Commissioner Vice Chair: The Honorable Eduardo Gonzales, Willacy County Commissioner
Keynote Speaker Virtual 12:15 – 1:00	Charles McGuire Water Division Director Environmental Protection Agency
	Hibiscus Room
Group Session VI	Stormwater VI – General Topics Chair: Celina Gonzales, City Manager, City of Primera Vice Chair: Israel Garza, Public Works Director, City of San Juan
	<i>“Water Quality and Stormwater Management”</i> Rex Costley Deputy District Engineer – Pharr District Texas Department of Transportation Pharr, TX <i>City of Laredo Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination (IDDE) Program For TPDES Compliance</i> Ivan Santoyo, E.I.T., CFM Engineering Associate I City of Laredo Laredo, TX
1:30 – 2:00	
2:00 – 2:30	
2:30 – 3:00	<i>“Recent Developments with Composite Manhole Covers Help Solve A Leading Cause of Water Pollution”</i> W. Chad Nunnery Principal Composite Access Products (CAP) McAllen, TX



Break 3:00 – 3:15	Hibiscus Room Networking, Coffee Break, and Exhibits
Group Session VII 3:15 – 3:45 3:45 – 4:15 4:15 – 5:00	Hibiscus Room Stormwater VII – Stormwater Topics Chair: Jose Aceves, Stormwater Manager, City of Harlingen Vice Chair: Raul Garcia, Stormwater Specialist, City of Los Fresnos
	“TWDB Region 15 Lower Rio Grande Regional Flood Plan (RFP)” Kristina Leal, P.E. HALFF Associates McAllen, TX
	“An Update on Willacy County Drainage Projects – An Overview” Richard Riggins, P.E. Project Manager Hanson Professional Services Inc. Brownsville, TX
	“An Update on Hidalgo County Drainage Projects – An Overview” The Honorable David Fuentes and Ellie Torres County Commissioners Pct. 1 and Pct. 4 Hidalgo, County
After Hour Event 8:00 – 11:00	Inquire about location with Task Force Members Hosted by Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. 

Friday, June 10, 2022 <i>Texas Water Development Board FIF Program and Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Planning</i>	
8:30 – 9:15 9:15 - 10:00	Hibiscus Room Stormwater VIII – TWDB Flood Infrastructure Fund Program Chair: Augusto Sanchez-Gonzales MS, CFM, Natural Resources Department, Cameron County Vice Chair: Rick Carrera, LRGVDC “RATES and LRGVDC TWDB FIF Regional CAT 1 Project” Andrew N.S. Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, D.WRE CEO & President Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. (RATES) Potsdam, NY/Edinburg, TX “Willacy County TWDB FIF CAT 1 Project” Jose Munoz, P.E. Principal Guzman & Munoz Engineering and Surveying, Inc. Mercedes, TX
	Break 10:00 – 10:15
	Hibiscus Room Networking Coffee Break and Exhibits
10:15 – 11:00 11:00 – 11:45	“City of Brownsville FIF CAT 1 Project” Anne Whitko, MS, MBA Senior Water Resources Project Manager HALFF Associates, Inc. Brownsville, TX “City of Harlingen TWDB FIF CAT 1 Project” Deren Li, P.E., Ph.D. President Javier Zamora, P.E. Project Engineer Godfrey Garza Civil Systems Engineering, Inc. Sugarland, TX
11:45 – 12:15 Keynote Speaker	Kathleen Jackson, P.E. Board Member Texas Water Development Board
Lunch 12:00 – 1:00 pm	Hibiscus Room Lunch

1:15 – 2:30	Bastrop Room (3rd Floor)
	Roundtable Discussion
	Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc.
	LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force
	Kathleen Jackson, TWDB
	(Attendees by invitation only)
Lower Laguna Madre Partnership	Stormwater XI – Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Partnership Chair: Augusto Sanchez-Gonzales MS, CFM, Estuary Director, Cameron County Vice Chair: Andy Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., Board Member RATES, Inc., Edinburg, TX
	Hibiscus Room
2:30 – 3:00	<i>“Update on Deepwater Horizon NRDA Activities in Texas”</i> Doug Jacobson EPA Representative Deepwater Horizon NRDA Trustee Implementation Group Texas Team Leader Environmental Protection Agency Dallas, TX
3:00 – 3:30	<i>“National Estuary Program Update”</i> Louise Bentsen Chief of Staff Offices of Vicente Gonzalez U.S. Congressman #15
Saturday, June 11, 2022 – 25th Annual WQ Management and Planning Conference	
Lunch Workshop – Noon -1:30 pm	Planning next year’s conference.
730 am – 12 noon	Fishing trip, (By invitation only)

June 5-6, 2022 – Pre-Conference Activities <i>CISEC, Inc., Certified Inspector Soil Erosion Control – Construction Inspector Certification Course</i>		
7:30 – 8:00		Hibiscus Room
		Registration and Check In
8:00 – 5:00		Hibiscus Room
Day 1	Course II	Instructor: Day 1
Start 8:00 am		Module 1: EPA Information
Break 10:00 – 10:15 am		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Water Act • NPDES 2017 General Permit • Evaluating CGP Inspector Requirements • Understanding a SWPPP and the S&EC Drawings
Lunch 12:00 – 1:00 pm		Module 2: Inspector Background Material
Break 3:00-3:15 pm		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions • Erosion • Sediment • Sedimentation • Polymers and Sedimentation • A Primer on Hydrology • Topographic maps • Hydrographs and sedigraphs • Critical Inspector Requirements • SWPPPs and BMPs • Communication • Recognizing limitations • CISEC Code of Ethics
Day 2		Module 3: Best Management Practices Understanding the Phases of Construction Inspecting
Start 8:00 am		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers • Check structures • Drains and inlets • Sediment Containment Systems • Polymers • Wind/Dust control methods • Erosion control practices • Hazardous waste material sites • Writing and Assessing Inspection Reports
Break 10:00 – 10:15 am		Day 2
Lunch 12:00 – 1:00 pm		Module 4: Conducting Inspections
Exam 1:00 pm		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection Requirements • Role of Designers, Inspectors, and Contractors • Inspector Responsibilities During Construction Activities • Inspection Reports • Reporting on BMP Maintenance • Documentation and Communication • Working with Contractors and Clients • Inspecting a Construction Site • During grading • During construction

Members of the LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force
Founded in 1998



City of Alamo
 Taskforce Representatives
 Melissa Gonzales
 Ernesto Solis
www.alamotexas.org



City of Edcouch
 Taskforce Representatives
 Victor Hugo De La Cruz
 Manuel Hernandez



City of Los Fresnos
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Willacy County
 Taskforce Representatives
 Honorable Eduardo Gonzalez
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Cameron County

Cameron County
 Taskforce Representatives
 Benjamin Worsham, P.E.
 Augusto Sanchez Gonzalez
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Hidalgo County Pct. 1
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Hollis Rutledge & Associates, Inc. (HRA) was founded in February 1993 when Hollis Rutledge envisioned a need for his expertise related to local, state and Federal government affairs. A native of Mission, Texas, Hollis was called upon twice to serve as a Presidential Appointee in the Southwestern Region of the United States. President Ronald Reagan appointed Hollis as a Special Assistant over five states with the Housing and Urban Development Administration, and he was later appointed by President George Bush as a Regional Administrator for the General Services Administration serving over eleven states. Prior to his Federal Government appointments, Mr. Rutledge served as a local circuit City Manager as well as provided services in the area through his own architectural firm. Over the years, HRA has served local cities, school districts, county governments, EDC's and special purpose districts with management and marketing services. Today HRA puts to practice its almost 25-year experience in helping local governments and entities with grant management and administration, strategic planning and budgeting, governmental issue management, and program development along with many more services. Together the HRA team has over 150 years of experience in all areas of services the company provides. The company continues to explore positive solutions through strategic insights with the growing challenges of the 21st Century. With its 25-year anniversary quickly approaching, the goal of HRA continues to be to empower communities and organizations to realize their potential by capitalizing on their history, culture and diversity.

GrantWorks

Founded in 1979, GrantWorks is one of the foremost grant management and administration services providers for hundreds of localities through thousands of grant contracts. GrantWorks is a full-service company with over twenty fully staffed divisions and 400+ employees experienced in covering all aspects of federal and state grant management. We handle every aspect of implementation for our clients including project development, environmental review, compliance with state and federal regulations, and implementation of funded construction projects. Our goal is to free you from burdensome paperwork while providing you with the timely and accurate decision-making information you need. <https://www.grantworks.net/>

Silver



Civil Systems Engineering Inc. (CSE) is a small engineering firm specializing in water resources and transportation engineering, and GIS services. The philosophy of our engineering practices is Systems Engineering. The traditional piece-meal project approach cannot meet the needs of complex engineering problems facing our communities today. A sound engineering solution that can be implemented must be derived from a systematic approach with considering all aspects pertaining to a project, tangible and intangible. Applying our established systems engineering approach to our daily engineering practices, CSE has saved millions of dollars for our clients. Our experienced professionals, depth of capabilities, resources, and advanced technology enable us to provide innovative, cost-effective, and constructible solutions to our clients.

The success of our firm relies on our experienced and competent engineering members. Our principal engineers include: Deren Li, Ph.D., P.E., D.WRE, CFM (President); Kurt E. Killian, P.E., CFM (Vice President); Homero L. Gutierrez, P.E. (Senior Project Manager); Javier Zamora, P.E., CFM (Senior Project Manager); Adebola Fashokun, P.E., CFM (Senior Project Manager); James Hathorn, P.E., CFM (Project Manager); and Darin Sanders, P.E., CFM (Project Manager). Our engineering staff possess an extensive range of engineering experience, technical skills, and depth of education. The CSE engineering staff has his/her personal commitment to our clients' projects every day. Our responsiveness to unique client needs and interests is what differentiates our work and the valued results we deliver. CSE is an equal opportunity employer and is certified as Historically Underutilized Business (HUB No. 1331030764300) by State of Texas, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE No. 15-02-9213) by City of Houston, and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE No. 15-09-9213) by City of Houston. CSE fully complies with all Affirmative Action Program policies. <https://www.cseengineers.com/index.html>



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Guzman & Muñoz Engineering and Surveying, Inc. (GMES) has been providing engineering, surveying & consulting services in the Rio Grande Valley region, with widespread projects in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Willacy, and Zavala County areas, since 1973. The firm is a well-established corporation, with its corporate office located in Mercedes the Queen City of the Rio Grande Valley in the state of Texas.

Our firm specializes in a broad range of engineering, surveying, and construction related projects including public works improvement projects in the areas of street improvements, drainage improvements, water and wastewater plants, water distribution and wastewater collection systems, and various surveying projects having expanded our services to include design/build construction.

Along with our Principal-In-Charge and President of the Corporation Mr. José L. Muñoz, P.E., S.I.T., GMES brings the talent and depth of approximately 23 employees that include engineers, surveyors, environmentalist, planners, technicians, management, and related support personnel. Respectively, these professionals bring their experience and expertise in construction management and industry, knowledge of funding criteria and project inspection, to add to the analytical and project scheduling that is vital to the timely, cost-effective, successful execution and completion of any project. Being mindful of the economical limitations that are in the RGV plays a vital role in providing engineering support and advice on any of projects or programs GMES undertakes.



Since our inception in 2009, B2Z Engineering, LLC has completed projects throughout the State of Texas. From planning through final design, program and project management, and finally construction inspection and material testing, we offer a true “Turn Key” delivery method to our clients.

As a HUB, WBE and DBE certified firm, we can assist our clients in meeting their project specific goals, while at the same time providing them with exceptional service. Through the years, B2Z has played a vital role in the design and construction of numerous private and public projects.

Our team takes pride in prioritizing attention to technical excellence, quality control and responsiveness no matter the size of the project. Let B2Z provide you with the guidance needed to find the most practical and cost-effective solution for all of your civil engineering needs.

Bronze



City of Los Fresnos

The area which is now home to present day Los Fresnos is not unknown to history. In fact, this area along the Rio Grande River and the Gulf of Mexico played a significant role in both the US-Mexican War and the American Civil War. The plain of Palo Alto (tall timber) just five miles south of town was the site of the opening battle of the war between the U.S. and Mexico in 1846. In 1907 Lon C. Hill, Jr. bought 14,232 acres and parceled them into lots. This eventually evolved into the layout of the original town site of "modern" Los Fresnos which was finally developed in 1915.

www.cityoflosfresnos.com



Freese and Nichols is a privately owned engineering, planning and consulting firm serving clients across the Southwest and Southeast United States. Founded in 1894, we offer stability as a long-term trusted advisor and use our national expertise to meet contemporary challenges. As the first engineering/architecture firm to earn the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, we consistently deliver award-winning solutions backed by superior client-focused support. <https://www.freese.com/>



South Texas Infrastructure Group, L.L.C. (STIG) is a locally owned engineering firm providing a variety of civil engineering services for both the public and private industry since March 11, 2013. Our firm focuses on delivering quality, cost-effective, and innovative engineering solutions in a timely manner. STIG offers a broad range of experience in consulting services which include transportation engineering, public works, land development, utility design/coordination, planning, project management and construction phase services. We have experience in a capacity of multi-disciplined engineering services, which makes us able to exceed project/client demands and expectations. STIG offers experience, vision, dependability, and creative design approaches.



Since 1994, S&B Infrastructure, Ltd. has built a long list of outstanding achievements. For 27 years, has provided planning, multi-discipline engineering design, construction, and construction phase services in the following market sectors: Transportation, Federal, Public Works, and Industrial and International, for our clients throughout Texas.



HCE is a professional civil engineering firm dedicated to serving clients throughout the Rio Grande Valley. We're proud to play a role in supporting the RGV's growth and expansion while carefully preserving natural resources for future generations. Through vision, process and collaboration, we bring an innovative approach to engineering design for our clients. Our reputation and work ethic can be judged by the personal relationships we cultivate with each client.

Millennium Engineers Group, Inc. (MEG) was founded in 2001 on the fundamental principles of quality and innovation. Today we provide professional services to architectural, engineering, commercial and industrial clients, contractors, federal, state, and local government entities.

MEG Engineers Group's services are designed to meet an extensive scope of technical requirements based on our projects specifications. Over the years MEG Engineers Group, Inc. has experienced continual, steady growth due largely to our talented team of professional engineers and associates, as well as many other credentialed professionals and administrative support.

From inception, MEG Engineers has been founded upon the tenets of attentive and responsive customer service, strong project management, and solid internal financial controls. The quality of our service, our focus on understanding and responding to our clients needs, and our application of good business management practices have resulted in most new projects originating from our existing customer base.



In 2003, a small transportation company started operations with just five trucks and a handful of employees trying to get a foothold in the market. Codysur Trucks goal was to give competitive pricing with high quality service for international freight delivery. Codysur Logistics came to be in 2007, in order to better serve the needs of our clients by making available additional carriers with more and varied transportation equipment. As we continued to focus on niche markets, Codysur Global Freight opened for business to give greater emphasis to air and rail cargo. In addition to more equipment, our ability to provide air, sea and rail services established the company as a player in all types of freight delivery services while increasing our network of partners. Brokerage services continues to be a fast growing sector of our business and we are increasing our global presence every day. The increased need to expand our footprint in Mexico and to streamline the freight transportation process across borders, led to the creation of C Transportation Services. It focuses on the transition of cargo from Mexico to the U.S. Along with growth in all business, we needed to be able to better coordinate our operations, so we opened several locations in the United States and Mexico to be near our clients. Today, these companies make up Codysur Group employing a large fleet of trucks and professionals with expertise in transportation ready to serve you.



Stormwater, floodwater, rising tidal waters, (etc.) that are meant to be drained into our natural waterways via storm systems will also flow into our sanitary system (I&I). Sanitary systems have limited capacities, and when the I&I – not requiring treatment – enters the sanitary system, volumes can exceed capacity. Consequently, pathogen-filled sewer water reverses, surcharges, and spills into the streets, and waterways (SSOs); this is a leading cause of water pollution amounting to 32 trillion gallons of pollution each year. SSOs also cost cities millions each year from fines, unnecessary rain guards, high wastewater treatment costs, electricity for added pump-time operation, and capital costs on over-capacity plants. The compression molding composite process reduces the potential for part-to-part dimensional variation compared to iron casting allowing for a closely mated cover-frame fit. And as a bonus, wastewater crews report that the composite assembly greatly improves odor retention. Municipalities have also suffered opening traditional manhole covers stuck to the frames from debris and sometimes iron oxide particles. Sewer gas (H₂S) corrodes iron covers in many collection systems especially around lift stations, air release valves, and water treatment plants. Composite manhole covers are inherently corrosion resistant. Composite covers bring many other: safer ergonomics, faster install, theft prevention, data transmission, cosmetic options, encapsulation of RFIDs/sensors, sustainability, and environmental impact. Finally, with the new compression molding process, assemblies are now becoming affordable and available in weeks not months.





TEXAS REGIONAL BANK
The people you know.™

The idea for Texas Regional Bank emerged in 2008 when four businessmen recognized the community banking void in their local region caused by the consolidation of privately-held community and regional banks. Over the years, locally-owned banks had decreased, reducing the banking choices in many parts of Texas.

Michael Scaief, Bobby Farris, Tudor Uhlhorn and Bill Elliff, leaders in business and the community, set out to develop a regional banking franchise committed to the success of the community. The group identified what had worked among regional banks in the past and adopted these strategies as operating principles.

The Board of Directors and Management of Texas Regional Bank remain committed the communities we serve through high touch banking relationships, advanced technology solutions, diverse ownership and community involvement. Each year team members contribute thousands of hours to community service projects.

Today, Texas Regional Bank has assets of approximately \$1.56 billion and 22 banking centers across the Rio Grande Valley and the Texas Hill Country. Texas Regional Bank is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Texas State Bankshares, Inc. with equity more than \$141 million and more than 850 shareholders across Texas. Without a doubt, the influence of its broad shareholder base and team of well-known and seasoned bankers has made Texas Regional the “Bank of Choice” in the Texas markets.

Exhibitors



C.C. Lynch & Associates, Inc. is a sales and service agency specializing in water monitoring devices and services. Founded in 1966, employee-owned CCLA has been under the current management team since 1993.

The corporate office is located in Pass Christian, Mississippi, with teammates peppered across the Gulf South States. Our professional sales team serves the Gulf States region of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Panhandle of Florida.

From a basic composite sampler to the most sophisticated water monitoring instrument or quality analyzer, our sales and service teams get your environmental instrumentation up running, keep it online, and maintained with precision. Beyond sales, routine flow meter calibration and instrument maintenance are a big part of our service team's business. We keep you in compliance and assist with operator training and record-keeping services.

We provide temporary studies from meter validation, plant flow balance, all the way to load characterization, and our environmental instrument rental pool is often a more convenient option when your team is spread thin.



Delta Specialty Signs & Supplies was established in 1985 by Martin Pena and his wife and kids. Our goal for these last 35+ years has been to Guide our customers through the ever changing world of Roads and Traffic congestion and Safely lead you to your loved ones. We continue to grow and update our equipment and knowledge in the sign industry, MUTCD and TXDOT requirements.



Advanced Drainage Systems leads the industry with a comprehensive and sustainable suite of products proven to work.



Founded in 1979, GrantWorks is one of the foremost grant management and administration services providers for hundreds of localities through thousands of grant contracts. GrantWorks is a full-service company with over twenty fully staffed divisions and 400+ employees experienced in covering all aspects of federal and state grant management. We handle every aspect of implementation for our clients including project development, environmental review, compliance with state and federal regulations, and implementation of funded construction projects. Our goal is to free you from burdensome paperwork while providing you with the timely and accurate decision-making information you need.
<https://www.grantworks.net/>



Kinloch Equipment & Supply, Inc. offers environmental products such as sewer cleaning equipment, sewer inspection equipment, street sweeping equipment, and street sweeping supplies. For those who need to get the job done on a budget, we have a supply of used and rental equipment that we keep in top shape. We also offer a wide variety of nozzles, lighting products, and accessories to help make each job safer and more efficient. Kinloch Equipment has all of the best equipment and the dedicated people to help you with what you need--all under one roof.



Stormwater, floodwater, rising tidal waters, (etc.) that are meant to be drained into our natural waterways via storm systems will also flow into our sanitary system (I&I). Sanitary systems have limited capacities, and when the I&I – not requiring treatment – enters the sanitary system, volumes can exceed capacity. Consequently, pathogen-filled sewer water reverses, surcharges, and spills into the streets, and waterways (SSOs); this is a leading cause of water pollution amounting to 32 trillion gallons of pollution each year. SSOs also cost cities millions each year from fines, unnecessary rain guards, high wastewater treatment costs, electricity for added pump-time operation, and capital costs on over-capacity plants. The compression molding composite process reduces the potential for part-to-part dimensional variation compared to iron casting allowing for a closely mated cover-frame fit. And as a bonus, wastewater crews report that the composite assembly greatly improves odor retention. Municipalities have also suffered opening traditional manhole covers stuck to the frames from debris and sometimes iron oxide particles. Sewer gas (H₂S) corrodes iron covers in many collection systems especially around lift stations, air release valves, and water treatment plants. Composite manhole covers are inherently corrosion resistant. Composite covers bring many other: safer ergonomics, faster install, theft prevention, data transmission, cosmetic options, encapsulation of RFIDs/sensors, sustainability, and environmental impact. Finally, with the new compression molding process, assemblies are now becoming affordable and available in weeks not months.

Keynote Speakers



Kathleen Jackson (June 10th)
Texas Water Development Board

Kathleen Jackson was reappointed to the Texas Water Development Board by Governor Greg Abbott on March 9, 2017. She was appointed to the Board by Governor Rick Perry on March 18, 2014. Jackson has a diverse background representing agricultural, environmental, industrial, and wholesale-supply interests, which includes developing and implementing water management strategies for Southeast Texas. As a registered professional engineer, Jackson served as public affairs manager for one of the world's largest petroleum and petrochemical producers.



Maj. Ian P. O'Sullivan (June 8th)
The U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers

Major Ian P. O'Sullivan was commissioned in the United States Army in May 2006. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Geospatial Information Science from the United States Military Academy at West Point, and a Master of Science in Geological Engineering from the Missouri University of Science and Technology. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) as well as the Engineer Officer Captain's Career Course and Basic Course.



Maria Elena Giner, Ph.D., P.E. (June 8th)
Commissioner – U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission

President Joe Biden in August 2021 appointed Maria-Elena Giner to serve as the United States Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico. Dr. Giner, the second woman and first Latina to hold the post, previously served as General Manager of the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), an institution that developed environmental infrastructure along the U.S.-Mexico border in association with the North American Development Bank. During her tenure at the BECC, she focused on policies that addressed U.S.-Mexico cooperation on water, energy, and climate change. Dr. Giner's education includes a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Loyola Marymount University, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Texas at El Paso, and a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the University of Texas at Austin. She is also a registered professional engineer, first-generation college graduate, and daughter of an immigrant. Dr. Giner is from the border region and attended Loretto Academy High School in El Paso, Texas. She is bicultural and bilingual.



Charles Maguire (June 9th)
EPA Region 6 Water Division Director

Charles Maguire joined EPA Region 6 in July 2018. He oversees the implementation of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act in the five-state area of EPA's Region 6. Charles came to Region 6 from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in Austin, Texas, where he served as Director of the Radioactive Materials Division since 2012, and Director of Water Quality Division from 2009 to 2012. Charles' resume includes experience as a senior executive and manager along with varied experience in environmental programs with an emphasis on water. Before joining TCEQ, Charles served for four years as the Manager of the Southwest Regional office of National Pork Producers Council in Dublin, Texas, coordinating the dairy industry certification program in Texas. Previously, Charles spent several years as the Assistant Director for Economics and Policy Analysis at the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research and participated in the creation of the organization by the Texas Legislature. Prior to TIAER, Charles served as President and CEO of a small business and Assistant Vice-President in the banking industry. Charles holds a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University where he majored in Aerospace



Danny Guzman (June 8th)
South Texas College Trustee

Mr. Guzman is a Right-of-Way Agent for Hidalgo County Pct. 1 District 7. Newly elected in 2020, Mr. Guzman represents the citizens of Northeast Hidalgo County, North Weslaco, Edcouch, Elsa, La Villa, Mercedes, Monte Alto, Northeast Alamo, Northeast Edinburg, and Hargil. Mr. Guzman is a former City Councilman and very active in community activities. Mr. Guzman currently serves as a member of the Education and Workforce Development Committee.



Ricardo Solis, Ph.D. (June 8th)
South Texas College

Ricardo Solis, Ph.D., is President of South Texas College and previously served as President of Laredo College, Laredo, TX, Executive Dean for Academic, Professional, and Technical Education at Gateway Community College, and Maricopa Community Colleges, in Phoenix, AZ. Dr. Solis earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education Administration – Community College Leadership from The University of Texas at Austin; a Master of Business Administration in International Management from Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, CA; and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Economics from Trinity University in San Antonio, TX.

RATES Board Members



Andrew Ernest, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, D.WRE, Edinburg, TX
Chief Executive Officer, RATES, Inc

Dr. Andrew Ernest has accumulated over 20 years of professional experience in Environmental and Water Resource Engineering and awarded over \$20 million in grants and contracts throughout his career. Ernest has more than 100 publications in his name, including more than 40 masters' theses he has supervised. His research focuses at the nexus of environmental informatics and water resource capacity development. Ernest bases his research efforts around his interest in investigating the role of innovation, entrepreneurship and engineering service in stimulating effort-based economies as a mechanism for promoting capacity development and sustainability.



Javier Guerrero, M.S., E.I.T., Edinburg, TX
Chief Project Development Officer – RATES, Inc.

Founded in 1998, the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) TPDES Stormwater Task Force – Facilitates the organization of a coalition of 30 local governments; 2014 Founded, Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Program Partnership. LLMEP Project is in the planning stages, strategic fund development funded by the Texas General Land Office, encompasses 6 counties. Mr. Guerrero has over 25 years of experience in academia, Former Director of Water Studies – Civil Engineering at UTRGV and a researcher at Texas A&M University-Kingsville; former City Councilman and former engineer at the City of McAllen; B.S. Engineering Technology, Structural Analysis and Design, University of Houston-Downtown; M.S. Environmental Engineering, Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Ph.D. Candidate, Environmental Engineering, TAMUK 2023.



Dave Bonner, Ph.D., Potsdam, NY

Dave Bonner received a B.A. in Physics and B.S. in Mathematics from Statue University of New York at Pittsburgh. He then pursued an M.A. in Mathematics from Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. and a M.S. in Mathematics from State University of New York Albany. He received his Doctorate from State University of New York at Albany. He currently the President and CEO of Adirondack Area Network.



Jeff Lape

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Washington D.C. (retired)

Jeffrey Lape is recognized as a national leader and expert on Federal water programs and policies. Mr. Lape has served in the Senior Executive Service for 15 years and is a national expert in watershed restoration, protection, and partnerships. Mr. Lape has extensive experiences implementing water resource protection programs at the Federal, State and Local levels of government and in the private sector.



Hollis Rutledge

President and Owner of Hollis Rutledge and Associates – Mission, TX

Mr. Hollis Rutledge, the founder of HRA, Inc., was called upon twice to serve as a Presidential Appointee in Southwest Region 7, first by President Reagan as a Special Assistant over five states with US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and then by President Bush as a Regional Administrator for the General Services Administration over eleven states. He was Executive Director of the Hidalgo-Willacy Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Program, former owner of Delta Systems Services, Inc. – an engineering and architectural firm, Director of Planning and Administration for the City of San Benito, City Manager for various municipal governments, real estate agent, owner of a marketing and consulting firm, Marketing Director for various professional service organizations and a Certified Teacher.

RATES Staff



Jodi E. Lees
Chief Financial Officer.

Jodi E. Lees received her B.B.A. in Accounting from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Since 2018, she serves as Chief Financial Officer for Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service.



Amber LaFountain
New York States Projects Coordinator

Amber Rae La Fountain graduated from the State University of New York at Potsdam with a B.S. in Business Administration. She later received her Master of Business Administration in Accounting from the American Military University. Since this year, she serves as the New York State Projects Coordinator for Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc.



Chris Fuller, Ph.D.
Chief Operations Officer

Dr. Fuller first obtained his B.S. in Biology at Texas A&M University-College Station. He then continued his education, graduating from Texas A&M University-Kingsville with a M.S. in Environmental Engineering. Lastly, receiving his Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Texas A&M University-College Station. Since this year, he is serving as Chief of Research for Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc.



William D. Kirkey, Ph.D.
Chief Research Officer

Dr. Kirkey received his B.S. and M.S. in Electrical Engineering from The State University of New York Buffalo State. He then obtained his Ph.D. in Engineering Science from Clarkson University. Since 2018, he is currently a Research Engineer for Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc.



Pete Kirkey
Lead Research Technician

Pete Kirkey earned his bachelor's degree in Computer Science SUNY Buffalo. Pete Kirkey is currently the Research Technician for Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc.



Deanna M. LeVrier
Accounting Manager

Deanna LeVrier graduated with her Bachelor of Applied Science in Organizational Leadership and is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Business Administration from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She currently serves as the Accounting Manager for Research, Applied, Technology, Education and Service.



Ben Vondrak
Field Technician Manager

Benjamin Vondrak graduated from Clarkson University with a Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship and Innovation and a minor in Environmental Policy. Ben Vondrak is currently the Field Technician Manager for Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc.



Rene Estrada, Jr.
Scholarship Intern

Rene is a civil engineering student at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. He is a recent LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force scholarship awardee and an intern at RATES, Inc. Rene is from Combes, TX and a graduate of Harlingen High School.



Mitchell Scoggins
Director of Field Operations

Experienced technical professional familiar with all aspects of project implementation from conceptual design through to completion. From generating CAD drawings to procuring necessary parts and modular components, determining interface and fit of equipment cabinetry, fabrication of wiring harnesses, mounting, connections, final testing and troubleshooting to actual field installation and/or maintenance.



Linda Navarro, M.S.
Watershed Engineer

Linda is a recent graduate of the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, where she majored in Civil Engineering. Linda oversees the NPS program, watershed related projects and is an upcoming modeler. Her expertise includes working with sensor technology, HEC-RAS, GIS, and AutoCad.

GUEST SPEAKERS



DAVID GARZA
Cameron County Commissioner District. #3

David A. Garza attended Texas A&M for two years, followed by the University of Texas Pharmacy School where he graduated with a BS in Pharmacy. Since 1980, he has owned and operated The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy in San Benito. Mr. Garza has a history of community and public service. He is an active member of Queen of the Universe Church and St. Joseph's Catholic Church in San Benito, TX and is currently serving as a Board member for Texas Regional Bank, and serves on a number of other boards, including the Texas Water Development Board Region 15 Flood Infrastructure Fund Regional Committee (Chairperson), on the TWDB Region M Regional Committee and the LRGV Regional Water Resources Advisory Committee (Vice-Chair).



DAVID FUENTES
Hidalgo County Commissioner Pct. 1

David Fuentes was elected to serve the citizens and families of Hidalgo County Precinct 1 as County Commissioner in 2016 and took office in January 2017. Born and raised in Weslaco, Fuentes graduated from Weslaco High School in 1990, and attended the University of Notre Dame where he received his bachelor's degree in business administration (BBA) with a major in accounting. Fuentes was licensed as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the state of Texas in 1999. Fuentes brings a wealth of accounting and financial management experience to his professional work and public service. He currently serves as Chief Financial Officer for Reyna Construction and Development and also serves as Chief Financial Officer for other various entities. His professional experience has spanned various industries including construction, development, hotel and restaurant management, school districts and higher education institutions, waste management, investments, banking, and golf course supervision. One of his most rewarding professional accomplishments was taking a break from the corporate realm to become a high school teacher. Fuentes served as Concurrent/Dual Enrollment Accounting Teacher in Weslaco High School from August 2003 to January 2009. He served as a school board member for six and a half years before his role as County Commissioner. Fuentes has been married to Yvonne Ortegon for nearly 25 years and they have three children: Nick, Michael, and Mikayla.



ELLIE TORRES
Hidalgo County Commissioner District #4

Mrs. Ellie Torres is a small business owner and has dedicated her life to public service. Mrs. Torres has served in the education sector for twenty-four years in various capacities. She was last employed for seven years at Region One Education Service Center prior to her 17-year career at Edinburg CISD, which included teaching at the elementary and secondary level. Mrs. Torres earned a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary Education and a Master of Education in Counseling and Guidance degree in 2000 from the University of Texas-Pan American. Mrs. Torres was an elected School Board Member of the Edinburg CISD from 2014 to 2018 In January 2019 she became the first woman to serve as the Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Commissioner. Mrs. Torres has been married to her husband, David Torres, for thirty-six years and has raised three children of their own. She is the proud grandmother of two grandsons and three granddaughters.



EDUARDO GONZALES
Willacy County Commissioner District #1

"Eddy" currently represents the area of Sebastian, Lyford and rural southwest Willacy County. Eddy is a retired Texas Department of Transportation professional where he served for 30 years as a Bridge Inspector. Eddy serves on the Texas Water Development Board Region 15 Flood Infrastructure Fund Regional Committee and on the LRGV Regional Water Resources Advisory Committee.



DR. ALI ESMAELI
Dean for Mathematics, Science, Information Technology, Bachelor's Degree Programs and University Relations
South Texas College

Dr. Ali Ismaili has 32 years of experience in higher education. He has served as a Mathematics Instructor, Department Chair for Mathematics, Division Director, Campus Administrator, Professional Development Coordinator, and Associate Dean for bachelor's degree Programs. Dr. Isma'ili was instrumental in the development, implementation, and evaluation of four unique bachelor's degree programs at South Texas College. Under his leadership Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and Accelerating Developmental Education programs have been developed and implemented at South Texas College. He serves as a Board Member for the National Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA), member of College of Engi0. `` -+ zaSZaaqAqz `neering Advisory Committee, member of Competency-Based Network, member of Texas Affordable Baccalaureate Team (TAB), and former member of the Rio Grande Valley Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Dr. Ali Esmaeli has earned a Doctorate in Education, Master of Science, Master of Education, and a Bachelor of Science Degree (all) from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Texas. During his tenure at South Texas College, Dr. Esmaeli has developed his division into a strategic embodiment of South Texas College's Mission and Vision.

THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY TPDES STORMWATER TASK FORCE



The LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force. In 1998, founded by Andrew Ernest and Javier Guerrero, a coalition of thirteen (13) Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) local governments joined to form the LRGV TPDES (Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Stormwater Task Force (TASK FORCE) in a joint effort to develop a proactive regional approach to comply with the TPDES Phase II Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) rules. The Task Force developed a regional stormwater management plan (SWMP) adopted by the membership. The SWMP includes Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are required as part of the six (6) Minimum Control Measures (MCMs) of the State's TPDES program. **Today the TASK FORCE is comprised of seventeen (17) local governments sharing one regional SWMP.**

Organization and Mission of the LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force. The TASK FORCE project idea was born from a 1998 local stormwater brainstorming round table held in La Feria, Texas. Several preliminary meetings continued at various cities until the coalition was formally organized. Local government officials and qualified professionals representing various communities in the LRGV region attended these meetings. The group agreed to develop a way to achieve a regional SWMP to comply with the TPDES regulations. The group formalized the organization by contractually empowering TAMUK to facilitate the group and by developing a system of by-laws that included election of board members and officers.

The TASK FORCE uses a unique, collaborative regional approach to involve various levels of government, including the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in developing cost-effective solutions that will achieve compliance with the TPDES rules. The TASK FORCE project embodies the spirit of the mutually beneficial relationships between local governments and embellishes this relationship with academia and regulators. After nineteen (19) years, although the impact of this organization has translated into a regional collaboration movement not seen anywhere else in the State, the overall impact of this organization has yet to be fully realized. The primary goal of the TASK FORCE project in 1998 was to develop and implement a regional SWMP to comply with Phase II regulations. In 2002, TASK FORCE participants began entering into local government interlocal agreements with TAMUK, which outlined the desire to address stormwater quality issues on a regional basis and named TAMUK as its facilitator. In executing these interlocal agreements, emphasis was placed on developing programs that study existing successful programs, addressing community goals, providing technical assistance and training, and promoting regional approaches.

In 2006, the TASK FORCE modified its mission to include stormwater quality management approaches to address broader water quality and watershed issues, particularly those associated with the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership (ACWP), a local Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)-related organization. The TASK FORCE project has already enjoyed side benefits of increased communication and cooperation and created a collaborative process for discussing water quality issues in the LRGV's four-county region. In addition, this collaboration and others like it, has enabled the participating communities to successfully secure many grant funding opportunities since the TASK FORCE's inception. Academic researchers and faculty provided facilitation and management assistance for the TASK FORCE project, initiating this effort through a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, other grants, and from annual membership fees collected from the member-local-governments. The funds provide resources for staff to facilitate the group's efforts in formulating TASK FORCE project goals and developing TASK FORCE programs. Funds, in part, are also used to host workshops, expert panel discussions, conferences, seminars and training sessions.

In 2008, during a TASK FORCE meeting held in Mission, TX, the organization formed several committees: ordinance, grant, scholarship, outreach, training, housekeeping, construction, and others. The TASK FORCE worked closely with the committees in developing the SWMPs by responding to recommendations and suggestions posed by these committees. Recently, these committees have been replaced with work groups which now work with researchers in facilitating the organization and implementing the SWMPs. One key workgroup, responsible for luring millions of dollars worth of grant funding to the Valley, is the Low Impact Development (LID) workgroup. The LRGV LID Outreach, Education and Demonstration program is a highly regarded project in the region that resulted from collaboration efforts within this workgroup.

New Paradigm. The new stormwater paradigm presents many questions to local governments in the LRGV. What is a stormwater management program, what will it cost, who will fund the program, is it needed, and how much will it cost? The TASK FORCE realizes a regional program is a key part of a successful regional storm water program. But regulators and academia do not have a firm grasp of the costs associated with developing and implementing such a program. Although the average citizen often takes for granted the services municipalities provide, the stormwater services are nonetheless expected. The region now requires that local governments provide a stormwater runoff pollution protection service. This new paradigm requires the development of infrastructure and funding strategies to support providing this service.

Storm Water Quality is Now a Municipal Responsibility. This is not the first-time local governments have been confronted with environmental water quality regulations that affect the manner that cities allocate funds. TMDL regulations recently started developing new performance measures for local governments, and LRGV communities have become very familiar with the Arroyo Colorado TMDL studies. Based on these studies, the drafters of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan (ACWPP), which included members of the Task Force, concluded that urban stormwater runoff is contributing to the impairment of the Arroyo Colorado. Thus, the timing of the formation of the Task Force could not have been better. Local governments typically tend to procrastinate when it comes to addressing non-mandated environmental issues, usually because of lack of resources and lack of expertise and understanding rather than due to a non-proactive attitude. Still, finding funds to implement a regional SWMP program is a huge responsibility for any local government. Cost effectiveness and revenue potential were major considerations for our local governments when developing this Task Force.

In the LRGV, the communities share similar demographics and similar environmental concerns. Most residents live in low- or fixed-income households and cannot afford to pay fees to support the environmental-related requirements. Thus, there is a strong case for any type of collaboration that would keep costs down. In the LRGV, each community is contiguous to other communities, with some cities bordered by four (4) other cities. Thus, the LRGV appears as one urbanized metropolitan region. Although all these communities experience similar TPDES stormwater problems, none had in place a TPDES stormwater program or related ordinance. Since the creation of the TASK FORCE, stormwater tasks were generally viewed as "add-on" responsibilities for departments and staff that have other primary responsibilities. To varying degrees, with the exception of McAllen and Brownsville, the communities had existing staff (such as sanitary sewer, code enforcement, or road department personnel) handling stormwater operations, maintenance, regulation and enforcement. None of the communities could maintain a person, much less a department, to handle stormwater administration, planning, design, and engineering; water quality planning and monitoring; and capital improvements and expenditures. The regional approach taken by the TASK FORCE allows the LRGV communities to share these responsibilities, which results in a much more cost-effective program for addressing stormwater issues. Also realized in time, the TASK FORCE network provides a vitally important link to these small communities when new employees take on storm water related duties after key employee turnover. **The TASK FORCE project will recognize its twentieth (20th) year of existence in 2018, and the organization is determined to continue evolving and to continue strengthening its partnership in the future.**

Transition from TAMUK to The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). In September 2016, the TASK FORCE decided to move its operation from TAMUK to UTRGV, a move that will be complete by July 2017. Moving the operation to a more local venue assures daily availability of resources and support to the TASK FORCE from the College of Engineering & Computer Science, the Civil Engineering Department and the UT System. With locations in Brownsville and Edinburg, UTRGV is poised to assist the TASK FORCE to achieve higher levels of success.

Transition from UTRGV to RATES/RGV. In January 2019, at its annual retreat, the TASK FORCE opted to pursue becoming a non-profit agency promoting not only its compliance requirements, but education, research and community engagement. RATES, Inc., an existing research institute, founded in 2005, and the TASK FORCE agreed to merge and become RATES, Inc. dba RATES/RGV. Today, RATES/RGV is becoming a rapidly growing research institute in the Lower Rio Grande Valley that looks forward to promoting educational events, awarding scholarships and providing much needed professional training.

Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Partnership

Board of Directors



Andrew Ernest, P.E., Ph.D.
Chairman
RATES, Inc.



David Garza
Vice-Chair
County Commissioner
Cameron County, TX



Javier Guerrero, E.I.T., M.S.
Secretary
RATES, Inc.



Augusto Sanchez Gonzalez
Executive Director
Cameron County, TX



Jose Hinojosa
General Manager
Santa Cruz Irrigation District #15



Melisa Gonzales
Special Projects Director
City of Alamo, TX



David Fuentes
County Commissioner
Hidalgo County



Kim Jones, Ph.D., P.E.
Professor
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Hudson DeYoe
Professor
UTRGV



Eduardo Gonzales
County Commissioner
Willacy County



Sergio Contreras
CEO
Atlas, Hall & Rodriguez, LLP
McAllen, TX

History of the LLMEP

On April 10, 2015, Cameron County authorized local legislation establishing the Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Program (LLMEP). On October 2016, Cameron County, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) TPDES Stormwater Task Force and Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK) secured funding from the Texas General Land Office Coastal Management Program Grant Cycle 22 to develop the strategic plan for the LLMEP. From October 2016 through August 2018, the LLMEP initiative conducted 15 workshops across the region and multiple planning meetings among the plan leaders. On May 8, 2019, the Research, Applied Technology, Education and Service, Inc. (RATES), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and Cameron County, TX, a coastal county in Texas and part of the LRGV, partnered to form the Lower Laguna Madre Estuary Partnership, Inc. a non-profit agency created to protect and restore coastal water resources on the South Texas Coast.