



Potential Impact of Stormwater Drainage on Rockport Harbor

Purpose of the ACND:

The Aransas County Navigation District (ACND), a political subdivision of the State of Texas, exists to protect public safety, shorelines and harbors through the conservation and development of natural resources.

The ACND understands the City of Rockport needs to manage stormwater runoff as a mitigation scheme to prevent some neighborhood flooding. However, the ACND has serious concerns about the proposed plan to re-channel 185+ acres worth of stormwater at a faster rate through a 3-foot by 6-foot pipe directly into Rockport Harbor, a mere 30-acre space. This flawed City solution raises significant environmental and economic issues, including silting into the Harbor, the speed of the stormwater outflow, the condemnation of the Veterans Memorial Park, and the major reparation expenses associated to the effects of this system to Rockport Harbor's delicate ecosystem.

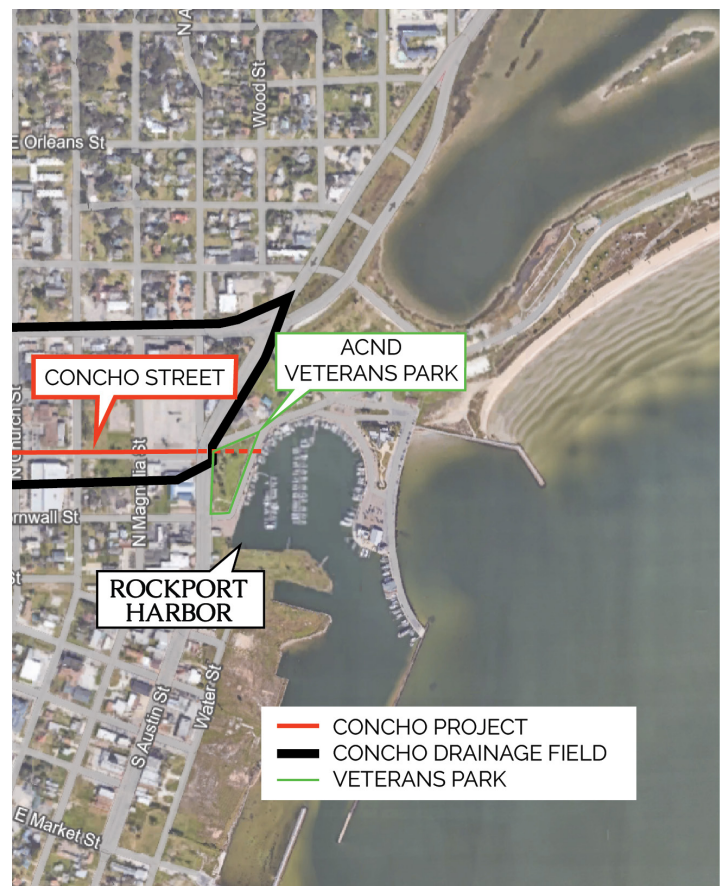
Due to the lack of any credible research and consideration in part by the City in preparation of this drainage project, the ACND has viciously opposed the flawed city project. The ACND will conduct their own environmental and engineering studies through expert unbiased 3rd party firms that will determine the potential damages due to the addition of the 3-foot by 6-foot pipe carrying stormwater and its contents into Rockport Harbor.

Rescuing Rockport Harbor not only safeguards local wildlife and marine habitats but also supports the economic well-being of our community by maintaining thriving tourism and fishing industries that depend on clean and healthy waterfronts. Please continue reading to learn about the City's proposed plan, the dangers of unchecked, unfiltered, and raging stormwater runoff, and explore potential alternative solutions that achieve stormwater management goals while Rescuing Rockport Harbor and preserving the Veterans Memorial Park.

City Proposed Plan:

The City of Rockport has announced, without any qualified environmental or engineering studies, a plan to force the ACND and the citizens of Rockport to accept an additional direct stormwater pipe system into Rockport Harbor. It is important to note that this system does not drain additional flooding volume, rather it adds a larger outflow drain that can force water out at a faster rate carrying silt and other debris into the Harbor.

This flawed city plan will re-channel 185+ acres of silt, chemicals, debris and "who knows what" other runoff from significant areas of the city at an exaggerated outflow rate straight into Rockport's 30-acre confined Harbor. The plan also involves the condemnation of the Veterans Memorial Park and ultimately condemning the Harbor through the silt and trash they send there.



Dangers of Stormwater Runoff:

Stormwater runoff often carries pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, oil, and trash from streets and lawns. In highland areas, natural filtration occurs as water flows through the ground. However, due to Rockport's low elevation, it must direct stormwater away to prevent flooding, bypassing this natural filtration process. As a result, this unfiltered stormwater runoff can lead to:

- **Sedimentation:** Increased runoff can cause soil erosion, leading to a buildup of sediment in the harbor. This can smother marine life and disrupt navigation.
- **Algal Blooms:** Excess nutrients can trigger blooms of harmful algae, reducing oxygen levels in the water and harming marine life.
- **Water Quality Degradation:** Contaminants can harm fish and shellfish populations, impacting recreational fishing and the local ecosystem.

Diverting stormwater directly to the Harbor also dramatically increases the natural flow of freshwater into the saltwater bay. Excessive freshwater inflow into a marine harbor can significantly impact the ecosystem in several ways:

- **Salinity Reduction:** Freshwater reduces the salinity levels in the harbor, which can stress or kill marine organisms that are adapted to saltwater conditions.
- **Disruption of Habitat:** Changes in salinity and water quality can alter the habitat, affecting species composition and abundance. Some species may leave the area, while others that can tolerate the new conditions may move in, leading to a shift in the ecosystem balance.
- **Sedimentation:** Freshwater inflow can carry sediment that settles in the harbor, potentially smothering benthic habitats and affecting organisms that live on the seafloor.
- **Pollution:** Freshwater runoff can introduce pollutants such as chemicals, heavy metals, and trash into the marine environment, which can be toxic to marine life and degrade water quality.
- **Disruption of Breeding and Feeding Grounds:** Many marine species rely on specific salinity levels for breeding and feeding. Changes in these levels can disrupt their life cycles and reproductive success.

Alternatives to Consider:

The ACND encourages the City of Rockport to explore a series of best management practices along with alternative approaches to stormwater management. These could include:

- **Pipe Re-route:** Consider re-routing the stormwater pipelines away from Rockport Harbor and discharging the treated runoff directly into the Gulf of Mexico. This would minimize the impact on the sensitive harbor ecosystem and negate the condemnation of Veterans Memorial Park.
- **Detention Ponds:** These ponds temporarily store stormwater, allowing for natural filtration and gradual release to minimize impacts on the harbor and outflow rate.
- **Stormwater Pipe Filtration Systems:** Investigate the feasibility of installing filtration systems within the stormwater pipes themselves. These systems could capture pollutants before the water reaches the harbor.

Conclusion

The ACND believes that protecting Rockport Harbor is our number one job. It is the lifeblood of our community's environment, economy, and tourism. We urge the City to carefully evaluate the potential negative impacts of channelized stormwater drainage to the Harbor and the disruption to the Veterans Memorial Park before making a final decision.

Alternative solutions, such as a pipe re-route, advanced filtration methods, and the implementation of detention ponds, should be seriously considered before silting in the Harbor is chosen by the City. These other alternatives can help minimize disruption to Rockport's Harbor and its ecosystem, ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of our natural resources.

By exploring these options, we can find a balance between effective stormwater management and the preservation of our vital environmental and recreational assets. A healthy Rockport Harbor isn't just vital for our local wildlife and ecosystems; it's the backbone of our community's economic well-being. Tourists flock here for the clean water and vibrant marine life, supporting our tourism industry.

We are working diligently for a thorough and transparent decision-making process that prioritizes environmental stewardship and community input, ensuring that the best possible outcome is achieved for both the residents and natural beauty of Rockport. If the City will work with us, we can find solutions that address stormwater management needs while safeguarding the health of Rockport Harbor for generations to come.