

Financial Challenges and Opportunities

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As Harris and surrounding counties have grown, so have the region's water issues. Early water resource development efforts focused on water supply, wastewater treatment, storm water management and land subsidence. More recently, water quality in the region's many streams and reservoirs has become a greater concern, with particular emphasis on bacterial contamination.

Over the long-term, surface water quality in urban and suburban areas is tightly linked with storm water management, wastewater treatment and reducing other point and nonpoint sources. Clearly, cleaning up bacterial contamination of Houston-area streams will require both improving existing infrastructure and developing better new environmental infrastructure. Targeted efforts are needed to improve wastewater treatment and enhance infiltration and treatment of rainfall runoff through better design of buildings, transportation infrastructure and landscapes. In addition, improving our stream infrastructure to filter, capture (and remove) contaminated sediments could both improve stream water quality and the amenity value of our water sources.

Finally, large amounts of resources are needed to accomplish these improvements. Local, state and federal funds all have roles to play, and better coordination of these funds could improve the effectiveness of our efforts.