

Area to get \$225M more in Ike funds

By T.J. Aulds | Posted: Thursday, September 17, 2009 12:00 am

Sometimes the squeaky wheel does get the grease — Or in the case of federal funds for Hurricane Ike recovery an additional \$225 million.

Galveston County Judge Jim Yarbrough said Wednesday the governor ordered a change to the formula for distributing the second round of federal community block grant money for housing and infrastructure repairs and improvements.

Gov. Rick Perry's office confirmed Wednesday that he instructed the Texas Department of Rural Affairs to change its funding formula. The agency's original plan used a formula based on Ike's winds storm surge and flooding.

Because the weather model didn't give any more weight to more populated areas rural communities north and west of Galveston County received more of the funding.

During that initial round of funding in March the region got about 62 percent of the funding: \$814 million of \$1.3 billion.

This time the region was slated to get 36 percent: \$623 million of the \$1.7 billion total.

The county's elected leaders representatives of social service agencies and the Houston-Galveston Area Council protested.

Dickinson Councilman Kerry Neves chairman elect of the Houston-Galveston Area Council complained the distribution method would give "more money to cows in Chambers County than to people in Galveston County." Galveston and League City passed resolutions protesting the funding plan.

Under the revised formula the region's share would increase to about \$843 million Yarbrough said. That's still about \$26 million less than the area should get County Commissioner Ken Clark said.

Still the plan is not completed and the Texas Department of Rural Affairs has three public hearings scheduled starting today to take in more comments.

County officials were frustrated today's hearing would not detail the new funding formula.

"How can we comment on a process when we haven't seen a document on the process we are supposed to be commenting on?" Clark asked.

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At A Glance

WHAT: Ike funding public hearing

WHEN: 9:30 a.m. today

WHERE: Houston Hobby Airport Marriott Hotel 9100 Interstate 45 South in Houston