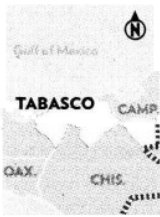


TABASCO

State to get 5 bln less than expected



TABASCO - Officials in Tabasco are expressing concern, following the federal government's decision to allocate 5 billion pesos to the state next year instead

of the 17 billion pesos requested.

However, Gov. Andrés Granier Melo was optimistic. "During these times and with the economic situation, it's good. We'll be ok, but we won't be great."

A large part of the state budget is set to go toward flood mitigation projects, following three consecutive years of severe flooding in many parts of the state. Earlier this month, floods had affected more than 200,000 people.

National Water Commission (Conagua) authorities said Monday that flooding in 2007 had prompted new ways to plan water and flood mitigation infrastructure.

Raúl Saavedra Horita, the director of the Southern Border Water Basin

Agency, said that diversion canals and walls alongside La Sierra and Grijalva rivers in the capital city of Villahermosa have helped curb flooding, as part of the Comprehensive Water Management Plan.

The new plan is more efficient than "encapsulating" rivers by digging ditches and making makeshift walls, he said, and the El Censo and El Tintillo derivation canals would help to naturally reroute the rivers.

In addition, El Macayo Floodgate will control up to 550 cubic meters per second of the capital's Carrizal River, Saavedra said.

However, a complementary structure on the margin of the floodgate is set to be finished within two years. Once finished, the project will "protect 650,000 Tabasco residents and provide security to some 40,000 hectares of farmland."

In November 1999, the Carrizal River surpassed its capacity, causing the Peñitas Reservoir to spill 2,000 cubic meters of water per second and affect more than 300,000 people in

the state

Then President Ernesto Zedillo announced the Water Management Plan of Tabasco, and Conagua allocated 530 million pesos to Gov. Roberto Madrazo of immediate funding to build walls, improve drainage and dredge rivers.

In 2003, the 2 billion-peso Comprehensive Flood Control Project (PICI) was created to revive flood-damaged land and use it for housing, industry and farming. The federal government was to contribute 72 percent and the state would pay for the rest.

Flooding in 2007 made it clear that the PICI was inefficient. Outgoing Gov. Manuel Andrade circulated a letter, stating that, according to him, Conagua didn't provide enough funding.

Now, Villahermosa Mayor Evaristo Hernández Cruz is saying that the PICI's reincarnation, the so-called Comprehensive Water Management Plan, should focus on dredging and desilting the capital's rivers, because building kilometers of walls isn't a "total solution."

- THE NEWS



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