

Ike Dike barrier concept the way to go

**By JON POWELL and CINDY EVANS | Posted: Thursday, July 31, 2014 12:15 am
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We live in Timber Cove in Taylor Lake Village. We love living on the Upper Galveston Bay estuaries for many reasons — the birds, the fish, the waterfront and the community.

But Taylor Lake Village and other nearby coastal communities like El Lago and Nassau Bay preserve a unique piece of American history as well, as they are the original neighborhoods built in the 1960s and home to many NASA engineers and astronauts who supported and flew Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle missions.

In 2008, Hurricane Ike produced an 11 1/2-foot storm surge in Taylor Lake. Our house, with an elevation now 10 feet above sea level, flooded with a foot-and-a-half of water, causing major disruption to our lives and considerable expense. Many of our neighbors fared much worse, with their homes destroyed.

When our house was built in 1965, it was 15 feet above sea level. Had the same storm surge occurred then, the house would not have flooded. What happened? The land subsided because of groundwater pumping for industrial use. And when it was recognized that this groundwater pumping caused such a serious problem, the Houston Galveston Subsidence District was formed in 1975, groundwater use was restricted and subsidence was slowed, but the damage had been done. The entire Galveston Bay area is now more prone to flooding, and as the sea level rises, our homes and neighborhoods will become even more at risk.

Can we do anything about this problem? It appears that we can. Following Hurricane Ike, Bill Merrill of Texas A&M proposed the Ike Dike, a barrier system to protect the Galveston Bay area from a similar storm surge. An Ike Dike would not only protect our homes, including historic neighborhoods like Timber Cove, but it would protect a major portion of our nation's industrial base — the refining and petrochemical installations located in the Houston-Galveston area. Almost 40 percent of the U.S. jet fuel is produced here.

The Dutch have been protecting their land from the sea for centuries, and following a major storm surge in 1953 that killed almost 2,000 people, they conceived and proceeded

to build the Delta Works, a barrier system to protect their people and industry from a another severe storm. The Ike Dike would be similar.

Cost estimates for the Ike Dike are about \$5 billion. Even if the costs were three to four times that amount, that would still be far less than the damages from Hurricane Ike, estimated to be about \$30 billion. And had Ike tracked a little farther to the west, the damage would have been considerably more.

We think this is a no-brainer. We caused some of this problem; we can fix it. Build the Ike Dike. Invest the money to protect our neighborhoods, the home of our space program and a major portion of the industrial base of our country.

Jon Powell and Cindy Evans live in Taylor Lake Village.