

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 11, 2026

A new report released March 10, 2026 by fluvial geomorphologist Dr. Mark Tompkins provides a devastating analysis of the “inevitable” threat to human life, property, and critical bridge infrastructure by the proposed wall and buoy system, creating “unique and unprecedented threats” to Laredo and a “more dangerous place” for people along the Rio Grande.

“The combination of wall and buoys is a ticking time bomb. Installing something like this in a major river with huge flood flows is unprecedented,” explained Dr. Tompkins, principal at FlowWest who has studied U.S. rivers for three decades. He recently conducted studies and an investigation of a border wall in Mission, TX, and observed structural failures from relatively low flows shortly after construction.

Key takeaways from the Tompkins report that explain reasons for the “inevitable” collapses and failures:

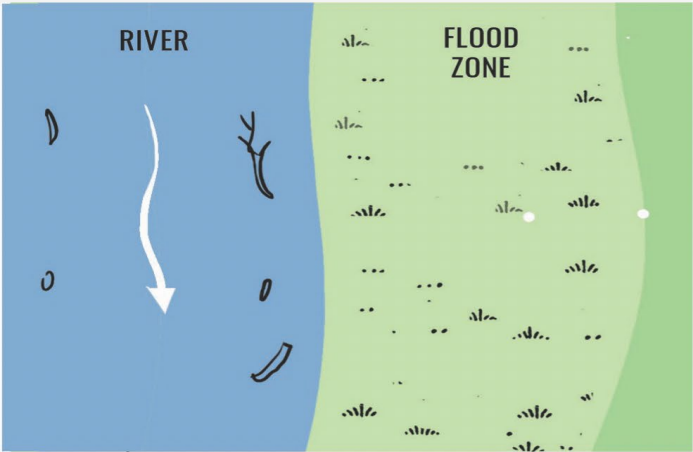
1. **Floods will be higher and faster:** The wall and buoys will straight-jacket the flow of the river, increasing the height and velocity of water flow, “which is exactly what we want to avoid when protecting against floods.” They will disrupt and reduce the natural dispersion of water and debris (conveyance) and instead create entanglements and obstructions. During a flood, debris and water will not be distributed across expansive flood zones that line the river as they have for millenia, and will, instead, concentrate the force and impact of flood water and debris.
2. **Debris will increase:** The wall, buoys, and cleared/denuded riverbanks will deflect flood flows, increasing erosion and scouring along the riverbanks and in the riverbed. The buoys will act as a giant trash collector, trapping abnormal amounts of debris and then becoming dislodged themselves. During a flood, debris and dislodged sections of the buoys will go downstream and get wrapped around bends in the river, and get caught in the wall as well as on bridge piers/supports causing them to fail.
3. **Wall sections will fail:** Therefore, the wall will inevitably fail at specific points, very likely near residential and public areas along the riverbank, which are numerous in Laredo.
4. **Threat to life and property:** Any points of failure or breaches in the wall would create more concentrated flooding than would otherwise occur, posing a threat to human life and increased damage to property. In addition, other areas already sensitive to high flows will experience even greater impacts than before, posing a threat to life and property.
5. **Danger to bridges:** The impacts will be greater on structures within the main river channel, specifically bridge supports/piers, possibly causing bridge damage and/or failure.

Portions of the proposed wall and buoy system will fail during extreme high flows. This will cause catastrophic flooding, damage, and destruction to property, and risks to the health and safety of people near the river corridor. Given Laredo’s past experience with floods, it is not a matter of if, but when.

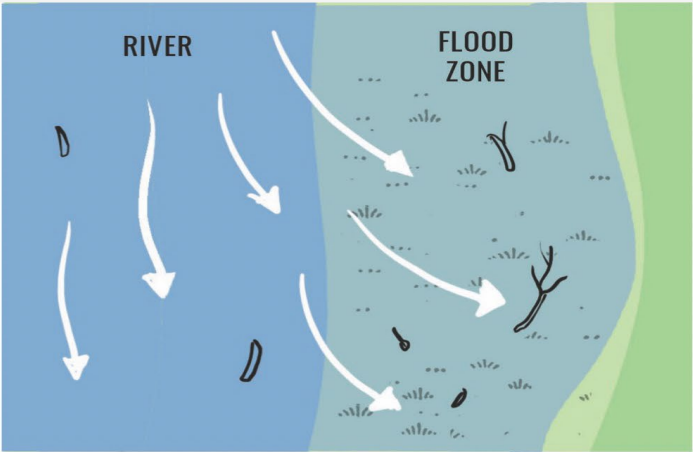
“The problem is that we do not know where that will happen, creating this enormous vulnerability,” Tompkins explained. “This is really unprecedented in my experience.”

The [U.S. government plans to install](#) 108 miles of border wall and 153 miles of river buoys in Webb and Zapata counties. It includes all riverfront land in Laredo, which the federal government said it intends to seize from the city, other public entities, and private landowners via eminent domain.

RIVER FLOW WITH NO BORDER WALL & BUOY SYSTEM

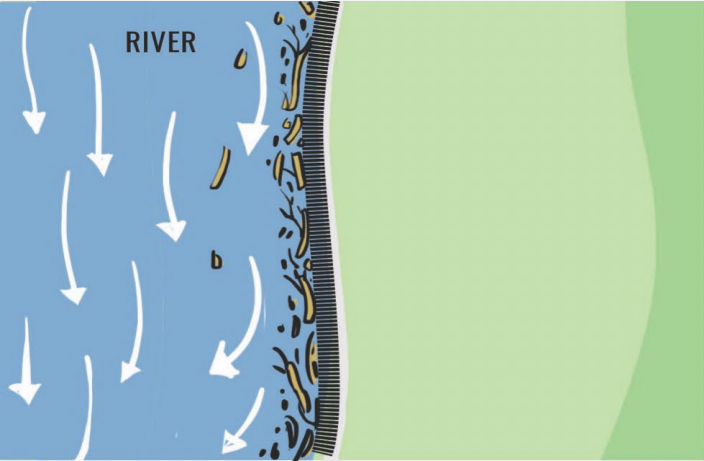


Natural, unobstructed riverbanks allow water and debris to flow



During high flooding, water & debris disperse naturally into expansive flood zones upstream of Laredo.

IMPACTS OF BORDER WALL

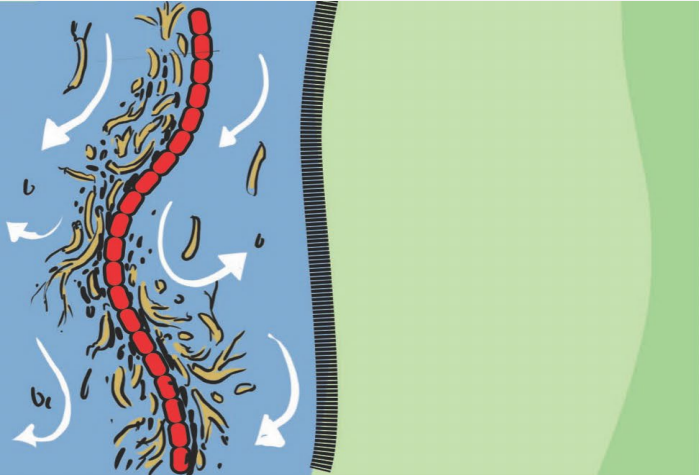


The border wall will reduce the ability of water to disperse into floodzones and will also trap debris, creating a "straight jacket" effect that will concentrate water flows, thereby increasing both the height and speed of flood waters as they enter Laredo.

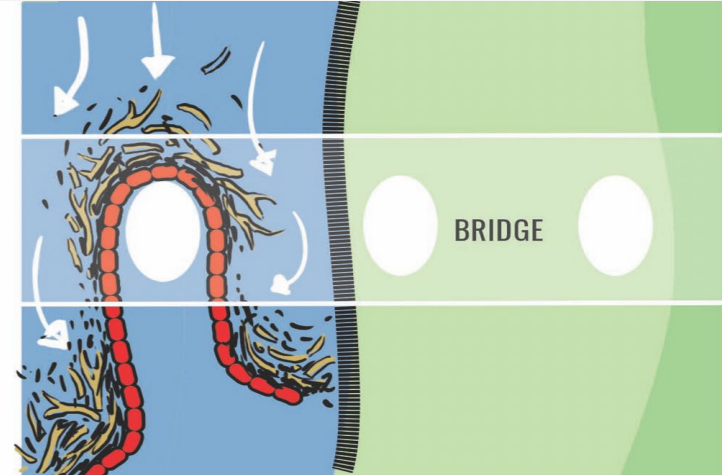


As a result, breaches in the wall become inevitable which could occur near many riverside residential areas of Laredo. These points of failure in the wall would be sites of catastrophic flooding.

IMPACTS OF BUOY SYSTEM



The buoy system will also interrupt water flow and trap debris, disrupting water flows along the entire course of the river.



Buoy sections will ultimately become dislodged and float downstream causing damage to any structures in the river, including critical bridge infrastructure.