



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
933 EAST COURT STREET · SEGUIN, TEXAS 78155 · FAX [830] 379-9718

GBRA and City of Seguin approve water rights agreement

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Contact: Judy Gardner, [830] 379-5822 or jgardner@gbra.org

SEGUIN-A cooperative effort between the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and the City of Seguin to subordinate the City's non-consumptive hydroelectric water rights was approved today by the GBRA Board of Directors. The Seguin City Council previously approved the agreement at their Aug. 4 meeting.

GBRA general manager Bill West and Seguin Mayor Mark Stautzenberger praised the agreement as "a partnership to make additional water supplies available for the Guadalupe River basin."

According to West, "water supply is very important to this basin. Presently, Canyon is the only water conservation reservoir on the Guadalupe River. Because it is difficult and time-consuming to permit and build new reservoirs, GBRA has been studying ways to increase the authorized diversion of Canyon to meet current and future water supply needs."

GBRA is currently permitted to divert 50,000 acre-feet of stored water annually from Canyon Reservoir while also honoring downstream senior water rights. Natural inflows are passed through the reservoir to honor these rights even when the reservoir is not full.

One way to improve a reservoir's firm yield, said West, is by "subordination" of downstream, non-consumptive water rights. "That is, the reservoir is allowed to store water rather than pass water through for certain non-consumptive uses. This allows a reservoir to remain full more often and will improve its firm yield."

Stautzenberger said Seguin holds two water rights, both granted by the state of Texas in 1914. "The consumptive right, which allows the city to pump up to 7,000 acre-feet per year from the Guadalupe River for municipal use, is not affected by this agreement."

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The agreement with GBRA applies only to Seguin's non-consumptive right to use up to 365 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water for hydroelectric generation. This right is available from natural flows and cannot be consumed, but must pass through to honor other downstream water rights.

According to Stautzenberger, this right has not been exercised in several years and a recent study by the City determined it was not financially practical to rehabilitate and operate the hydroelectric plant. City Manager Jack Hamlett was asked by the Council to explore options for its use and a Seguin Water Committee was appointed to consider the matter.

At about the same time, GBRA was reviewing its Canyon Reservoir storage options. "Our Board of Directors had agreed to subordinate GBRA's hydroelectric rights for the six dams at Lakes Dunlap, McQueeney, Placid, Nolte, H-4 and H-5 pending an agreement with the City," West said.

GBRA director of project development David Welsch and other staff members met with the Seguin Water Committee during its eight-month fact-finding process. The Committee was chaired by City Council member Eric Vordenbaum and included Councilman Rodger Weyel, Gloria Rivera, owner of Seguin Web Design, Fred Keiser of Keiser Manufacturing and attorney Robin Dwyer. Eventually, the Committee endorsed a series of recommendations which were prepared in the form of an agreement and approved by the Seguin City Council.

The terms of the agreement provide (1) a base payment of \$50,000 to the City each year by GBRA (2) 15% of the revenue from new water sales generated from the increased diversion amounts over and above the present 50,000 acre-foot diversion will be paid to the City by GBRA, and applied first to the base payment (3) an option for a one-time buy out by GBRA of the City's hydroelectric rights for \$7-million, and (4) all future out-of-district transfers of water from Canyon Reservoir (excluding those already under agreement) must take place downstream of Seguin.

West said the agreement supports GBRA's permit application currently before the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) to increase the firm yield and permitted diversion of stored waters in Canyon Reservoir. "City officials, staff and Committee members were truly committed to developing recommendations that are in the best interest of Seguin as well as this entire region. With their help, we will continue to work toward a secure water future for this river basin."