



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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Guadalupe Basin study will evaluate environmental effect of river flows

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SEGUIN.....As demand for water increases, so does the concern of water officials about how this will impact instream flows. For example, how much additional water can our rivers supply, through permits and other diversions, without impacting the environment or the plants and animals that depend on these flows?

To help answer these questions, directors of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority approved an Interlocal/Interagency Cooperation Contract between GBRA and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) that will identify the amount of instream flows needed on the Guadalupe River to maintain, preserve or restore instream uses, exclusive of bay and estuary freshwater inflows.

The contract approved by the Board at their August 19 meeting in Seguin “ensures that water planning officials will have access to the most current data available,” said GBRA general manager Bill West. “This information will be in the form of a hydrological and physical habitat model that can be used to evaluate the effects of proposed water management alternatives on instream uses.”

Three river segments from below Seguin to below Victoria will be selected and studied using a problem-solving method called Instream Flow Incremental Methodology, or IFIM.

Prior studies did not always use IFIM criteria but simply determined fixed minimum flows for river systems without analyzing their effect on aquatic habitats. The

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advantage of IFIM, said West, is that it uses incremental, or staged, measurements in which aquatic habitats are evaluated as a function of stream discharge.

The multi-year study began in August 1997 with a five-month Interlocal Contract among GBRA, TNRCC, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) to perform an initial river assessment. According to West, this work was completed by December 31, 1997.

The August 1998 contract divides the remainder of the project into separate research phases. TNRCC, as the lead agency, is entering into individual contracts with TPWD, TWDB and GBRA to perform specific tasks needed to complete the study by December 31, 1999.

GBRA's contract with TNRCC covers eight areas, including water quality work in the hydroelectric lakes, water quality on the river system, project administration, collection of physical habitat and benthic invertebrate data, aerial photography of the Guadalupe River and hydraulic data collection.

West said the contract amount will not exceed \$125,000 and GBRA's portion of the costs will be approximately \$50,000.