



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA announces plans for lake cleanup and summer reopening

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, February 11, 1999

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SEGUIN-Approximately 150 people who attended a meeting at the Seguin-Guadalupe County Coliseum Monday evening heard representatives from the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) and the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) discuss a proposed cleanup schedule that could reopen Lakes Dunlap, McQueeney, Placid, Nolte (Meadow), H-4 and H-5 (Lake Wood) for public use by this summer.

David Welsch, director of project development for GBRA, said the current restrictions on Lakes Dunlap, McQueeney, Placid, Nolte, H-4 and H-5 will be extended until the lakes can be lowered again to complete an extensive debris removal project. Welsch said this is necessary in order to prevent wave action from scattering debris, to protect the buoys that mark obstructions and to safeguard the general public.

Lakes H-4 and H-5 near Gonzales did not gather as much flood debris as previously expected. Based upon a reconnaissance evaluation of these two lakes planned for February 20 and 21, they may be reopened for public recreation within the next few weeks. The goal is to have Lakes Dunlap, McQueeney Placid and Nolte opened by May 1.

During the meeting, Welsch and NRCS area representative Gary Rainwater presented results of the January 23 flood damage reconnaissance, explained the process for funding and cleanup of debris, and answered questions from the audience.

The reconnaissance effort assigned teams to each lake who marked obstructions and debris with buoys, photographed their location and created maps of large debris fields and items. Welsch said most of the debris was natural, such as trees and stumps. Natural debris moved during the flood will qualify for cleanup funding, but stumps that have been underwater in the riverbed since the lakes were created will not be included.

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At their February 17 meeting, GBRA's Board of Directors will consider authorizing a formal application to NRCS for cleanup funds. Preliminary estimates place this amount between \$1.5 and 2-million. When approved, NRCS will pay 75% of the approved cost and local sponsors must contribute the remaining 25%. Potential sponsors include Guadalupe County, the City of Seguin, the City of New Braunfels and GBRA.

During the application period, reconnaissance data will be used to develop a cleanup plan that includes assigning priorities, specifications, obtaining easements, identifying burn and disposal sites, and completing timelines for lake lowerings to accomplish this work. Once funding is obtained, sponsors will advertise for and award bids and begin mobilizing contractors.

In response to questions concerning which items will qualify for the cleanup project, NRCS officials explained that obstructions and other large debris that pose public safety hazards in waterways and along shorelines will have priority, including items that could move with future floods. Trees that are leaning more than 45% adjacent to the water may also be removed.

Rainwater indicated that homeowners will still be responsible for cleaning and repairing most of their private property including boat docks, waterfronts and yards. He also said that NRCS guidelines do not include removing sediment and sand or gravel bars deposited by floodwaters, or damage caused to public boat ramps.

Welsch said extensive public notice will be provided well in advance of the cleanup effort, including dates and times of lake lowerings. "We will try to extend this over weekends so that residents can schedule waterfront repairs."

After the cleanup, a "Know Your Lake" program will most likely be in effect to give people time to become familiar with changes in lake topography. "There may be a short period of time when recreation is restricted to daylight use and to certain types of watercraft," said Welsch. "We are working hard to have the lakes open by summer, but public safety is our primary concern."

Questions about the cleanup effort should be directed to David Welsch or Allen Ognoskie at GBRA, (830) 379-5822.