



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA BOARD CONTINUES EFFORTS TO INCREASE BASIN WATER SUPPLY

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SEGUIN-Efforts to provide a dependable treated water supply to parts of the Guadalupe River Basin moved one step closer today when the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority board of directors approved treated water supply contracts with the cities of Boerne and Fair Oaks Ranch.

The contracts call for GBRA to deliver treated surface water to Boerne and Fair Oaks Ranch and other customers from a water treatment plant to be built near Canyon Reservoir and approximately 43 miles of pipeline. GBRA is responsible for design, permitting, financing, construction, operation and maintenance of the project.

“We started working on the Western Comal Treated Water Supply Project several years ago as part of an overall regional plan to provide a reliable supply of treated surface water to rapidly growing portions of western Comal and Kendall counties,” said GBRA general manager Bill West. “These areas currently rely primarily on wells drilled into the Trinity Aquifer which has a limited capacity. Some wells source the Edwards Aquifer which has a legislatively-mandated pumping cap of 450,000 acre feet per year.”

“During times of low rainfall or drought, many of these wells have water quality and quantity problems. This area must have a reliable, sustainable water supply to maintain a healthy economic and environmental climate and also to meet the challenges of a growing population,” said West.

Boerne and Fair Oaks Ranch will each receive an initial annual water commitment of approximately 1,120 acre-feet per year. Both cities also have the option to increase their total projected demand, or raw water reservation. Boerne has reserved 1,861 acre-feet per year and Fair Oaks Ranch has reserved 1,400 acre-feet per year.

The initial term of both contracts is through December 31, 2037 with options for twenty year extensions to 2057 and 2077.

GBRA previously signed similar contracts with the San Antonio Water System (SAWS), the Bexar Metropolitan Water District (BMWD) and the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) that provide for the delivery of a total of 4,000 acre feet of treated water through 2037. This will

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reduce pumping from the Edwards Aquifer and assist this region as it transitions to multiple sources of water. At the end of the contract period, this water must be used for in-basin uses.

According to West, this water supply is conditioned upon approval by TNRCC of GBRA's application to increase the authorized use of water from Canyon Reservoir. GBRA formally subordinated its non-consumptive hydrogeneration water rights after long-term hydrologic studies confirmed subordination would increase the reservoir's firm yield, to approximately 90,000 acre-feet per year. West said this will have no impact on lake levels or releases.

GBRA filed an application with the TNRCC to increase the amount of water that can be used from the reservoir each year. After a two-year review process, TNRCC declared the application 'administratively complete' and mailed notices to water right holders. As required by law, GBRA published a notice in area newspapers on August 15 to provide a thirty-day period for individuals or organizations to request a hearing on the amendment.

According to West, the increased diversion amount is a vital part of GBRA's efforts to provide additional water that can be used throughout the Guadalupe River Basin to meet long-term needs. "This amendment increases the amount of available water in the reservoir while also continuing to meet all senior water rights and instream flow requirements which provide for protection of bay and estuary inflows. TNRCC has told us this is a very prudent way to manage the water system."

West said GBRA has received a few letters in opposition to the permit amendment but is confident TNRCC will recognize the importance of the additional water supply and approve the application. "We are working on memorandums of understanding with various entities to address these respective concerns. It's important for people to understand that only a small portion of the additional Canyon Reservoir water will be used right away. The majority is like an 'insurance policy' that will track the region's growth and be there when needed," West said.

West said county judges, mayors, city managers, industries and others throughout the basin have expressed strong support for the application because they recognize its importance in relation to their future needs.