



# NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY  
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## **VOTTELER JOINS GBRA AS DIRECTOR OF WATER POLICY**

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SEGUIN. . . .Dr. Todd H. Votteler will join the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority on June 1 as director of water policy. "We are delighted to have Dr. Votteler at GBRA. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience that will be invaluable to this organization," said GBRA general manager Bill West in announcing Votteler's appointment.

Votteler served as the federal special master for Judge Lucius Bunton of the U.S. District Court in Midland during the Endangered Species Act litigation concerning the Edwards Aquifer, and was actively involved in the efforts to create the Edwards Aquifer Authority.

According to West, Votteler's responsibilities will include all areas of ground and surface water policy, both internal to GBRA and as they relate to local area water entities, state and federal agencies.

"GBRA is in the geographic center of the state's most critical regional water planning effort," said Votteler. "It has the opportunity to shape the Texas model for sustainable development of regional water resources, while at the same time upholding its responsibility as stewards of the unique natural treasures of the basin, from San Marcos and Comal Springs to San Antonio Bay."

Votteler received his Ph.D. in Environmental Geography from Southwest Texas State University in May, 2000. He holds the distinction of being SWT's first doctoral candidate, after successfully defending the University's first dissertation "Water from a Stone: The Limits of the Sustainable Development of the Edwards Aquifer." Votteler completed eleven months of research for his 468-page dissertation that examines water conservation measures for areas that get their water from the Edwards Aquifer, such as San Marcos, San Antonio and Uvalde.

Votteler's research includes three central findings. The first is a method confirming that when spring flow reaches a low point in the Fall, critical flows are likely to result the following summer. "That is when endangered species will face potential harm and those in the Guadalupe River who depend on the springs for their water supply will suffer," Votteler said.

The second finding confirms that the Edwards Aquifer Authority's current drought management plan will not maintain spring flows above critical levels during a drought. According to Votteler, the EAA's current method of depending on measurements from groundwater wells for its drought management plan is not a reliable way to prevent critical flows at the springs.

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His research calls for redesigning the current plan to focus on the spring flow of Comal and San Marcos Springs, which are home to eight threatened and endangered aquatic species. Votteler said that if the springs dry up, the entire area could face severe economic repercussions. Spring flow not only is important to the species but can also provide nearly the entire surface water flow in the lower Guadalupe River during droughts.

For the springs to dry up, Votteler said the current drought would need to continue into the summer of 2001, although "we are likely to have a problem this summer with low spring flows."

Votteler's third finding is a management methodology for the Edwards Aquifer during wet periods that ensures additional supplies of water during dry times. By storing more water during wet periods for use during the frequent droughts that affect the region, San Antonio could avoid overpumping the aquifer during critical phases. This could preserve flows from the springs, which are crucial to meet the historic water rights in the lower Guadalupe River Basin as well as to provide freshwater inflows to San Antonio Bay.

"Hopefully, some of the answers to these issues will result from the Region L planning process," said Votteler.

A native of Dallas, Votteler graduated from Highland Park High School in 1981. He earned a bachelor of science degree from The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee and a master of science degree from The University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and the Environment. After working in Washington, D.C. as a research scientist for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, he moved back to Texas in 1993 to attend the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs where he was a doctoral student until the death of his research advisor in 1995.

Votteler says his love of the outdoors as a youth has gradually evolved into a career in natural resources science, management and policy. As a part of serving as the federal special master for the U.S. District Court in Midland, Votteler prepared regional drought and long-term water supply plans for the Edwards Aquifer region, including the City of San Antonio. He spends his free time managing timberland in Northeast Texas, hunting and fishing from the Red River to the Laguna Madre, and is a regular contributor to Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine.