



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA decides not to sell Canyon Reservoir water for Labor Day recreation

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SEGUIN-Officials at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) cited current drought conditions in the Guadalupe River Basin, and the need to conserve Canyon Reservoir's stored water supply if the drought continues, as their main reasons for turning down an inquiry about selling water for recreation during the Labor Day weekend.

The inquiry came to GBRA from the Governmental Affairs Committee of the Water Oriented Recreation District "at the request of WORD permit holders." The letter, dated August 4, asked about "the possible sale of 660 acre/feet of water . . ."

"This inquiry was given serious consideration at our August 16 Board meeting," said general manager Bill West. "GBRA's Canyon permit allows it to sell stored water for several beneficial purposes, including recreation. We have contracted for recreation water on two previous occasions when reservoir commitments and weather conditions were more favorable."

Canyon Reservoir is permitted as a dual-purpose project for flood control and water storage. According to the purposes of use identified in the Texas Water Code, priority for water is given first to municipal use, next to industry, then to agriculture and finally to recreation. The priority between individual water rights is then governed by seniority.

"We are deeply concerned about the conditions in the Guadalupe River Basin and the Edwards and Trinity Aquifers due to the current drought situation," West said. "Our staff and directors could not justify releasing any additional stored water from Canyon Reservoir when we might be facing an extended drought in which every drop of water would be needed."

According to West, there are a number of indications that water resources are under significant stress. As of mid-August:

- Canyon Reservoir is more than 4 feet below normal conservation pool level;
- The inflow to Canyon Reservoir is consistently below 20 cubic feet per second (cfs) and GBRA is releasing only 50 cfs to meet its commitments;
- The flow of the Guadalupe River at Victoria is below 30% of the monthly norm;
- The mean daily spring discharge at Comal Springs is below 200 cfs, the established take level for fountain darters;
- The discharge from Comal and San Marcos Springs accounted for approximately 86% of the river flow at Victoria;

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- GBRA inflated its fabric dams at the Lower Guadalupe Diversion Dam and Salt Water Barrier on July 18 due to extremely low river flows and levels in this area. These bags prevent local water supplies from being contaminated by salt water from San Antonio Bay as the river flow declines.
- The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission notified junior water rights holders along the upper Guadalupe River that their ability to pump may be curtailed if river flows continue to decline;
- The TNRCC watermaster for South Texas, Al Segovia, reported that of the six river basins he monitors, the Guadalupe River basin "is in the worst shape."

West said GBRA will continue to give future requests serious consideration and make every effort to accommodate them. "However, our first priority and responsibility is to protect available water supplies needed to sustain life."