



NEWS

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GBRA board approves landmark water supply agreement with SAWS and SARA

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SEGUIN.....A landmark water supply agreement unanimously approved today by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) board of directors will eventually provide the San Antonio metropolitan area with its first alternative water supply to the Edwards Aquifer.

The San Antonio Water System (SAWS) and the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) are each scheduled to vote on the agreement at their respective board meetings next week.

According to GBRA general manager W. E. "Bill" West, Jr., the agreement represents almost three years of hard work by GBRA, SAWS and SARA. "This is tangible evidence of our commitment to create regional solutions that will fulfill our mutual water needs. The Lower Guadalupe Basin project is truly a win-win situation for everyone because it fully utilizes this regional water resource, helps reduce the demand on the Edwards Aquifer and protects the aquifer springflows that are so vital to the continued water health of this region."

Under the agreement, GBRA will sell 70,000 acre-feet of raw water annually from the lower Guadalupe River Basin to SAWS and SARA who will treat and deliver this water to their customers and other regional providers in their respective service areas. SAWS' share of the agreement amounts to approximately 90% of the total supply while the San Antonio River Authority will use the remaining 10% in its four-county service area.

"We are delighted to be able to share our resources with others in this region," said GBRA board chair Pamela Hodges. "Our goal is to be an active partner and a good neighbor in the effort to locate additional water supplies for San Antonio and Bexar County. The water available under this agreement for the next 50 years will supplement their reliance on the Edwards Aquifer while providing time to develop diversified water supply sources."

In response to this news, Craig D. Pedersen, Executive Administrator of the Texas Water Development Board said, "I would like to congratulate GBRA, SAWS and SARA for this effort. The ability and willingness of these agencies to join forces in implementing a project of this complexity and scale exemplifies the type of cooperative outcomes that have been facilitated by the Senate Bill 1 process. TWDB staff will be looking for opportunities to assist these parties in implementing this project."

The project's water source is run-of-the-river rights owned by GBRA below the junction of the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers. "The lower basin is an ideal location to divert water because it allows upstream users to have access to the flows throughout their downstream journey," said West.

More-more-more

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GBRA will be responsible for construction of the diversion facilities and pump station on the lower Guadalupe River, while SAWS and SARA will construct the pipeline to Bexar County and water treatment components of the project.

According to West, the water to be sold to SAWS and SARA represents that portion of GBRA's water rights that have not been fully utilized over the years. "We have already identified and reserved from these existing rights the amount of water needed in-basin over the 50-year term of the agreement," said West.

The agreement provides for an initial reservation period of one to seven years, during which time SAWS and SARA will pay an approximate annual fee of \$12 per acre-foot of water. Once water delivery begins, the cost will increase to \$60 per acre-foot in addition to an annual inflation factor based on the Consumer Price Index. The amount of water sold to SAWS and SARA will gradually decline over the life of the agreement until it reaches zero acre-feet.

During this time, SAWS and SARA will be looking for additional sources of water to replace the gradually declining amount supplied by GBRA, West said. "Their goal is to keep the pipeline full. They have a number of options for this replacement water, including off-channel storage reservoirs, water from other river basins and desalination. The next 50 years will be challenging times for water planners. We will need to move from regional cooperation to statewide cooperative projects to meet the future water needs of Texas."