



GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
933 EAST COURT STREET □ SEGUIN, TEXAS 78155 □ FAX [830] 379-9718

GBRA moves to secure water supply for region

Will ask TNRCC to amend water rights for delivery outside district, as part of Water Supply Agreement with SAWS and SARA, and also apply for unappropriated Guadalupe River rights dedicating freshwater for bay and estuary inflows

For more information, contact Judy Gardner, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
Tel: 830/379-5822; or email jgardner@gbra.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 28, 2001

SEGUIN – In a decisive effort to secure a substantial source of water for the future of the Guadalupe River system, San Antonio and the region, while at the same time protecting springflow levels, instream flows, and bay and estuary inflows for San Antonio Bay, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) Board of Directors today authorized general manager Bill West to file applications with the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC).

“This is a historic milestone in that it replaces 50 years of destructive competition with constructive cooperation between the citizens of the Guadalupe River and those who rely on the Edwards Aquifer,” said West.

The first application to be filed with TNRCC will request amendments to six existing water rights permits owned by GBRA in the lower Guadalupe River, downstream of the confluence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers. This would allow water from these rights to be used within GBRA’s ten-county statutory district and other areas in the region outside the Authority’s jurisdiction.

The second application will authorize a new permit for the diversion of unappropriated flows. In this application, GBRA will request authorization to divert the unappropriated water from the Guadalupe River, upstream of the GBRA Salt Water Barrier. That water could be used to meet future demands within the middle and lower Guadalupe River. It also provides for the sustainable use of the region’s water resources, while protecting instream flows and bay and estuary flows.

“The Board action today breaks new ground in Texas water planning and emphasizes the fact that, when it comes to water, we’re all in this together,” said West. “Both applications are necessary to secure future water supplies for the Guadalupe River system and surrounding region as part of the new State Water Plan.”

The Plan, which is currently being reviewed by the Texas Water Development Board, will be presented to the Legislature for action during the 2003 session.

(more-more-more)

GBRA – TNRCC water rights amendments

Page 2 of 3

November 28, 2001

The applications are also cornerstones of option SCTN-16c in the Region L Water Plan, produced under the Senate Bill 1 water planning process. According to West, that option has three components: 1) an amendment of GBRA's existing lower Guadalupe water rights to deliver water on a temporary, interim basis, 2) an application to divert unappropriated flows from the Guadalupe River and deliver water on a longer term basis, and 3) the use of groundwater as a supplemental source. The Region L Water Plan does not contain any new major reservoirs.

In the first proposed amendment, water associated with existing water rights will serve municipal, industrial and irrigation customers within GBRA's service area.

Remaining water, which will not be needed along the Guadalupe River for a number of years, is the source of supply for a Water Supply and Delivery Agreement signed on May 10, 2001 by GBRA, the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) and the San Antonio River Authority (SARA).

"This water lease is an important component of that agreement between the three agencies and will provide a temporary supply for the San Antonio area while they obtain other permanent, long-term water sources," said West. "Over the life of the contract, the amount of water committed to SAWS and SARA will decrease in steps, as that water is needed along the Guadalupe River."

"By helping San Antonio diversify its water sources and reduce pumping from the Edwards Aquifer, we are protecting flows from the Comal Springs and San Marcos Springs. This springflow contributes up to 80% of the baseflow of the Guadalupe River. With this plan in place, more baseflow will actually be available during the most critical months, and will help to maintain instream and freshwater flows for bays and estuaries, especially during low rainfall and drought conditions."

Under the terms of the fifty-year agreement, GBRA will initially deliver up to 70,000 acre-feet of raw water per year to SAWS and SARA for use in Bexar County/San Antonio and in the rest of SARA's four-county district. Additional amounts can be purchased on an interruptible basis, when available, and when not needed in the Guadalupe River system. By diverting the vast majority of the water at the Salt Water Barrier, instream flows in the Guadalupe River are protected.

The Agreement also requires that GBRA amend its existing water rights so that water can be diverted and delivered to SAWS and SARA. "This is why GBRA has taken this action today," said West. "We cannot wait to ensure the water future of this region. Our partners in this project – SAWS and SARA -- are not waiting either. They are already taking the steps necessary to bring this water to the San Antonio area by 2010."

West emphasized that "this project does not include delivery of any Canyon Reservoir water to SAWS or SARA. The water to be supplied will come from that portion of GBRA's water rights that are not currently needed along the Guadalupe River."

GBRA will build, own and operate the diversion pump station. SAWS and SARA will construct approximately 130 miles of pipeline, as well as treatment and storage facilities.

West also emphasized that the agreement does not decrease the availability of water or the commitment of water to current GBRA water customers in the Calhoun-Victoria-Refugio Counties area. In fact,

(more-more-more)

GBRA – TNRCC water rights amendments

Page 3 of 3

November 28, 2001

the contract specifically provides that the water delivered to SAWS and SARA will be ‘junior and subordinate’ to the water used to supply local customers using those water rights in the GBRA service area.

West said the pumping facilities to be located on the lower Guadalupe River will be owned and operated by GBRA. “The income received by GBRA from the project will allow GBRA to make improvements to its Calhoun Canal System, as well as implement other water resource projects within the GBRA service area.”

GBRA’s second application to TNRCC for rights to unappropriated water in the Guadalupe River is also addressed in the Water Supply and Delivery Agreement among GBRA, SAWS and SARA. This application contains protections for bay and estuary flows that West believes will establish a new standard for the state.

According to West, this application for unappropriated water will be a competing application to one filed on July 10, 2000 by the San Marcos River Foundation (SMRF) and currently pending before TNRCC. The SMRF application asks for approximately 1.3 million acre-feet of state water in the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers.

West said GBRA has not determined an exact amount of water to be requested in the permit application. “There are differences of opinion as to how much water is actually available. We feel strongly that this should be decided by a combination of Water Availability Modeling and an agreement with TNRCC, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The new Regional Water Plan is the only option that actually increases bay and estuary flows above current levels once all of the elements of the plan are implemented. As opposed to the SMRF permit application, GBRA’s proposed permit is part of the new Region L Water Plan,” said West.

“GBRA also believes a water right of this size and consequence, with bay and estuary freshwater inflow requirements, should be granted to appropriate governmental entities subject to legislative oversight. GBRA has a history of responsible operation, and the staff and experience necessary to ensure that this water permit is managed properly. The implications of this permit are far-reaching and too important to delegate to an organization that is not accountable to anyone at the state level. In contrast, GBRA and all other river authorities will now undergo regular reviews by the new Water Advisory Council.”

“GBRA’s application will contain conditions for bay and estuary needs. We strongly support these flows and the protection of wildlife and this will be an integral part of this permit application,” said West.

According to West, a number of entities are currently opposing the SMRF application and requesting a contested case hearing before TNRCC. In addition to GBRA, these entities include the Texas Water Conservation Association, Kerr County, Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District, San Antonio Water System, City of Kerrville, Upper Guadalupe River Authority and Canyon Regional Water Authority.