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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GBRA presents "River of Life" curriculum to sixth, seventh & eighth grades

SAN ANTONIO — Frederick "Fritz" Schlather, Guadalupe County director, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) board of directors, will present a new interdisciplinary middle school curriculum, "River of Life," to the New Braunfels Independent School District Friday, January 31. The new curriculum, which was developed and funded by GBRA, includes teacher training and inservice support and will be distributed free to all sixth, seventh and eighth grade classrooms in GBRA's statutory district, which includes Comal, Calhoun, Victoria, DeWitt, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Hays, Refugio, Caldwell, and Kendall counties.

The project began several years ago when GBRA conducted a basin-wide survey, to find out what teachers and students wanted to know about water, as part of its ongoing curriculum development program.

"They requested that GBRA develop a curriculum with current information about a wide range of water issues, lesson plans, classroom and lab activities and lots of enrichment options," said Judy Gardner, GBRA manager of communications and education. "We also assembled a steering committee with at least one middle school science or social studies teacher from each county in GBRA's statutory district. They met to offer suggestions for the overall structure and main lesson topics and review the materials that were developed. Each teacher also wrote a lesson unique to his or her county or area. This is truly a 'grass roots' effort that will result in a curriculum that reflects the needs and interests of the basin's students and teachers." Candy Bagley of Saegert Middle School and Jane Reed of Briesemeister Middle School, Seguin ISD, represented Guadalupe County on the steering committee.

GBRA engaged education consultant Cinde Thomas-Jimenez to direct the project, develop the overall curriculum and hands-on activities, and provide the teacher training and inservice components. In addition to 10 years of teaching experience, Mrs. Thomas-Jimenez has developed school programs, teacher training, and curriculum for various water agencies including the Edwards Underground Water District (now the Edwards Aquifer Authority), the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, Bexar Metropolitan Water District, the Lower Colorado River Authority and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (formerly the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission).

The state-mandated TEKS and TAAS elements are correlated to the curriculum. The history and geography of the Guadalupe River Basin and its watersheds, surface and groundwater, mapping activities, water use, distribution and management issues, conservation, aquatic life, and water quality and treatment are included in the lessons. The curriculum includes includes maps, photos of the river and basin, and interactive materials.

Gardner said the project is part of a sequenced water education program developed by GBRA that begins in the fourth grade with the “Journey Through the Guadalupe River Basin” elementary curriculum.

“Eventually, we plan to complete a high school curriculum that will be the third, and final, phase of GBRA’s water education program,” said Gardner. “Our goal is to help young people gain a better understanding of their water resources and how critical it is to protect water for themselves and future generations.”

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