NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA to Participate in Water Quality Study of Canyon Lake

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SEGUIN- Canyon Lake is one of nine Texas reservoirs that will be included in a two-year study to determine how the presence of algae affects recreational activities on the lakes. The results of the study could help state and federal water-quality regulators in setting water quality standards for nutrients to ensure fishable, swimmable water as required by the federal Clean Water Act.
The study by the Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA), in association with the Texas Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies (TAMSA), will investigate the level at which algal growth affects visitors' interest in boating, swimming, fishing and other recreational activities.

"If algae is present in a sufficient amount to discourage recreation, then it becomes a water-quality issue," said Peggy Glass of Alan Plummer Associates, Inc. The environmental engineering firm is coordinating the study for the TWCA, a nonprofit organization representing river authorities, water districts, associations, industries and municipalities throughout Texas.

"The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, helped sponsor and fund the construction of Canyon Reservoir," said GBRA general manager Bill West, Jr. Since 1964, this structure has provided flood protection benefits and a reliable supply of stored water to the Guadalupe River Basin and region."

"This study is just one of many to which GBRA has contributed funding and employee expertise, as part of our dedication to 'protect, conserve, reclaim and steward' the water resources in the Guadalupe River Basin," said West. "GBRA employees will be collecting water samples and surveying recreational users for the next two summers at the lake. We look forward to working with visitors and residents to gather information that can be used to protect the long-term water quality of this beautiful facility."

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In addition to Canyon Lake, the study will gather data at eight other reservoirs, which are popular recreational centers:

Lake Bridgeport, in Wise County northwest of Fort Worth on the West Fork of the Trinity River; Cedar Creek Reservoir, in Henderson County southeast of Dallas on Cedar Creek in the Trinity River watershed; Lake Livingston, in Polk, San Jacinto, Trinity and Walker counties north of Houston on the Trinity River; Lake Georgetown, in Williamson County near Austin on the San Gabriel River in the Brazos River watershed; Lake Granger, in Williamson County near Austin on the San Gabriel River in the Brazos River watershed; Lake Fork Reservoir, in Wood County east of Dallas on Lake Fork Creek in the Sabine River watershed; and Lake Travis, in Travis County near Austin on the Colorado River, Lake Houston, in Harris County near Houston on the San Jacinto River.

Twice a month each summer, water quality monitor teams from participating river authorities, water districts and councils of government will assess conditions in the reservoirs with respect to algae and associated water quality measures. They also will survey recreational users on their perceptions of water quality conditions and the resulting suitability for recreational activities.

The presence of algae doesn't usually pose hazards to human health. However, excessive algae growth, referred to as an algae bloom, is unsightly and sometimes odorous. Algae blooms can result when high amounts of nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, are discharged to a water body. The nutrients may come from discharges from wastewater treatment plants, spills, or fertilizers that are washed off the land by storm runoff.

When the TWCA completes its first year of study, it will submit an interim report in early 2004 to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the state agency responsible for setting water quality standards. The commission intends to submit its recommendations for nutrient standards to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by December 2004.

"The study will provide insights on the extent to which nutrient standards are needed to protect recreational uses of major reservoirs. The adoption of nutrient standards can lead to more stringent limits for discharge permits and increased emphasis on management programs for nonpoint sources such as agricultural and urban storm water runoff, " said West.

TWCA member organizations participating in the study include the Brazos River Authority, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Lower Colorado River Authority, Sabine River Authority, San Antonio River Authority, Tarrant Regional Water District, and Trinity River Authority.

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