



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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GBRA ENDORSES USE OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE PROCESS FOR SPRING FLOW MANAGEMENT

River authority would consider increasing pumping cap if all stakeholders participate in cooperative process and springflow protections during droughts are assured

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Seguin, Texas - On Wednesday, November 15, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) board of directors voted to support the Guadalupe Basin Coalition's resolution calling for Edwards Aquifer management legislation that would allow increased pumping if the State uses the Recovery Implementation Program process. The concession would clear the way for the EAA to fulfill the approximately 549,000 acre-feet per year permitted obligations and could help avoid litigation that has cost millions in the past. The Guadalupe Basin Coalition's resolution calls for Texas to use the process to achieve a consensus agreement among all stakeholders to insure that the Comal and San Marcos spring flows are protected.

Joy Nicholopoulos, Texas State Administrator for Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, presented the Recovery Implementation Program process for the Edwards Aquifer at the GBRA board meeting Wednesday. The GBRA board voted to approve the resolution with the qualification that: "GBRA supports Resolution No. 2006-1 of the Guadalupe Basin Coalition, provided the proposed critical period withdrawal reductions are adjusted so that adequate continuous springflows from both the Comal and San Marcos Springs will be protected at all times, including throughout a repeat of the drought of record."

According to General Manager Bill West, the endorsement is an effort to encourage the Legislature to use the Recovery Implementation Program process for the Edwards Aquifer. The process would bring together all the federal, state and local stakeholders to facilitate a plan that protects spring flows and the water rights of all who depend on the Edwards Aquifer.

"Whether you depend on the Edwards Aquifer for direct well access to water or for the Guadalupe River which provides water resources to communities and the bay and estuary system at the coast, it is a resource that demands thoughtful, regional management," said West. "The Guadalupe's lifeblood is the spring flow from the Comal and San Marcos springs, especially in times of drought. It is critical that we all protect that spring flow and the Edwards Aquifer that feeds it. By using this cooperative process we can get everyone to the table and start moving forward on the water challenges that face us. Providing adequate water resources will only become more and more difficult to address in the future as our population and development increases. GBRA and the communities in the Guadalupe Basin will live with increased pumping to accommodate the Edwards Aquifer Authority's (EAA's) existing permits if we can all agree to move forward together under the Recovery Implementation Program process."

Citing programs including the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Act Collaborative Program, the Upper Colorado and the San Juan Recovery Implementation Programs, the Platte River Endangered Species Partnership and the Lower Colorado Multi-species Conservation Program as examples of successful cooperative conservation efforts, West said the process holds promise for achieving a consensus agreement on managing water resources in the area and could prevent litigation over the issue in the future.

"GBRA is committed to working with all those involved to assure that we all have the water we're going to need for our citizens, the economic development required to sustain us all, and the natural environment that we all appreciate and want to keep for our children and grandchildren," said West. "Getting the U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas Water Development Board, Texas Parks & Wildlife, U.S. Geological Survey, EAA, San Antonio Water System (SAWS), GBRA, South Central Water Advisory Committee, Texas A&M University, the Guadalupe Basin Coalition, the Texas Farm Bureau, environmental groups and all the concerned state and federal agencies to work together will allow us to develop criteria using a science-based process."

The Recovery Implementation Program process has already been presented to the EAA, SAWS and other groups with positive responses. Nicholopoulos hopes to set an initial meeting of potential stakeholders in January.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased with the response from potential stakeholders for a Recovery Implementation Program for the Edwards Aquifer, said Nicholopoulos. "We look forward to working with stakeholders to help address complex conservation issues in the Edwards Aquifer through the Recovery Implementation Program process, which is an excellent example of cooperative conservation."

West urged those depending on water resources from the Edwards Aquifer and the Guadalupe River Basin to encourage their legislators to call for use of the cooperative conservation process. For more information on cooperative conservation, see www.doi.gov/initiatives/conservation. For information on GBRA, see www.gbra.org