



Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
933 E. Court Street, Seguin TX 78155
www.gbra.org

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Historic Partnership Provides Conservation of Wetlands and Wildlife in Guadalupe River System

For more information

LaMarriol Smith, GBRA, (830) 379-5822, lsmith@gbra.org

Environmental organizations operating in and around the Guadalupe River Basin recently formed an historic four-way partnership to work together for the conservation of wetlands and wildlife in the Guadalupe River system.

Formed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), this partnership includes the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust), the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), the San Antonio Bay Foundation (SABAY) and Ducks Unlimited (DU), and is evidence of the broad array of supporters who recognize the Guadalupe River as being among the most unique rivers in the country and are committed to protecting the river and its associated habitats.

The agreement was conceived in 2009 when Todd H. Votteler, Ph.D., representing both the GBRA and the GBR Trust met with Scott Yaich, Ph.D., director of conservation operations for DU at Ducks Unlimited's national headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee. The purpose of the discussion was to begin exploring a formal relationship regarding cooperative conservation projects in the Guadalupe River Basin. Calhoun and Refugio counties have been identified as priority wetlands conservation areas in the North American Waterfowl Conservation Plan, a plan that has been a major focus of DU's conservation efforts. After the initial meeting additional steps were taken to explore the possibility of a more formal working relationship, including contacts between DU management and the GBRA Board, and the addition of Todd Merendino, Ph.D., DU's Texas manager for conservation programs, to the GBR Trust Board.

The goal of this MOU is to establish a framework between the participants to facilitate cooperative efforts in the conservation of important natural resources of mutual concern associated with the Guadalupe River system through the establishment of a formal relationship. "This agreement will be a model for cooperation and achievement between international conservation organizations, and local conservation and government entities around the country. I have already heard from other groups that want to create similar partnerships," said Votteler.

With its origins in the Texas Hill Country and its connection to the major springs of the Edwards Aquifer to the delta and bays on the Texas Coast, the river system supports an astonishing array of unique natural habitats while providing for the needs of people.

"San Antonio Bay is surrounded by priority wetlands. Having an agreement in place with such respected environmental organizations will only help facilitate future conservation projects," said Tommie Streeter-Rhoad, executive director of the San Antonio Bay Foundation.

"Conservation is most effective when supported by diverse partnerships," said Steve Jester, executive director of the Trust. "While each organization in the new agreement has a different focus, each values the water, wetlands and associated habitats of the Guadalupe River system, particularly those found in counties along the Texas coast." Consequently, even though organizational missions and methods may differ, there is broad overlap in desired outcomes of long term conservation of functional wetland and riparian habitats that provide such great benefit to both nature and local communities.

The GBR Trust and DU have already found a way to put this new partnership to work on the ground. A large part of the Trust's work in conserving the resources of the Guadalupe River system involves the use of perpetual conservation easements donated by landowners. Landowners who want to permanently conserve their property through a donated conservation easement typically incur a number of costs associated with the transaction. Ducks Unlimited has agreed to consider reimbursement for some of these transaction costs for landowners donating a conservation easement to the Trust in areas where DU is actively working on habitat restoration and conservation. Ducks Unlimited in turn will seek to leverage the value of the donated conservation easements as match for grants to restore and enhance more wetland habitat, ultimately



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contributing further to the mission of all signatories of the four-party agreement.

“The Trust is looking forward to many more cooperative efforts with DU , GBRA and the Bay Foundation” Jester added.

The GBRA was established by the Texas Legislature in 1933 as a water conservation and reclamation district. GBRA provides stewardship for the water resources in its 10-county statutory district, which begins near the headwaters of the Guadalupe and Blanco rivers, ends at San Antonio Bay, and includes Kendall, Comal, Hays, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Gonzales, DeWitt, Victoria, Calhoun, and Refugio counties.