



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

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GBRA Votes in Favor of EARIP Habitat Conservation Plan

Vote caps four years of work-Plan designed to protect endangered and threatened species

For more information

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SEGUIN, TX — Twenty-four members of the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (EARIP) steering committee, including a representative of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), voted in favor of approving the draft habitat conservation plan and associated documents during a meeting Monday, Nov. 7, 2011, at the GBRA River Annex Office in Seguin, TX.

About 60 people attended the meeting that put forth the vote culminating four years of EARIP work balancing aquifer water use and supply with the needs of endangered and threatened species. Representing diverse and sometimes conflicting interests spanning from the Hill Country to the Gulf Coast, the stakeholder steering committee, the science subcommittee, and EARIP Program Manager Robert Gulley worked tirelessly to develop and reach consensus on a habitat conservation plan for species dependent on the Edwards Aquifer and the water that flows from its springs.

Of the 26-member EARIP steering committee comprised of state and regional water agencies, municipalities, industries, agriculture, environmental organizations and the public, a member representing a Medina County utility district opposed the plan, and a member representing industrial aquifer pumpers abstained from the vote.

“While not perfect, the agreement reached today will provide greater protection for Comal and San Marcos springs, the endangered and non-endangered wildlife dependent on the springs, and those who rely on the water from the cities, industries and agriculture on down to San Antonio Bay,” Bill West, GBRA general manager said.

Todd Votteler, Ph.D., GBRA’s executive manager of intergovernmental relations and policy and GBRA’s representative to the EARIP, said, “The agreement reached at GBRA today will have impacts far beyond the Edwards Aquifer region and the Guadalupe River Basin. This agreement will result in changes to the way Texas manages water and endangered species that will radiate throughout the state over the coming decades much as legislation and court rulings regarding the Edwards Aquifer have done since the 1950s.”

During the 2007 Legislative Session, legislators mandated the Edwards Aquifer Authority to develop a Recovery Implementation Program, which is an initiative designed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that brings multiple stakeholders together to resolve critical environmental issues.

“We have to give a lot of credit to the program manager,” Votteler said, adding, “Under the leadership of Robert Gulley the region’s stakeholders found ways to bridge their differences and come together in what is a rare example today of all that can be accomplished when people from different points of view commit to work together.”

The final habitat conservation plan will be sent to the USFWS for review. After review, the plan implementation could begin in about a year.

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.



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