



Texas Water Conservation Association

Texas Water Day 2006

♦ WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT (WRDA) & THE U.S. CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The future of Texas water depends on a strong federal partnership. The TWCA strongly supports the reauthorization of the WRDA, inclusion of a Texas Environmental Infrastructure Program in WRDA, and adequate funding for the Corps of Engineers.

Background:

The projects needed to meet the challenge of providing for the water needs of Texas' future have been identified through the grass-roots SBI planning process. The estimated cost is over \$17 billion. It is critical to establish a local-State-federal partnership to implement, on a priority basis, the SBI water projects. The proposed Texas Environmental Infrastructure Program will bridge the gap between planning and construction. Critical to Texas water is strengthening the partnership with the Corps of Engineers. A strong partner is needed to provide solutions for the many challenges of meeting the future water needs of Texas. The Corps should have a key role in providing for the water supply needs of Texas in a balanced, watershed-based approach. The long history of partnership between the Corps and Texas should not only be continued but focused to help implement solutions.

Request:

We ask your support for provisions of Water Resources Development Act that provide for this balanced federal partnership and for establishing the Environmental Infrastructure Program for Texas in WRDA.

♦ U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY FUNDING (USGS)–CRITICAL DATA FOR TEXAS WATER DECISIONS

Data provided by the USGS is critical for planning and management of Texas Water resources issues. The USGS stream gages provide a long-term set of invaluable hydrologic data for the State and local officials managing water resources. Continued reduction in USGS funding to support the gaging network has resulted in reduction in the number of gages.

Background:

At issue is the reduction of stream and reservoir gaging stations nationwide, with our focus on Texas. The cooperator program originally began as a 50/50 cost-sharing program between the USGS and local cooperators to fund gage operation and data collection. It has now shifted to a much higher cost share to the local cooperator, some as high as 75/25. Consequently, at a time when water supply, emergency management and environmental monitoring are increasingly critical, collection of the basic data is shrinking. The data is used by a number of agencies and individuals, well beyond the needs of the local cooperator. It is in the national interest to have a single integrated system providing real-time and historical stream flow information for all users, including water managers, emergency managers, recreational water users, engineers, and scientists. The USGS Cooperative Program design is to do this. However, in the current environment, approximately seventy stations are lost annually nationwide. This continued eroding of basic data collection compromises all aspects of water supply, flood warning and environmental protection.

Request:

We ask your support to provide a plus up of \$2.5 million for the Cooperative Program, earmarked for Texas, and return it to true 50/50 partnership and a plus up of \$3.5 million in the USGS National Streamflow Information Program earmarked for Texas.



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- More Statewide Water Issues on Reverse -

Other Statewide Water Issues

◆ PRIVATE ACTIVITY BONDS

Private activity bonds are tax-exempt issues targeted to spur investment in private activities for the public good. In Texas, numerous smaller systems are built, operated, and maintained by WSCs, which are eligible for tax-exempt financing only through the private activity volume cap. Even larger, public water suppliers can be affected by the private activity volume cap constraints. Related is the need to restore tax-exempt eligibility for “air and water pollution control facilities,” which can be achieved without removing these facilities from existing caps. Tax-exempt status would help state and local governments deal with high costs of environmental regulations. *We ask for your support of HR 1708 to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that the volume cap for private activity bonds shall not apply to bonds for water and wastewater projects and for your support on H.R. 4993 to restore tax-exempt status to air and water pollution control facilities financing.*

◆ FLOOD CONTROL & FEMA FUNDING

Flooding in Texas, and most recently Hurricanes Rita and Claudette, has again emphasized the need for a coordinated, watershed approach to address floodplains and safety. With the Administration and Congress looking to the states to take larger roles in preparing for and recovering from natural disasters, Texas has both opportunity and challenge. *We ask for your support of S. 2005, funding of the FEMA pre-disaster mitigation, and the Map Modernization Initiative.*

◆ WATER REUSE

Water reuse is one of the most significant water management strategies being adopted to meet the water requirements of Texas. Water reuse is a critical component of the future water supply needs and to support economic development of Texas and our nation. Sound science and technology must be developed in order to maximize the application of water reuse in an affordable manner. *We ask for your support to provide federal funding (e.g., Title 16, EPA Research Grant Program) for research needed to develop sound science and technology to support the implementation of water reuse projects.*

◆ BRACKISH GROUNDWATER & SEAWATER DESALINATION

The increasing demand for water, coupled with the state’s vulnerability to drought events, compel water planners to consider all potential sources of water. Recent reports by the state indicate that brackish groundwater and seawater desalination offer viable alternatives as a water supply source. *Support capital funding for developing new drought-proof water supplies by means of seawater desalination and continued federal funding for research for seawater and brackish water desalination technologies.*

◆ INVASIVE AQUATIC & RIPARIAN PLANTS

A concern regarding invasive plants in Texas is its consumption of large amounts of water, which can displace the ecosystem. Additionally, the unchecked growth of giant salvinia, water hyacinth, hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil, for example, seriously impacts water supply, water quality, hydropower production, flood control, navigation, recreation, fish and wildlife benefits, property values, and even human health. As an arid state experiencing drought conditions, Texas cannot afford additional water loss due to these invasive plants. *We ask your support of passage and funding of the Salt Cedar and Russian Olive Control Demonstration Act (H.R. 2720 and S. 177), full funding of the Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act 2004 (P.L. 108-412) for FY07, and funding for the U.S. Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plan Control (APC) and Aquatic Plant Control Research Program (APCRP).*

◆ SMALL PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

New drinking water regulations are adversely impacting small water systems in Texas. The treatment and removal of naturally-occurring contaminants is almost exclusively a problem for small water systems that have no available alternate water source. Capital costs for treatment is much higher for these smaller water systems. A large number of small water systems in Texas are privately-owned and, therefore, are unqualified to access most tax subsidized public funds. This only serves to further the burden on the private water system’s ratepayers. *We ask for your support of continued funding for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and support of S. 2161 to prevent the enforcement of national primary drinking water regulations unless sufficient funding is provided for the treatment and removal of naturally-occurring groundwater contaminants, as well as an amendment to expand coverage to all naturally-occurring contaminants, such as fluoride and radionuclides.*



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