

Sierra Club to Hold Coastal Public Forums in September

Events Will Focus on New Process to Preserve Freshwater Inflows

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club – in cooperation with other statewide and regional conservation organizations – will hold public forums in Houston and Beaumont this September to focus attention on a new state process for identifying and preserving flowing rivers and freshwater inflows into Texas coastal bays and estuaries. Both SB 3 and HB 3, enacted by the Texas Legislature this past spring, outline a stakeholder and scientific process for the protection of “environmental flows” that will be implemented for various bays and associated river basins over the next several years.

Beginning in November, this process will be conducted over the next two years on the upper Texas coast for Galveston Bay and Sabine Lake and their respective river basins. In 2008 the process will be initiated for bays and river basins on the middle Texas coast, and in 2009 the process begins for the water resources on the lower Texas coast.

Speakers at both the Houston and Beaumont forums will be Myron Hess, National Wildlife Federation; Wendy Gordon, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; and David Bradsby, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. They will provide background on the environmental flows issue, an overview of the new environmental flows allocation process, and a look at specific issues affecting Galveston Bay and Sabine Lake and the respective river basins.

The Houston forum will be held September 26 at the Children’s Museum of Houston, located at 1500 Binz in the Museum District. The Galveston Bay Foundation and other local groups are co-sponsoring this event.

The Beaumont forum will be held September 27 at the Holiday Inn Beaumont Plaza, located at 3950 Interstate 10 South (at Walden Road) – not to be confused with the Holiday Inn Midtown in Beaumont.

Both forums will be evening events. Food and drinks will be provided for attendees from 6 to 7 p.m. Presentations will begin at 7 p.m., and the sessions will conclude by 9 p.m. Ample time will be provided for questions from the audience to the three speakers.

These coastal forums are free and open to the public. However, the Sierra Club requests that people planning to attend one or both of the forums complete and send in a pre-registration form by Monday, September 24 so that adequate arrangements may be made for food and seating. Attendees will be welcome at the door even if they have not pre-registered, but seating will be limited at both events. A pre-registration form may be found on the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter website (www.texas.sierraclub.org) or may be obtained by calling the Sierra Club office in Austin at 512-477-1729.

For additional information, contact Jennifer Walker, Water Resources Specialist, Sierra Club, at the phone number above or via e-mail at jennifer.walker@sierraclub.org.