

**Joint Press Release  
National Wildlife Federation,  
Environmental Defense, and  
Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club**

**ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS LEGISLATION IMPORTANT  
FOR TEXAS RIVERS AND BAYS**

(May 30, 2007 - Austin) As a result of legislation passed during the recent legislative session, the state will soon launch a major effort to protect Texas rivers and coastal bays. Article 1 of both Senate Bill 3 by Senator Averitt and House Bill 3 by Representatives Puente and Hilderbran create a stakeholder-driven process for determining how much water must be allowed to remain flowing in rivers and into bays to keep them healthy and productive.

Recommendations developed by stakeholders and an accompanying scientific review process will be used by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to adopt formal environmental flow standards and to set-aside a reasonable amount of state water for the specific purpose of protecting rivers and bays. Existing water rights permits will not be affected.

"This legislation is an important milestone in the effort to protect Texas rivers and bays," said Myron Hess, Manager of Texas Water Programs for the National Wildlife Federation. "It represents an unprecedented agreement between conservation organizations and water development interests that grew out of an extensive study process supported by Governor Perry, Lt. Governor Dewhurst, and Speaker Craddick," added Hess.

All water in streams and rivers is publicly-owned. However, over the course of more than a hundred years the state has issued perpetual permits to farmers, cities, golf course operators, industries, and others to withdraw water from the streams and rivers. Many additional permit applications currently are pending. As a result, river flows are threatened.

"It is critically important to ensure that we leave sufficient water in our rivers to keep them healthy and productive," said Mary Kelly, Attorney and Co-Director, Land, Water and Wildlife Program at Environmental Defense. "Adequate flow levels are important for fish and wildlife and also are critical for protecting water quality. In addition, coastal bays need sufficient river flows to provide nutrients and sediments and to keep salinity levels in check. Billions of dollars of economic activity such as commercial and recreational fishing and tourism are at stake," added Ms. Kelly.

"The passage of environmental flows legislation marks the beginning of an extensive public process designed to give interested folks a voice in deciding what kind of future they want for their local rivers and bays," said Ken Kramer, Director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. "It represents a real opportunity for all of us to help ensure that future Texans will be able to enjoy the tremendous natural heritage we inherited," concluded Kramer.

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