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Future of Central & South Central Texas Fish & Wildlife Now in TCEQ's Hands *Stakeholders urge adoption of environmental flow recommendations*

Austin, Texas –Environmental groups say that upcoming decisions by state water officials will determine the future of Central and South Central Texas rivers and bays as well as oysters, shrimp, whooping cranes, and other fish and wildlife – and economic industries dependent upon those resources. This Thursday, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) will hold a public meeting to take input on a recently initiated rulemaking process to develop standards for the amount of water that must remain flowing in those rivers and bays.

“The future health of Central and South Central Texas fish and wildlife – and the jobs that depend on them – are in the hands of TCEQ. We urge them to adopt environmental standards consistent with stakeholder recommendations and take this opportunity to protect our natural resources for future generations,” said **Tyson Broad with the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, who served on a stakeholder committee that developed recommendations for the Guadalupe/San Antonio area.**

The TCEQ rulemaking is the final stage of a multi-year consensus-based process to set environmental flow standards for the Colorado/Lavaca river and bay area and the Guadalupe/San Antonio river and bay area (map below). Over the past two years, stakeholder committees for each of these areas worked together to develop recommended flow standards that will apply to diversions of surface water in the respective areas. This is the second set of areas to undergo a statewide process established by Senate Bill 3 in 2007.

“These recommendations represent an incredible amount of effort by a diverse group of stakeholder interests. These groups worked tirelessly to achieve a reasonable balance between the need for water to support healthy fish and wildlife and the jobs they support, and other human water needs,” said **Myron Hess of the National Wildlife Federation, who served as Vice-Chair on the Colorado/Lavaca area stakeholder committee.** These stakeholders included representatives of river authorities, industries, regional water planning groups, agricultural interests, commercial and recreational fishing interests, conservation groups and others.

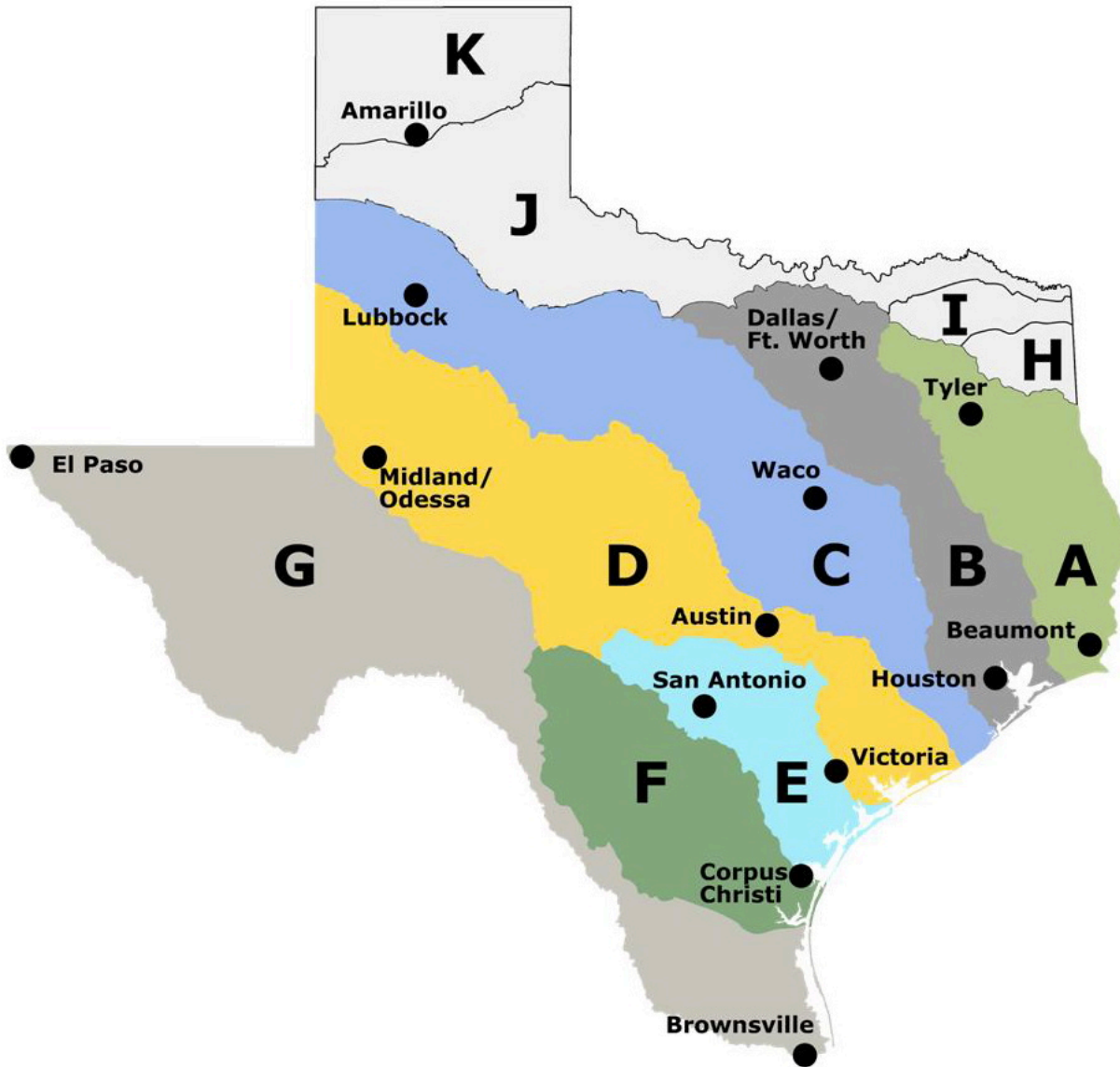
After months of deliberation and compromise, the Colorado/Lavaca area stakeholder committee reached consensus and unanimously approved reasonably protective flow standard recommendations. The Guadalupe/San Antonio area committee produced recommendations endorsed by the vast majority of members (22 of 25).

“Despite numerous concessions made by many stakeholders and great efforts to find a reasonable middle-ground, a unanimous recommendation was unachievable because one party pursued a strategy of non-consensus. They witnessed the same strategy play out favorably for water development interests in the Trinity River/Galveston Bay area and are working to employ the same here,” said **Jennifer Ellis with the National Wildlife Federation and Guadalupe/San Antonio stakeholder committee member.**

TCEQ has until September 2012 to formally adopt the final rules based on the stakeholder recommendations and other input. The rules will govern future water rights permitting and guide voluntary strategies to help restore flows. The first opportunity for public input will be this Thursday, Nov. 3 at 2 p.m. at 12100 Park 35 Circle, Bldg. E, Room 201S in Austin. Written comments can also be submitted to Kathleen.Ramirez@tceq.texas.gov until Nov. 17.

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Areas Affected by Rulemaking



- D.** Colorado & Lavaca rivers / Matagorda & Lavaca bays Area
- E.** Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, & Aransas rivers / Mission, Copano, Aransas & San Antonio bays Area

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