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Environmental Groups Issue Position Statement on Texas Water Planning and Funding

(Austin)—The National Wildlife Federation and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club have issued a position statement calling for a strategic and cost-effective approach to meeting all of the critical water needs of Texas. In the position statement the environmental organizations cite the need to refine and improve the state water plan while also providing funding for protection of instream flows and freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries, water conservation and reuse, and water infrastructure that meets certain prioritization criteria. The joint statement is a contribution to the current discussion at the state level of how best to address the water future of Texas.

“With all of the discussion about how to fund the State Water Plan, it’s important that we take a close look at our water plan and make sure that we have a planning process that identifies true water needs and is not a wish-list of water demands and projects to meet unnecessary demands,” said **Ken Kramer, volunteer Water Resources Chair for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club**. “For example, the water plan should reflect implementation of effective drought response measures during dry years. The current plan does not do so, but the state and regional water plans are revised periodically and should be improved as they are revised.”

“The State Water Plan should be revised to address all water needs, including water to support the health of our rivers and bays along with the commercial and recreational fishing, river and coastal tourism, and other industries that depend on adequate river flows and freshwater inflows for their survival,” said **Myron Hess, Manager of Texas Water Programs for the National Wildlife Federation**. “In addition, whatever funding mechanism might be established to meet state water needs should dedicate a reasonable amount of funds – at least 5% - to implement voluntary measures to protect and restore those flows and to support research on flow needs.”

“Texas needs to be cost-effective in meeting our state water needs,” said **Jennifer Walker, Water Resources Coordinator for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club**. “In order to do so we need a significant investment of state funding in water conservation and reuse, and we need to have clear metrics for determining whether water infrastructure projects in the State Water Plan merit state financial assistance. Our position paper identifies some of those important prioritization principles, including the need for projects to demonstrate that the water produced will be used efficiently and that the projects will have low environmental impact.”

The joint position paper concludes that: **“As we move forward in the 21st century Texas clearly needs a comprehensive and fiscally-responsible approach to providing water to sustain the people and the environment of Texas. We can accomplish that goal by refining the State Water Plan to better define our true water needs and by developing a State funding mechanism that provides for more efficient use of already-developed water resources and for protection of fish and wildlife while targeting State financial assistance for critical infrastructure projects to address unmet needs.”**

The full position paper may be found on the web site of the **Texas Living Waters Project**, a **joint public education and public policy project of the National Wildlife Federation and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club**. The specific link to the paper is:
http://www.texaswatermatters.org/pdfs/Meeting_the_Critical_Water_Needs.pdf.

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