



February 15, 2002

Dear Regional Planning Group Chairman \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your commitment of time and energy to participate in regional water planning for Texas. The first round of regional planning completed just over a year ago laid the groundwork for meeting Texas water needs for the next 50 years through the inventory of existing water supplies, the identification of existing and future demands from a multitude of water use groups, and the discussion of possible water management strategies for meeting those demands.

Many regional water planning groups have noted that they were unable to address a number of important issues during the first round of planning due to the short time frame available and the necessity of meeting certain initial planning requirements in that limited time period. The second round of regional water planning, getting underway now, represents an opportunity to cover those issues not previously addressed, to re-evaluate initial plan elements on the basis of new information and changed circumstances, and to meet new requirements imposed by the passage of SB 2 by the Texas Legislature in 2001.

As your group finalizes its scope of work, which we understand will provide the blueprint for your planning activities for several years, we would like to take the opportunity to share our perspective on some of the tasks we believe the regional water planning groups should undertake in this new planning cycle. We believe these tasks are necessary in order to meet statutory requirements and produce comprehensive regional water plans to meet all important water needs of the state. Specifically we believe that each regional water planning group should:

- (1) identify the amount of water needed to maintain healthy fish and wildlife habitats in its respective region, a goal that is important not only for the environment but also for the economic health of our state's commercial and recreational fishing industries and related tourist industries;
- (2) develop and propose water management strategies to provide water to meet those environmental needs;
- (3) perform a meaningful quantitative assessment of the environmental impacts of water management strategies proposed to meet other identified water demands;
- (4) assess the water quality impacts of proposed water management strategies;
- (5) devise and propose strategies for reasonable reductions in water use during times of critical drought rather than strategies to meet all potential water demands during such times;
- (6) ensure that the regional plan, including proposed water management strategies, is consistent with the long-term protection of natural, agricultural, and water resources within the respective region;
- (7) devise and propose strategies to move toward the goal of sustainable groundwater management for major and minor aquifers within the region; and
- (8) incorporate advanced water conservation measures (for all types of water user groups) into the regional plan.

With regard to the issue of identifying unique stream segments for possible designation by the Legislature, we continue to support such efforts. However, recent legislative changes greatly limit the significance of such designations. Accordingly, on a relative basis, we urge planning groups to give a higher priority to identifying environmental water needs in the region and devising ways of meeting those



needs. If sufficient financial resources are provided to the regional water planning groups to allow all of these tasks to be completed, then recommendations for designation of certain streams as unique stream segments could be pursued. In this regard, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department should be able to provide a significant amount of data on various candidate streams in order to allow the regional water planning groups to make recommendations.

We would be happy to provide you with clarification of any of the points made above. We are also ready and willing to provide any assistance we can to your group in gathering and analyzing information relative to the issues outlined above. We recognize that we need to be active participants at the regional level in this round of planning, and we are committed to doing that. Regional water plans that meet the needs of people and the environment will help sustain our state well into the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input on the scope of work for the second round of regional water planning for Texas. We look forward to a productive working relationship with you over the coming months and years.

Sincerely,

Susan Kaderka,  
National Wildlife Federation

Ken Kramer,  
Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club

Mark MacLeod,  
Environmental Defense

Mary E. Kelly,  
Texas Center for Policy Studies

Cc: Regional Planning Group Members