

## **Water alliance forged to quench Texas needs**

**By Abilene Reporter-News Staff**

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The Brazos River Authority has formed an alliance with a north Texas groundwater provider that may help Texas meet a significant portion of its water needs in the next 50 years, according to a Brazos River Authority press release.

The joint water supply alliance with Mesa Water Inc. is nonbinding but could result in water from the private company being available to customers in and outside the Brazos River basin within five years, the press release said. The authority's 42,000 square-mile basin extends from the Texas-New Mexico border west of Lubbock to the Gulf of Mexico near Freeport.

"This alliance between the authority and Mesa begins discussions that show the potential of creating the largest conjunctive use of surface and groundwater resources in the history of Texas, if not the entire country," said Joe Hinton, chairman of the authority's board of directors.

Charles Dana, a consultant with Mesa Water in Dallas, called the alliance "the most important development yet in the Roberts County landowners' efforts to market their water to a major metropolitan area outside the Panhandle." Mesa Water was formed in 1999 to develop groundwater in Roberts County.

Mesa Water is a consortium of landowners headed by Dallas businessman T. Boone Pickens. The company says it has purchased rights to 90,000 acres of groundwater rights.

If a project results, Mesa could deliver its water into the Brazos River basin via a pipeline that would be constructed from the Texas Panhandle, the press release said.

The water could then be transported via the Brazos River, bringing the groundwater closer to the end-user while saving additional pipeline construction costs, it said.

Through the agreement, the Brazos River System could be used as a partial means of conveyance to either the Dallas-Fort Worth region or San Antonio, and also benefit other parties, he said.

The alliance will help the authority ensure the best management of the state's natural resources, said Phil Ford, general manager and chief executive officer of the authority. The authority also is considering it as a way to provide new water for the Brazos River basin and Texas.

"By combining Mesa's groundwater with our existing surface water system," Ford said, "Texans will end up with substantially more reliable water than if the two organizations were to move ahead alone."