

Survey shows Texans would support conservation campaign

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AUSTIN — Most Texans would support a public awareness campaign to promote water conservation and believe the state should promote water-saving strategies, according to a survey released Tuesday.

The survey conducted for the Texas Water Development Board found that 87 percent of Texans would support a water conservation campaign similar to the "Don't Mess with Texas" anti-litter campaign.

Sen. Robert Duncan, R-Lubbock and Rep. Robert Puente, D-San Antonio, said they would lead the charge to secure about \$15 million in state funding for the campaign, which would be titled "Water IQ: Know Your Water." It would also be presented in Spanish: "Water IQ: Conozca a Tu Agua."

"We have to educate people," Puente said. "Conservation is a job for everyone."

The statewide phone survey conducted in August by Baselice and Associates contacted a random sample of 1,228 Texans and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

Texas Water Development Board officials said the survey supports recommendations from a conservation task force that the Legislature implement a statewide campaign with the goal of reducing water use by 1 percent annually.

Statewide, average water use for households and small businesses is about 170 gallons per day, not including large industrial and agricultural use. Use varies among regions of the state.

In 2001, a comprehensive study of statewide water use and future projections found that Texas will struggle to keep up with the demand of the population boom over the next 50 years.

State officials warn that without better conservation, Texas will spend billions of dollars on new water sources to meet demand, such as the construction of new reservoirs. Public health also would be an issue if Texas had a shortage of clean drinking water.

According to the survey, 98 percent of Texans believe water conservation is important and 87 percent support a public awareness campaign to promote saving water.

It also found that 87 percent said they are more likely to conserve water after learning how they can do it and why it is important; and 71 percent believe the state should spend money to implement conservation plans.

The survey also found that only 28 percent of Texans know the natural source of their drinking water.

"Without conservation, water will become a budget issue, a public health issue and an economic issue," Duncan said.

January 25, 2005 - 2:12 p.m. CST

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