

# Don't Mess With Our Water: Board should fund conservation ad campaign

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After the catchy "Don't Mess With Texas" blitz hit the airwaves in the 1980s, fewer of us casually rolled down a car window and chunked out a beer can or hamburger wrapper. Who wanted to look like the Philistine messin' up our roadways? Or the creep who thought junk all over I-35 was OK?

We now need an equally mind-altering campaign promoting water conservation. North Texas' 16 counties, for example, plan to get about 25 percent of their future water supplies through making resources last longer. That's a great goal, but the effort will need to seep into our consciousness to get us all to conserve - not just here, but all over Texas.

Legislators took a step toward raising public awareness when they recently approved a statewide advertising campaign to show how Texans can conserve water. One problem: No one in Austin funded the thing.

The folks down there may think they can wait until the Legislature meets again in 2009, to see if there's then enough cash to roll out an eye-catching campaign.

When it comes to water, however, this state can't afford to wait. The state's population is on track to double by 2060 at the very time existing water supplies are projected to decrease by 18 percent. Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist Larry McKinney makes good points about this in his essay in his agency's July magazine, which is devoted to Texas water issues. We particularly liked Mr. McKinney's line that water conservation "is a strategy in which all Texans can participate and, taken together, can make a significant contribution."

Fortunately, the state's top officials have a way to fund the campaign before the 2009 Legislature starts.

When the governor, lieutenant governor and speaker of the House meet with other members of the Legislative Budget Board in September, they could allocate \$9 million to the effort. The Texas Water Development Board could then start working with media wizards to launch the campaign.

All it takes is for our top leaders to show leadership. Then, we all can do our part - again - to not mess with Texas.

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