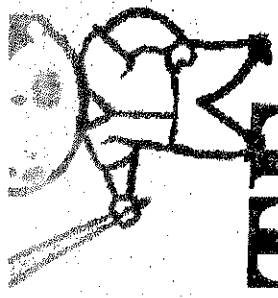


meaning of Memorial Day
"Thank You"



Life League Photos
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JORDA ADVOCATE

"Your neighbor to neighbor newspaper since 1996"

Thursday, May 22, 2008

Section F - Fifty Cents

FRESHWATER: WHAT WILL WE LEAVE OUR CHILDREN?

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on a "future use" scenario, where models showed that inflows normally below the drought tolerance level only three times would increase to 20 times, representing a 567% increase in severe drought conditions.

The new water allocation process, along with the LCRA's current water management plan could be used to help avoid these potential problems, according to LCRA officials.

In 2007, Texas legislature enacted SB-8 and since then, numerous organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas Water Development Board, as well as the National Wildlife Federation and TCEQ, have been diligently working to try and find the best solution to this problem.

Hess asked the crowd, "What natural heritage will we leave for our children and grandchildren?" Without proper analysis of the

situation our bays and estuaries are currently facing, and without taking the proper action immediately, there might not be much of a freshwater system left to protect, he said.

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Freshwater decline leaves 'Bays in Peril'

JOHN BRADEN
Matagorda Advocate

Representatives from six different environmental and government agencies met on Tuesday evening during an open-to-the-public forum about the Senate Bill 3/Environmental Flows Allocation Process.

The process calls for advisory groups, made up of scientists and technical experts, and stakeholder groups, made up of professionals and concerned residents, to work together to analyze the needs of different bay areas along the Texas coast.

Both groups will work directly with other advisory committees and science teams and report not only to each other, but also directly to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The TCEQ is responsible for then establishing

environmental flow standards for the Texas coastline.

Environmental flow refers to the aboveground water in a river, as well as how much is pumped on land, and how much of this water actually reaches the coast's bays and estuaries.

The reason for this new allocation process to be established was to ensure that future generations have enough freshwater reach the gulf coast, said Myron Hess, representative with the National Wildlife Federation.

"With an estimated increase in Texas population to about 40 million people by 2,050, and with nature not producing an increased amount of water year by year, something must be done now," Hess said.

The increase in population puts growing demand on the sale of water rights permits, which allow in-

dividuals and organizations to use river water for personal use. The state has been issuing water rights permits for over 100 years and they never expire, Hess said.

"It wasn't until 1985 that the state started systematically thinking about environmental flows and started putting conditions on permits to limit what could be used," he said.

Hess listed five ways that Texas residents could meet the growing demand on freshwater rivers; stricter water conservation, more use of existing water rights, better re-use of wastewater, adoption of new water permits or a better use of groundwater.

All of these options have to be carefully looked at before any major decisions can be made, Hess said.

"95 percent of Gulf commercially and recreationally imported fish

and marine species rely on estuaries during some part of their life cycle," said Dr. Norman Johns with the National Wildlife Federation.

The amount of freshwater from rivers that reaches the gulf's partially salinized bays and estuaries is what keeps the area healthy and productive. Without it, water quality would decline and models show almost the whole Texas coastline would be threatened, Johns said.

According to the report summary of bay conditions along the coast called "Bays in Peril," which was thoroughly conducted by the National Wildlife Federation, five out of the seven bays analyzed are in danger of having sea life severely threatened due to a lack of freshwater.

This threat analysis was based

See Freshwater 14F