

# Dallas Editorial: Trinity River panel needs balance, speed

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A few years back, South Texans witnessed the horror of the Rio Grande nearly going dry. Baked clay stood out where a river once flowed mightily. Vegetative growth and overuse of the Rio Grande nearly choked the pride of Texas to death.

North Texans certainly don't want that nightmare scenario for the rivers we depend on. That's why we're glad to see committees finally being established to study the flow of the Trinity River, plus the Neches and Sabine rivers. The Trinity affects North Texas the most, but the Sabine and Neches also are important potential water supplies.

Texans with a stake in those rivers make up two of the new committees. The members range from municipal water representatives to environmental advocates to agricultural producers.

The panel's first decision came last month, when it named a statewide team of scientists who will review the findings of local scientists with specific expertise in these rivers. The result will be a report that will guide the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality on how much water these rivers need to maintain in order to avoid the problems that nearly dried up the Rio Grande.

The local scientists haven't been named yet, and we hope they are selected soon - and with an eye toward balance, as reflected in the review team selection. The state needs diverse and objective expertise to gauge the flow of these rivers.

Galveston Bay, for example, depends upon the Trinity's health. The river flows into that bay, creating a rich aquatic life that benefits the state through fishing and tourism. Without a proper flow, that would be lost.

Of course, cities like Dallas, Houston and Fort Worth depend upon the Trinity for part of their water supply. They need to know how much they can draw from it without damaging the river.

The studies of these rivers are already months behind schedule. The state can't afford further delays because we're already looking at 2011 before the TCEQ can issue rules governing them.

Fortunately, these rivers don't at all resemble the desperate plight of the Rio Grande some years back. But many Texans have an interest in these studies getting going without delay - and getting done right

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