

Water issues on Guadalupe sorted through by TCEQ

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The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality on Wednesday approved rules for new permits on several rivers designed to ensure enough environmental flows, or water for critters and plant-life.

Especially tricky was the decision on the Guadalupe River, where population growth and long-term environmental matters involving the health of bays and estuaries have collided.

“Everyone looked at squeezing the most amount of water out that we can” for environmental and human needs, said commissioner Carlos Rubinstein.

Environmentalists were generally displeased with the balance that was struck between human and environmental needs on the river. The TCEQ rules departed on some key points from recommendations by a broad stakeholder group, especially the protection of large pulses of water flowing downriver after, say, a heavy thunderstorm.

“Without adequate justification, TCEQ failed to capitalize on the work of the stakeholders who had struck a careful balance between future water supply needs and environmental protection,” Jennifer Ellis, who served on the stakeholder committee and works for National Wildlife Federation, said after the decision.

During the hearing Wednesday, the general manager of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority praised the TCEQ. The GBRA calls on the river for water supply and energy projects. More stringent rules, requiring more water during certain periods for environmental needs, might have conflicted with the river authority’s water planning.

The TCEQ largely followed stakeholder input on the Colorado River, where stakeholders came to a consensus. (GBRA and a couple of cities had stymied consensus in the Guadalupe basin recommendations.)

http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/sharedgen/blogs/austin/green/entries/2012/08/08/water_issues_on_guadalupe_sort.html?cxntfid=blogs_salsa_verde

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