

# Group says Texans prefer conservation over construction

The Associated Press

**Web Posted :** 06/06/2002 7:20 PM

Texans would rather conserve water than build the new dams and reservoirs called for in the statewide water plan drafted to meet water needs over the next 50 years, an environmental group said Thursday.

According to a poll released by the National Wildlife Federation, 54 percent of Texas voters said they would support conservation measures, including installation of low flow toilets and shower heads, over new construction.

The poll conducted by the Tarrance Group surveyed 800 registered voters from April 28-May 2 with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

According to the poll, 93 percent of Texans say it is important to adequately protect rivers, bays and wildlife when planning for future water needs. The survey also found that 76 percent favor limiting the amount of water that could be pumped from underground aquifers.

"Texans overwhelmingly want us to focus first on meeting our water needs through conservation," said Susan Kaderka, director of the group's Austin office.

The Texas Water Development Board in December approved a statewide water plan designed to meet the state's needs during a projected population boom over the next half century.

The plan recommends building up to eight new reservoirs and other water transfer systems at a cost of about \$17.9 billion. It does not include financing nor does it authorize any spending, but is meant to serve as a blueprint for future planning.

Green groups have been critical of the project from the beginning, saying the plans all but ignore conservation and that the construction projects would damage the environment.

Regional water planners were instructed to consider the environmental impact of their recommendations in order to keep rivers and streams flowing and limit the impact on endangered species.

The plan includes water reuse, desalination and other conservation efforts, according to the water development board.

Planners are supposed to issue new recommendations to the plan every five years.