

Gov. Perry Creates Environmental Flows Advisory Committee

Panel to Develop Recommendations on Freshwater Inflows for Rivers and Bays

AUSTIN – Gov. Rick Perry today issued an executive order establishing the Environmental Flows Advisory Committee to examine issues relating to protection of instream flows and freshwater inflows for the state’s rivers, lakes, bays, and estuaries.

“Water is our most valuable natural resource, and how we manage our river and bay systems during low-flow conditions is of vital importance,” Perry said. “The Advisory Committees will fully examine the environmental flows issue to ensure our river and bay systems are vibrant, and regional economies dependent on water resources are protected.”

The Governor’s advisory committee will build on the work of a legislative committee that made valuable progress toward developing an integrated approach to protecting human needs and maintaining minimum instream flows and freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries while furthering economic development.

The Advisory Committee will consist of nine members appointed by the Governor. The chairman of three state agencies – the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas Water Development Board, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission – charged with responsibilities in the environmental flows area will be standing members of the advisory committee with the remaining six members to be chosen from among river authorities; municipalities; environmental, agricultural, industrial, and hunting and fishing interests or others with expertise in environmental flows issues; and the public.

It is anticipated that the Advisory Committee will examine between two and four major river and bay systems during its tenure, which should provide a sound basis for legislative recommendations in the 2007 regular session.

To assist the Advisory Committee in its work, the Committee will appoint a local and regional stakeholder group for each individual river and bay system selected for consideration by the Committee. In addition, the Advisory Committee is authorized to establish a science advisory council of five members to provide it with technical expertise. The TCEQ, TWDB and TPWD will provide staff support for the Committee.

The Advisory Committee will submit a report with findings and legislative recommendations to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives by Dec. 31, 2006. Unless extended, the executive order establishing the advisory committee will expire on Sept. 1, 2007.

“Water is critical to every aspect of our lives,” Perry said. “We must be good stewards of our fragile ecosystems, and promote sound management practices so that an abundant supply of water is available to the benefit of our people, our wildlife and our economy.”

A copy of the executive order is available at www.governor.state.tx.us.