

## **Environmental Groups Hail Passage of House Bill 3**

### **"An important step towards helping to provide future generations of Texans with healthy rivers and coastal bays"**

For Immediate Release (Wednesday, February 28, 2007):

(Austin)-Three major environmental groups commended the Texas House of Representatives for its preliminary approval today of legislation aimed at preserving the flows in Texas rivers and freshwater inflows into the state's coastal bays and estuaries.

National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense, and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club all participated in negotiations with water suppliers and industry groups that led to the consensus approach for protection of "environmental flows" that was embodied in House Bill 3, sponsored by State Rep. Robert Puente (D-San Antonio).

"House passage of HB 3 represents an important step towards helping to provide future generations of Texans with healthy rivers and coastal bays," said Myron Hess, Manager of Texas Water Programs and Counsel for the National Wildlife Federation's Gulf States Natural Resource Center.

"HB 3 demonstrates the growing consensus about the need to maintain flowing rivers and freshwater inflows on the Texas coast," observed Ken Kramer, state Sierra Club director. "It's one of those momentous occasions in which people who disagree on many water issues work together to fashion legislation in the public interest."

"We're very pleased with the House action on the environmental flows bill and look forward to working with the Texas Senate to get final approval of this legislation," said Mary Kelly, Co-Director of Environmental Defense's Land, Water, and Wildlife Program.

HB 3 would initiate a scientific determination of the water flow needs for each of the state's bay systems and associated river basins. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality would then adopt flow standards for the state's rivers based on those determinations and input from stakeholder groups. Different mechanisms would be established to meet those flow standards based on the situation in each river basin.

The three environmental groups noted that maintaining river flows is critical not only for preserving fish and wildlife habitat but for many other reasons as well: protecting water quality, sustaining commercial and recreational fisheries, assuring water supplies for downstream users, providing water for livestock, maintaining property values for riverside landowners, and providing opportunities for river recreation, among other values.

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