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New Report:

Save Water, Save Rivers, Save Money

Increased municipal water conservation could provide Texas with one million acre-feet of water, roughly the same amount as the State Water Plan's 16 new reservoirs

(AUSTIN, TX) – A report released today by the National Wildlife Federation illustrates the promise of municipal water conservation in the state of Texas. *Save Water, Save Rivers, Save Money: The Potential of Municipal Water Conservation in Texas* shows how reasonable water conservation could provide over one million acre-feet of water per year statewide. Those savings would roughly equal the amount supplied by all 16 of the new reservoirs recommended in the 2007 State Water Plan.

“Water conservation is the common-sense solution our cities are looking for. It would be far better to make efficient use of the water that is right under our nose than to spend billions of dollars damming rivers and drowning valuable wildlife habitat,” said Dr. Norman Johns, a water resources scientist with the National Wildlife Federation and the lead researcher on the report. Johns added, “Conservation is not just easier on our rivers and streams, it’s also easier on ratepayer’s wallets.”

The recently approved 2007 State Water Plan recommends 613,000 acre-feet of municipal water conservation savings (an acre-foot is roughly 326,000 gallons) by 2060. The new National Wildlife Federation report shows that an additional one million acre-feet of savings—beyond the 613,000—is readily achievable, based on the success of San Antonio and the progress being made in other Texas cities.

According to Johns, “The water conservation recommendations in the State Water Plan are a decent start down a long road. Ultimately though, the Plan could have, and should have, gone much farther. In this analysis, we calculated how conservation technologies and techniques available today could help meet demands over the next 50 years.”

Three case studies in the report focus on how municipal water conservation could help to eliminate three controversial and environmentally destructive dams recommended in the 2007 State Water Plan: Marvin Nichols, Fastrill, and the Brownsville Weir.

“We’re not saying that water conservation absolutely could replace every single dam in the 2007 State Water Plan,” said Myron Hess, Manager of the National Wildlife

Federation's Texas Water Program. "We are saying Texans need to take the recommendation to build 16 new reservoirs over the next fifty years with a grain of salt. If we're smart about it, we can have the water we need without unnecessarily sacrificing Texas' natural heritage—and we can save money in the process."

Recent studies on global warming predict Texas will experience severe droughts more often, further illustrating the critical importance of using our water as efficiently as possible.

"Using water efficiently makes sense today and it will make even more sense in a hotter, drier Texas," said Johns. "Dams don't make new water, they only capture what nature provides. With decreased rainfall and increased evaporation, the proposed new reservoirs will yield less than currently estimated. The only question is 'How much less'? Using the water we already have more efficiently will help extend our municipal supplies. That will allow more time to take a close look at the proposed reservoirs to see if they can 'withstand the heat' as affordable and reliable water supply sources."

"Our analysis shows that better water conservation has huge potential for the State of Texas," concluded Johns. "The bottom line is that an increased emphasis on water conservation makes sense financially and environmentally. The savings we have calculated are achievable, we just have to put our minds to it and hold our state and local governments and water planners accountable for making it happen."

Contact:

Lacey McCormick, 512-476-9805, mccormick@nwf.org

To download a copy of the report, go to www.texaswatermatters.org.

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The National Wildlife Federation's mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.