



COUNTY OF ARANSAS
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February 18, 2010

Con Mims, Chairman
South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group, Region L
c/o Nueces River Authority
P.O. Box 349
Uvalde, Texas 78801

South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group,
Region L Members
c/o Steven J. Raabe, P.E.
San Antonio River Authority
100 East Guenther Street
P.O. Box 839980
San Antonio, Texas 78283-9980

RE: Water Management Strategies on February 4, 2010 Agenda

Dear Chairman Mims and Members of Region L:

I am writing you regarding my comments at the February 4, 2010, Region L planning meeting. While I appreciated the brief amount of time given me for comments, I was disappointed by the process. My request to reclassify some of the strategies in the plan to "water strategies needing further study" was criticized as "litigation rhetoric" by Mr. Bill West of the committee. My request, however, was consistent with the wording in Section Eight, Page Ten of the 2011 South Central Texas Regional Plan under Environmental Studies. I quote, "Therefore, the SCTRWPG recommends that additional environmental studies be undertaken to be able to evaluate the effects of such projects on the ecosystems that rely on inflow to San Antonio Bay and flows of the Guadalupe River and San Antonio River watersheds.

Environmental concerns are also mentioned in Section 7.3.2 as follows: "Potential reductions in freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries, including associated effects on wetland and marsh habitats and marine species, are identified as matters of concern. Primary concerns focus upon the potential effects of the GBRA New Appropriation (Lower Basin) on freshwater inflows to the Guadalupe Estuary." It is more responsible, therefore, for the projects that raise these concerns be studied further rather than rush them into the plan, particularly if the water may or may not be needed for another 20 to 30 years.

As I pointed out, the effects of reduced water flows during sparse rainfall conditions raised the salinity levels in San Antonio Bay to 60-year record highs during the 2008/2009 period. That has directly effected game fish and other aquatic life in that system. I am deeply concerned about the ecological integrity of San Antonio Bay and surrounding bays, because that integrity is essential to the economic vitality of Aransas County.

I attended that meeting with the hope of working within the process, but I left disillusioned by the process. That disillusionment is based on the following impressions:

1. The committee appears to be numerically unbalanced in favor of water users;
2. The committee is reluctant to recommend change of previously committed water rights even in the face of a projected growing gap between water needs and water supply for the planning period; and
3. Of course, the contradiction mentioned earlier of actions being taken before studying their environmental impacts.

Finally, Region L does not include Aransas County, but we will certainly be among the first to feel the effects of a flawed water management plan. This plan and this process, if not done with careful consideration will not only endanger the livelihood of Aransas County citizens, but of everyone that relies on the Guadalupe River Basin for stability and prosperity.

Sincerely yours,



Charles W. Smith
Aransas County Commissioner, Pct. 3

xc: Senator Glenn Hegar
Representative Todd Hunter
Texas Water Board