

# GBRA River Run

A publication of the **GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY** Spring 2010



**Is This Where  
We're Heading?**

TEXAS  
WATER

SMWTP Celebrates 10 Years



Watershed Protection in Kyle



Quenched Drought

# From the GM

## When the Feds Come Marching In ...

By now, many of you have heard about the lawsuit filed in federal court by The Aransas Project (TAP) against the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), alleging a “take” on the endangered whooping crane during last year’s drought and requesting federal oversight to possibly reallocate water rights on the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), therefore, is inextricably tied to this lawsuit against the TCEQ. TAP is attempting to turn upside down the entire system of water rights allocation in the state of Texas and have the federal government take it over.



Clearly, the GBRA has led the way in developing important new information about the whooping crane and its habitat. GBRA, along with the San Antonio River Authority and other partners, funded the research that investigated the diet, behavior and habitat of whooping cranes in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on San Antonio Bay.

This seven-year study — conducted by a team of renowned Texas A&M University researchers led by Dr. R. Douglas Slack — evaluated the relationship between freshwater inflows feeding San Antonio Bay and the health of its endangered whooping crane population. The researchers’ conclusions do not support the draconian allegations made by TAP.

If successful, TAP’s lawsuit would mean the stripping of water from municipal, agricultural, and industrial water right holders along the Guadalupe and San Antonio river basins and reassigning it to the causes requested by TAP. That means the water rights for Kerrville, Boerne, New Braunfels, San Marcos, Seguin, Lockhart, Luling, Gonzales, Cuero, Victoria, Port Lavaca, and Refugio, as well as for companies like Dow and Dupont could be reduced or cancelled. Lower Guadalupe Basin communities’ efforts to achieve additional economic development and new jobs could be hamstrung. Farmers and ranchers also could have water rights curtailed or cancelled.

TAP’s lawsuit also could disrupt two processes put into place by the Texas Legislature — the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (EARIP) and the Environmental Flows (E-flows) process.

The EARIP is a process designed to achieve consensus on how the Edwards Aquifer is to be managed for the mutual benefit of all who depend on it. This scientific process has been underway for more than a year and is required to be completed by 2012.

The E-flows process also is designed to achieve consensus on how the instream flows and bay and estuary freshwater flows are to be provided for the health and welfare of the rivers, bays and estuaries.

Although the lawsuit targets the Guadalupe River, it could have the same impact on other river systems in Texas that currently has or is under consideration to have endangered species listed in or near its waterways. In other words, the suit may affect the great majority of the people living in this state and the economy that sustains them.

Is that what Texans really want? A judge of the federal court in Corpus Christi has indicated that we very well may be addressing that issue before her in March 2011.

Whooping cranes exist in nature, and nature’s conditions can be both beneficial and harsh, as witnessed by the recent 22-month long drought in the Southwest. Even so, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, GBRA, and other interested organizations and individuals will continue to work so that conditions in their wintering habitat along San Antonio Bay will enable these beautiful creatures to survive and prosper.

But one has to ask, “Where is the same level of concern for the people of Texas?”

W. E. “Bill” West, Jr.  
General Manager

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### GBRA River Run

Spring 2010

#### Editor

LaMarriol Smith, Manager of Communications and Education

#### Art Direction and Design

Connie Rothe, Board Relations

#### Editorial

Tammy Beutnagel, Public Communications Assistant  
Cinde Thomas-Jimenez, Education Coordinator  
Joel Williams, Dublin and Associates Staff  
LaMarriol Smith

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#### Contact GBRA River Run:

Office of Communications and Education  
Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority  
933 E. Court  
Seguin, TX 78155  
Editor: 830.379.5822  
Email: [editor@gbra.org](mailto:editor@gbra.org)

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Front cover illustration: by M Square Design

Back cover photo: by LaMarriol Smith

## Kyle Cleanup and Watershed Protection

More than 300 Kyle area volunteers devoted Saturday morning, February 27th to help cleanup their local environment in the Kyle Parks and Plum Creek Watershed Clean-Up. Partners for the event were the City of Kyle Parks and Recreation Department, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership, and Hays CISD, notably Lehman High and Fuentes Elementary.

Participants removed more than 1,740 pounds of recyclable materials and 1,720 pounds of trash from around Plum Creek in Steeplechase Park and Lake Kyle in the Plum Creek Preserve and Nature Trail. The Plum Creek Preserve and Nature Trail is property that was recently acquired by the Kyle Parks and Recreation Department through a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife. The property will open to the public later in 2010. In all, more than 3.5 miles city property alongside Plum Creek was tackled.

As a predecessor for the event, existing dog waste in Steeplechase Park was addressed to provide a visual demonstration of the potential for contamination to Plum Creek with bacteria. On February 26th, approximately 100 fourth grade students from Fuentes Elementary spent their science class time in Steeplechase Park, marking pet waste for cleanup the next day. The Kyle Parks and Recreation Department noted that after 550 dog droppings were marked in 2009, only 128 were found in 2010. The city has installed pet waste stations in the park with bags for easy clean-up, and it appears as though residents are getting the message.

Kyle is located at the headwaters of the Plum Creek Watershed. All rain, irrigation, and runoff within city limits drains into small local streams, including Plum Creek. Because this water forms the beginnings of Plum Creek, the city plays an important role in water quality downstream as the

creek meanders 52 miles past Lockhart and Luling before finally flowing into the San Marcos River.

To find out more about watershed protection efforts in the Plum Creek Watershed, visit <http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/>.



Park cleanup volunteers



Photos by Jim Cullen



# New Boat Ramp Opens at Canyon Lake

Officials with area water entities formed a beneficial partnership and took the opportunity of low water conditions on Canyon Lake to make major improvements to one of the existing Comal County boat ramps. This improved facility, Ramp #2 located in the Village West Subdivision, opened at Canyon Lake in late December.

Staff from the Water Oriented Recreation District (WORD), Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), Comal County, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) got together to discuss the condition of County boat ramps at Canyon Lake. Boat Ramp #2, also known as Village West and located off of Colleen Drive, was identified as steep and badly in need of repairs. It was deemed one of the few ramp areas capable of being run deeper into the lake,

yet previously provided poor access during low reservoir conditions. The ramp now provides better access for the south side of the lake.

A partnership was formed, with WORD and GBRA each contributing \$30,000 towards the project with Comal County handling engineering, construction, and project oversight.

The Corps secured all necessary permissions for the work to be done. The old ramp was

demolished, and a new one built just next to it. A circular drive was also added for ease of use getting on and off the ramp. By conducting the work while the reservoir was low, the construction staff was able to take advantage of the record low lake levels to extend the ramp almost 6 feet deeper into the water than the old one, making it much more versatile and keeping it open much longer during drought.



Photos by David Welsch

# TPWD Funds Boat Ramp Projects in the Basin

Two areas in the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's basin recently benefitted from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission's approval of more than \$2.5 million in grants to pay for boat ramp construction or repair projects across the state.

GBRA was awarded \$75,000 for renovation of a boat ramp at Lake Wood, plus a walkway and courtesy dock to improve access for people with disabilities, new bulkhead, lighting and signage.

On the lower end of the basin, Calhoun County was awarded \$126,000 to build a rock jetty to protect an existing public boat ramp on Magnolia Beach and improve lighting and signage. The boat ramp affords public access to Lavaca Bay. The jetty will project against silting and wave damage and make it safer to launch or land at the ramp.

The funding was made possible by the State Boating Access Program authorized by

the 64th Legislature in 1975. The program provides funding for the purchase, construction, renovation and maintenance of boat ramps, access roads and other related projects aimed at improving the recreational boater's access to public waters. The money for the program comes back to the states from the federal recreational boating gasoline tax and an excise tax on fishing tackle collected under the Federal Aid to Sport Fish Recreation Act.

# Lakes Gonzales and Wood Lowered to Freeze Invasive Plants

About 50 acres of control invasive waterhyacinths were killed when Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority work crews lowered the levels of Lake Gonzales (H-4) and Lake Wood (H-5) approximately 1.5 feet during a hard freeze in January. At the time, the National Weather Service forecast a hard freeze across much of the State, including lows between 23 and 18 degrees in Gonzales County Jan. 7-10.

GBRA officials employed this natural and less expensive method than chemical treatments to kill off some of the plants by allowing nature to freeze the plants' root systems. "Because water tends to protect the root ball of the plants from freezing, lowering the lake levels exposes the root systems to the freeze, killing the hyacinth," explained Debbie Magin, GBRA's director of Water Quality.

GBRA staff observed that the freeze covered the whole park slough at Lake Wood Park and boat ramp area with ice about 3/16 of an inch thick from the entrance pipes to the end of the slough for at least two nights. On the third night, the slough surface froze from the bridge to the end and along the banks to the entrance pipes. Most of the hyacinths at the end of the slough were out of the water and in the mud during the freeze. In terms of surface acreage, staff estimated 40-50 acres of the hyacinths were destroyed with the freeze.



Photos by Steve Taylor



Photo by Mark Hencke

# Victoria Regional WWTP Employees Give 38 Years of Service

by Tammy Beutnagel

Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority officials honored the organization's Victoria Regional Wastewater Reclamation System employees at a banquet dinner on February 18, 2010 in Victoria. With the exception of employees eligible for retirement this year, the majority of GBRA employees will transition to the City of Victoria.

The wastewater system contract will transition to the City of Victoria at the end of this year — marking the end of a contract executed in 1972 between GBRA and the city.

This partnership created a renovation of the original Willow Street plant and a new and expanded plant on Loop 175. The Willow Street plant treats 2.5 million gallons of wastewater per day, while the newer Victoria Regional Wastewater Reclamation System can treat up to 9.6 million gpd. Both plants have provided wastewater treatment service in an

environmentally-responsible manner with an on-site laboratory to conduct daily sample testing to ensure treated product meets state and federal guidelines.

Experienced and highly trained GBRA employees operated the plants. Prior to this year's transition, 10 of the 17 GBRA employees had earned "A" licensed wastewater certifications.

"The key to our success over the last 38 years has always been our employees,

both past and present. This division would not have survived as long as it has without the dedication, loyalty and hard work of its employees," said Bryan Serold, GBRA operations manager for the Lower Basin.

"I also witnessed a unity and sense of family first-hand during the 1998 flood recovery efforts when the staff pulled together to overcome what seemed to be insurmountable odds in restoring the flooded regional plant," said Serold.

"We are so very thankful for each and every one of these employees' and their years of service. Each person was like a family member in the GBRA family and they will always be remembered," said Bill West, GBRA general manager. "We know those who transition to city employment will continue doing a great job with the City of Victoria," he added.

*Fifteen of the 17 Victoria employees are pictured.*



# Officials Recognize 10 Years of Operations at the San Marcos Water Treatment Plant

While 22 months of drought recently scorched the Central and South-Central Texas areas and despite some watering restrictions, one constant that San Marcos residents were able to rely on when they opened the tap was clean water treated at the San Marcos Water Treatment Plant (SMWTP.) This January marked the tenth anniversary of the start-up of the SMWTP and Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) Regional Raw Water Delivery System's service to citizens in the Hays County area.

In January 2000, GBRA's 30-inch diameter pipeline and the City of San Marcos' 6 million-gallon-per-day (MGD) water treatment plant (WTP) were placed into operation. The City of San Marcos and GBRA have become equity partners in the pipeline and treatment plant when the City of San Marcos selected GBRA to operate the plant.

"The City's foresight in recognizing the need of such a facility, the citizens' support of the project, and GBRA's commitment to providing high quality operations and maintenance have led to one of the best water treatment plants in the State," said Bill West, GBRA's general manager. "This project is a model example of a regional water supply project that meets the needs of numerous entities," added West.

Since the plant opened in 2000, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has awarded the SMWTP operators five consecutive Texas Optimization Program (TOP) Awards. The TOP Ops is awarded to selected plants in Texas that are producing the safest drinking water possible. This award is based on a voluntary, nonregulatory program designed to consistently improve the performance of existing surface water treatment plants without major capital improvements. The TOP Ops award also evaluates the operators' success to meet all rigorous criteria for a comprehensive performance evaluation in a specific time period.

On three different occasions TCEQ has chosen to use the SMWTP for new inspector training, advanced inspector training on Special Performance Evaluations, and for a TOP Ops training. According to Jack Schulze, member of TCEQ technical review and oversight team, SMWTP is one of the few treatment plants in Texas that has both internal and external sludge recirculation capability on its clarifier. This advanced equipment allows TCEQ to show inspectors how both technologies work and complement one another.



Photo courtesy GBRA Archives

## Milestones of SMWTP:

- ◆ In January 2000, the GBRA 30-inch diameter pipeline and the City of San Marcos 6 MGD WTP were placed into operation. The City of San Marcos selected GBRA to operate the plant.
- ◆ The plant was expanded to 9MGD in 2004.
- ◆ In 2006 the original IH-35 pump station, pipeline, and 0.5 MG ground storage tank were completed.
- ◆ In 2007 the SMWTP was expanded from 9 MGD to 21 MGD.
- ◆ In 2008 the regional raw water pump stations #2 and #3, increasing the plant capacity from 16 MGD to 25 MGD, were completed.





# THE TRUST

## Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust Secures 6,200-Acre Conservation Easement



Photo by James Fuller

More than 6,200 acres of property along the San Antonio River in Goliad County is being preserved through a conservation easement with the Fuller family and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust). The easement, executed December 16, 2009, becomes the largest tract of property secured by the GBR Trust since its inception in 2001. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization or government agency that permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect the property's conservation value.

Dr. James Fuller, his wife Mary and family own the 6,201-acre tract that features seven miles of San Antonio River frontage and diverse topography. The Fullers plan to pass the land to their three sons who are actively involved with the management of the land. "We wanted to see this beautiful property preserved for

our three sons and ultimately for their families, rather than being fragmented and developed," Dr. Fuller said.

"All of us love the ranch, and our sons are environmentally conscious and concerned about keeping the property in tact – preserving it for future generations. This easement will help us do that," Mary Fuller explained.

The Fullers also participate in the Conservation Crop Rotation Program with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides food, cover and water for livestock and wildlife, specifically quail.

In addition to NRCS, the family also works with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to

manage their land for wildlife, yet still manage an active ranch. They also practice wildlife management techniques, such as controlled burns.

The Fuller's homestead is situated at the highest point on the property, which allows a stunning view from the wrap-around front porch.

As the Fullers began to acquire the land over the years, they worked hard to clean up the land of abandoned homes and other debris that past owners left behind.

Over the years the family had considered entering into a conservation easement and recently decided it was time to move forward with the easement to protect the land from future development and to preserve it for future generations.



# ESA Lawsuit Opens Door of Texas Water

by Joel Williams

**I**s the federal government about to take over management of surface water in Texas?

A recent lawsuit filing and a petition, both initiated under the Endangered Species Act, could have the far-reaching impact of placing the state's waterways under strict federal oversight.

The lawsuit involves an endangered international icon, the whooping crane. The petition involves a lesser-known type of animal, dozens of species of mussel that live along various rivers in the state.

## The Whooping Crane Lawsuit

In March, an organization called The Aransas Project (TAP) sued the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Corpus Christi, alleges that state management of the Guadalupe

and San Antonio rivers has harmed the whooping cranes that winter at

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. It accuses the agency of violating the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) by not allowing enough fresh water to reach the coastal marshes where 23 whooping cranes are said to have died in the winter of 2008-2009.

Specifically, the TAP lawsuit alleges that the state agency has violated the "taking" provision in Section 9 of the federal ESA. It prohibits a "take," any activity causing the death or harm to a listed species, or that destroys its habitat. If the federal court found that the state's surface water management

practices were resulting in whooping crane deaths, federal officials could assume control of water management in Texas. That could mean an end to the issuance of new water permits, the imposition of a whooping crane habitat conservation plan, reductions in the amount of water diverted and the timing of such diversions of existing surface water rights. Groundwater management could be affected as well because the Trinity, Edwards and Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifers contribute significantly to the baseflow of the Guadalupe River.

The Aransas Project's leadership includes members of the family that owns the D.M. O'Connor Ranches of Texas, with roots in Aransas County. Houston-based attorney Jim Blackburn, who represents TAP, also represented the O'Connor family in their attempt to block Exelon Corp. from obtaining a surface water supply that would make it possible for the company to build a nuclear power plant in the region. The site secured by Exelon for its plant would be located adjacent to property owned by the O'Connor family.

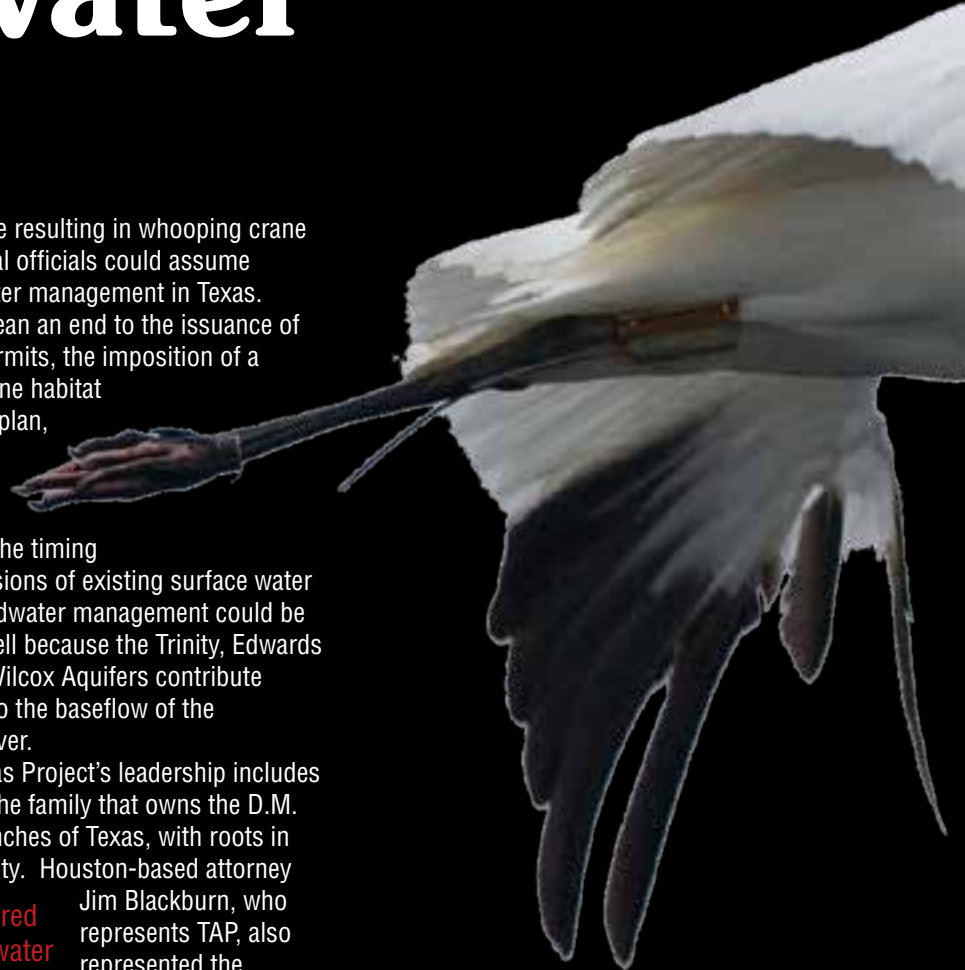
"The harm that the Whooping Cranes have experienced is a direct result of TCEQ's failed oversight of its water rights permit programs in the Guadalupe River Basin where too much water is being taken out of the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers, especially during low-flow conditions," TAP attorney Jim Blackburn said after filing the lawsuit. "The scientific evidence strongly indicates that, during lower flow

conditions, the full use of existing water rights in this basin — granted and overseen by TCEQ — will worsen the condition of the whooping cranes if fully utilized."

## The Mussels Petition

The petition that could bring Texas rivers under federal control involves an effort to have nine species of mussels living along various rivers in Texas listed as "endangered."

In December, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which has jurisdiction to ensure compliance with ESA provisions, filed notice in the Federal Register, "To List Nine Species of Mussels from Texas as Threatened or Endangered with Critical Habitat."



# or for Federal Control



The proposed listing was in response to petitions filed by a conservation group called WildEarth Guardians. The mussels under consideration for listing as threatened or endangered, in Texas, according to the USFWS, include: Texas fatmucket (*Lampsilis bracteata*), Texas heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*), Salina mucket (*Potamilus metnecktayi*), Smooth pimpleback (*Quadrula houstonensis*), Texas pimpleback (*Quadrula petrina*), False spike (*Quincuncina mitchelli*), Mexican fawnsfoot (*Truncilla cognata*), and Texas fawnsfoot (*Truncilla macrodon*).

“Based on our review, we find that the petitions present substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing these species may be warranted,” Fish and Wildlife Service officials indicate in the Federal Register filing.

Together, the whooping crane and mussels cases could result in drastic changes to the way rivers are managed in Texas, with the

federal government calling the shots, said Bruce Wasinger, the GBRA’s general counsel.

“More than 100 years of precedent for how our rivers are managed in Texas would be completely unraveled,” Wasinger said, adding, “Basically, the Endangered Species Act would be used for the federal government to control how the state manages its surface water. This is the first attempt by any group to completely blow the whole system up.”

“Obviously, if the lawsuit for the endangered whooping crane is successful in usurping water rights on the Guadalupe River, the same legal logic could be used on any other Texas river where there are endangered species,” Bill West, GBRA general manager said.

This suit also undermines a number of processes the state already has in place – the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (EARIP), regional water planning efforts, the environmental flows process and development of desired future conditions for aquifers - to further ensure adequate water for both human and environmental needs, West explained.

### Precedents and Consequences

Previous cases related to the Endangered Species Act and their effects on management of rivers include:

\* The halting of the Tennessee Valley Authority’s construction of the Tellico Dam on the Little Tennessee River in 1973, a

project that had begun before passage of the Endangered Species Act. The project was nearly complete when a court stopped construction after a court found under the ESA that it was critical habitat for the endangered snail darter, a small fish. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the ruling, but an injunction on dam construction was lifted after Congress exempted the dam from the ESA and remnant populations of the snail darter were relocated to other streams. The fish’s status has since improved to “threatened.”

\* A 2007 federal court ruling in California that diverted water previously used for agricultural irrigation and other uses. The action was designed to protect the endangered Delta smelt, a two-inch-long fish native to the Sacramento River Delta.

\* The federal monitoring of critical habitat for the Concho water snake, a native of Central and West Texas, after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed it as threatened in 1986. Management of water flows and restoration of habitat have been key components of a recovery plan established for the small snake that lives in the Concho and Colorado River basins. The USFWS in September 2009 proposed removal of the snake from the list of threatened and endangered species because its population had recovered.

\* A USFWS-initiated cooperative agreement between the states of Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado to modify their water management practices to protect the whooping crane and other threatened and endangered species in that region. The case stemmed from efforts to license hydroelectric power projects on the Platte and North Platte Rivers.

# Control of Texas Water, *(continued)*

## Mussels Proposed for ESA Listing

Name	Location
Texas fatmucket <i>(Lampsilis bracteata)</i>	historically found in the Colorado, Guadalupe, and San Antonio river systems in Texas, and currently known to occur in two tributaries of the Colorado River, Llano River, upper San Saba River, and upper Guadalupe River.
Texas heelsplitter <i>(Potamilus amphichaenus)</i>	historically and currently known to occur in the Neches River, the lower central Trinity River, and the upper Sabine River.
Salina mucket <i>(Potamilus metnecktayi)</i>	currently known to occur in the Rio Grande from Brewster County to below the Falcon Dam in Starr County.
Golden orb <i>(Quadrula aurea)</i>	historically occurring in the Guadalupe, San Antonio, Colorado and Nueces-Frio river systems, and currently known to occur in the upper and central Guadalupe River, lower San Marcos River and Lake Corpus Christi in the lower Nueces River drainage.
Smooth pimpleback <i>(Quadrula houstonensis)</i>	historically occurring in the Brazos and Colorado River systems of central Texas and currently known to occur in the central Brazos, central Leon, central Little Brazos, and Navasota rivers in the Brazos River system, and from the central Colorado River.
Texas pimpleback <i>(Quadrula petrina)</i>	historically occurring in the upper and central Brazos, Colorado, and Guadalupe-San Antonio river systems; currently, it is known to occur in two tributaries of the Colorado River, the lower Concho and upper San Saba rivers, as well as the upper San Marcos River.
False spike <i>(Quincuncina mitchelli)</i>	occurring historically in the Brazos, Colorado, and Guadalupe river systems in central Texas and in the Rio Grande system in New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico. The only known extant population occurs in the lower San Marcos River, a tributary to the Guadalupe River system.
Mexican fawnsfoot <i>(Truncilla cognata)</i>	historically occurring in a large section of the Rio Grande system, including the lower Pecos River near Del Rio, and through the Rio Salado of Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, Mexico. It is now known to inhabit a small section of the lower Rio Grande in the Laredo area.
Texas fawnsfoot <i>(Truncilla macrodon)</i>	historically occurring in the Brazos and Colorado river systems, and currently known to inhabit the Brazos River system and the upper portion of the Colorado River.

All other uses of water would be subordinate to that water right, said Wilson, adding, “You’d essentially have no water left at times.”

### The Arguments

In a March 11 news release disseminated by TAP, Blackburn said, “TAP’s actions are similar to those of GBRA and Sierra Club when they litigated endangered species lawsuits in response to unregulated pumping in the Edwards Aquifer.”

There really is no comparison between the two cases, West said, explaining, “When GBRA initiated the litigation using the ESA in 1989, there was no mechanism for regulating pumping from the Edwards Aquifer and the Edwards Aquifer Authority did not exist. It is because of that suit that the EAA was created and rules were to be promulgated to ensure springflow for the endangered species. The most enlightening thing about Blackburn’s comment is that it underscores the fact that GBRA has led efforts for responsible management of water resources and protecting endangered species that thrive in those resources.”

Wilson served as a peer-review overseer and technical advisor to GBRA during a seven-year study of whooping crane habitat on the Texas Gulf Coast, known as the SAGES Study.

One of the key arguments in TAP’s lawsuit is that the TCEQ allowed too much freshwater to be diverted before it reached the coast, which led to excessive salinity in the coastal marshes. The lawsuit alleges that the salinity caused a steep decline in available food for the whooping cranes during the drought of 2008-2009, and that they died as a result of inadequate food. However the SAGES study, conducted by Texas A&M University researchers, concluded among its findings that during times of drought, when the whooping cranes’ preferred

“The Endangered Species Act is extremely powerful,” said Lee Wilson, a water and environmental resource consultant based in Santa Fe, N.M., who has been involved in projects on the Gulf Coast for more than 25 years. “It gives the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a great deal of authority to have things changed in ways that benefit endangered species.”

He said the USFWS does not tend to abuse that power, and has attempted to work with affected parties to work out long-term solutions.

“What The Aransas Project has asked for is much more aggressive,” Wilson said. “They’re asking for a water right for whooping cranes to be recognized as the highest priority water right.”

coastal food source, the blue crab, may decline, the birds easily switch to other foods for their nourishment.

The world's only natural wild flock of whooping cranes, the birds known as the Aransas-Wood Buffalo flock, migrate between Texas and Canada, where they spend the summer and fall. Their population declined to a perilous 16 in the 1940s, and recovered to a high of 270 in the spring of 2008.

Wilson said scientists are still trying to determine what caused the deaths of so many birds in 2008-2009. He noted that of the 57 members of that flock that died that year, at least 34 died before they reached Texas.

Wilson's review of federal documents indicates the known deaths in Texas are much less than the 23 commonly reported, and moreover, there is evidence that a viral infection played a role in most of the deaths that have been confirmed.

"We haven't found anything meaningful that shows that these birds died because of food shortages, or that freshwater inflows had anything to do with it," Wilson said. "The lawsuit calls for federal management to ensure freshwater inflows in whooping crane habitat, and they can only get that out of a federal court if they can show a violation of the federal Endangered Species Act."

Blackburn also said in the March 11 news release, "It's become apparent that the only way we're going to see any water left for the bays and the cranes is through a plan ordered by the court."

Some of the state's political leaders have expressed alarm at a combination of recent federal proposals to assert control over Texas' water, including State Rep. Bill Callegari, R-Houston, who bylined a news article in March titled "Washington Shouldn't Mess With Texas' Water."

Callegari cites a proposed expansion of the Clean Water Act, changes in federal water resources planning to increase emphasis on ecological rather than economic goals, proposed new limits on land uses along waterways, and the proposal to list the mussels and a number of other water-related species as threatened or endangered.

"The measures being considered in Washington would genuinely interfere with Texas' sovereignty," Callegari said. "If approved, they would subordinate Texas' water priorities to federal decisions, and shove this state's right to manage its own water resources aside to make way for federal control and bureaucracies. This cannot happen."

## Major River Basins in Texas



This river basin map shows where mussel species that are proposed for ESA listing are located and how many species are in each basin.

# Quenched Drought Leads to Promising Recreation Season

by Joel Williams

What a difference a year makes. In 2009 at this time, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Basin, like much of Texas, was in the grips of an exceptional drought. By mid-summer, Canyon Lake had dropped to a record low. Sections of river slowed almost to a standstill and started growing algae.

Water recreation, usually the best way to get relief from the summer heat, was less inviting under those conditions, and in some places, unsafe.

But the drought that started in the fall of 2007 began to break in the fall of 2009, and brought us a rainy winter. El Niño, the climatic phenomenon of rainy winters resulting from warm surface water temperatures in the eastern Pacific, replaced La Niña, the cool surface temperatures in that region, which had brought two consecutive dry winters to Texas.

In February 2010, Texas State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon declared that the drought was officially over statewide.



Photo courtesy GBRA archives

This year's timely rains have brought Canyon Lake back up to its optimum level and rivers are flowing at a healthy pace for tubing, boating and other fun.

"The way it's set up right now, I wouldn't be surprised if we had one of the best years we've had in eight or nine years," said Zero Rivers, owner of Rockin R River Rides, one of the largest outfitters specializing in rafting and tubing on the Guadalupe.

The bulk of Rivers' business for the year concentrates in a 16-week period starting the Memorial Day Weekend and running through the summer.

Although it was impossible to predict how the weather would play out over the course of his high season, he said that conditions in March indicated, "We should have it great at least through the middle of July this year."

Tommy Hill, chief engineer for GBRA agreed, noting that the flow of water into Canyon Lake on March 1, 2010, measured 540 cubic feet per second. That was 15 times the paltry flow of 36 cubic feet per second recorded on March 1, 2009.

"The outlook is very good," Hill said in March 2010. "Canyon is refilled, we're continuing to get rains and we

have a relatively high inflow coming into Canyon. We're back to operating Canyon from the non-drought criteria."



Photo by LaMarriol Smith

Canyon Lake was back up to its normal operating level of 909 feet above mean sea level, when it is considered full. It was a healthy recovery from early September 2009, when it had dropped as low as 892.7 msl.

That meant good news for Judy Young, director of the New Braunfels Convention and Visitors Bureau, which relies on the water attractions in the area as part of the New Braunfels vacation experience.

"We're destination where people don't come to do just one thing, but if the water recreation conditions are good, they are more likely to stay longer, for multiple days," she said. "We are on pace for a very good year. Our advance bookings are looking great."

Along with healthy lake and river conditions, the robust spring wildflower crop already was helping to bring new visitors to the area, getting the season off to a good start.

"Mother Nature has been kind to us this year," Young said.

## Where *are they now?*

### Nelson Erxleben

by Tammy Beutnagel



Photo by Connie Rothe

On a Sunday in May of 1972, Nelson Erxleben attended what should have been a blessed family event at Emanuel's Lutheran Church in Seguin. It was his daughter's baptism. However, it was also two days after record flood waters inundated the Guadalupe River Basin, causing numerous casualties and lost homes.

Erxleben gave his apologies to his family after church services and headed for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's hydro control room where he was called into work.

While homeowners had been rescued or evacuated from lake homes by this time, five GBRA hydroelectric plants were still engulfed with water. This meant emergency actions for GBRA hydro workers, electricians and Erxleben. "I didn't sleep for three days afterwards," he said.

When asked if he could recall a pleasant memory at GBRA, Erxleben smiled when he mentioned Nolte Island Park, "Before GBRA started the water and wastewater business, most people didn't know what type of company it was or what 'GBRA' even stood for. But that changed when people discovered Nolte Island."

Located five miles out of Seguin and adjacent to Nolte Lake/Meadow Lake, the 20-acre 'pecan bottom' started out as undeveloped property that lie between a hydroelectric dam and the pre World War II hydroelectric plant. But when Erxleben became grounds manager, he started a transformation at the park.

He took pride in managing the island and watched it become one of the most desired, private parks in Seguin. An additional picnic site, pavilion, concrete slab, playground, baseball field, volleyball area and restrooms were added.

"GBRA employees and their families loved to go to Nolte for picnics and the annual Pecan Fest," Erxleben explained.

Today, hundreds of pecan and oak trees, wild turkeys, hogs, birds, hawks, and eagles remain at Nolte Island.

Throughout his career at GBRA, Erxleben was promoted as operations manager for the GBRA wastewater reclamation plants. He helped build the Springs Hill, Dunlap Regional Wastewater facility, Canyon Park Estates, Northcliffe and Nob Hill Water Supply Systems. Erxleben acknowledged, "There wasn't a division I didn't work in," noting his time at the Port Lavaca Water Treatment Plant, the Calhoun Canal, and on construction of the Victoria Regional Wastewater Reclamation System.

Erxleben and his wife of 58 years, Ann, live in Seguin. Their daughter, Betty Ann and spouse Jimmy Schriever live in Seguin, while son, Michael resides in Leander, Texas. Their six grandchildren — Jessica, Joseph, Whitney, Trent, Vicki and Dena and five great grandchildren, Makenzi, Landri, Tate, Emma, and Ella — share very special places in their grandparents' hearts.

Since Erxleben's retirement with GBRA in 1996, he and Ann have enjoyed traveling to Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe and Coughatta.

**Started at GBRA: 1970**  
**Retired at GBRA: 1996**

Nelson Erxleben can be contacted at:  
211 Delany St., Seguin, TX 78155  
(830) 379-5259

# GBRA Honors Retiring Employees



Photo by Connie Rothe

**Frank Ceballos - 34 Years**  
February 27, 1975 to Decembere 31, 2009

During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, five GBRA employees celebrated their retirements.

The combined service of these retirees — Frank Ceballos, Charles Durst, Wendell “Wendy” Gillit, Cornelio “Connie” Molina, and Clifford Prout — totaled 136 years.

“It is difficult to measure such dedication and loyalty,” said Bill West, GBRA general manager, adding, “But, we certainly are glad that they gave their service to help make GBRA become the outstanding organization it is today.”



Photo by Connie Rothe

**Charles Durst - 28 Years**  
August 31, 1981 to August 31, 2009

## Not Pictured:

**Cornelio Molina - 29 Years**  
June 24, 1980 to December 31, 2009

**Clifford Prout - 17 Years**  
August 25, 1992 to September 4, 2009



Photo by Jim Wyatt

**Wendell Gillit - 28 Years**  
August 31, 1981 to August 31, 2009



# GBRA *Training & Licenses*

Alan Schneider of Coletto Reservoir completed the 2010 Dam Safety Workshop and Annual Haz-Com Training.

Alan Zolnosky of Coletto Recreation attended TWUA Day School.

Allan Smith of the Buda WWTP attended New Team Training.

Allan Ognoskie of Hydro attended New Team Training.

Brian Lyssy of the Lab completed Pesticide Safety Education Program, an Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar, and Chemical Hygiene Plan Review.

Carl Korth of Coletto Reservoir attended Annual Haz-Com Training.

Clarissa Frnka of the Lab attended the Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar.

Craig Skelton of the Western Canyon WTP attended TRWA - CSI and CCC, and New Team Training

Curtis Gosnell of the Calhoun Canal attended Pathogen Exposure Control, TWUA - Golden Crescent Day Training, and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Curtis Seiler of Coletto Recreation attended Annual Haz-Com Training.

Darel Ball of Water Resources completed the Emergency Response Table-Top Exercise and attended New Team Training.

David Garcia of the Port Lavaca WTP completed Pathogen Exposure Control and Pipeline Awareness training, and attended the Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

David Dodd of the Calhoun Canal completed Pathogen Exposure Control and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard

David Lundin of the Port Lavaca WTP attended the Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Dennis Walker of the Buda WWTP completed Technology-Based Training: Pump and Motor Maintenance.

Don Koble of the Canal RWSS completed Pathogen Exposure Control, TEEEX - Customer Service Inspection, Pipeline Awareness, TWUA - Golden Crescent Day Training, Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, and Utility Read Software training.

Donald Carpenter of the Luling WTP attended New Team Training.

Dustin Greenwood of the Western Canyon WTP attended New Team Training

E Ray Harp of the Lab attended an Ethics and Data Integrity

Training Seminar and completed Chemical Hygiene Plan Review.

Emmylou Roberts of the Lab completed training for Dionex Chromeleon Software, CM Admin User Training, Chemical Hygien Plan Review, and attended the Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar.

Fred Hernandez of Shadow Creek attended New Team Training.

Gregory Holt of Hydro attended New Team Training.

Guadalupe Aguillon of the Calhoun Canal completed Pathogen Exposure Control, Pipeline Awareness, TWUA - Golden Crescent Day Training, and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Herbert Wittliff of the Calhoun Canal completed Pathogen Exposure Control, Pipeline Awareness, TWUA - Surface of Water II, and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Hunter Duncan of the Western Canyon WTP attended TRWA - CSI and CCC and New Team Training.

James "Dale" Wall of the San Marcos WTP attended New Team Training.

Jason Lewis of Coletto Recreation attended TWUA Day School.

Jim Lumley of the Calhoun Canal completed Pathogen Exposure Control and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Joey Kisiah of the Port Lavaca WTP completed training for Pathogen Exposure Control and TCEQ Rules and Regulations.

John Moryl of Canyon Hydro attended New Team Training.

John Smith of Water Resources attended New Team Training.

Josephine Longoria of the Lab completed New TNI of the Laboratory Accreditation Standards Alamo Chapter Training - FLOCAM Microbe Identification, Communication Skills for Success, the Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar, Dionex Chromeleon Software CM Admin User Training, and the Chemical Hygien Plan Review.

Juan Vasquez of the Western Canyon WTP attended TRWA - CSI and CCC.

Kylie McNabb of the Lab attended the Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar and Chemical Hygien Plan Review.

Lee Gudge of Water Resources attended the Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar.

Linda McPherson of the Port Lavaca WTP Pathogen Exposure Control

Marlon McAdams of Coletto Reservoir attended TWUA Day School and Annual Haz-Com Training.

Michael Tompkins of the Calhoun Canal completed Pathogen Exposure Control, Pipeline Awareness, TWUA - Golden Crescent Day Training, and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Michael Urrutia of Water Resources attended New Team Training and TRWA - Technology Based Training.

Richard Gaona of the Calhoun Canal completed the Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, Pathogen Exposure Control, and attended TWUA - Golden Crescent Day Training.

Ronald Gosnell of the Canal RWSS completed TEEEX - Customer Service Inspection, Pipeline Awareness, TWUA - Golden Crescent Day Training, Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, and Utility Read Software training.

Ronnie Parenica of the Port Lavaca WTP completed Pathogen Exposure Control.

Ryan Boedeker of the Canal RWSS completed Pathogen Exposure Control, Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, and Utility Read Software training.

Samuel Widmer of Coletto Recreation attended Annual Haz-Com Training.

Shane McAdams of Coletto Reservoir completed a SCADA Training Class, and SLC 500 and RS Logix 500 Maintenance and Troubleshooting.

Sheryll Kisiah of the Canal RWSS completed Pathogen Exposure Control and Right-to-Know Training Program - OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard.

Stacy Frentzen of the Lab attended the Ethics and Data Integrity Training Seminar.

Stephanie Shelly of the Port Lavaca WTP completed training for Pathogen Exposure Control.

Steven Maricle of Hydro attended New Team Training.

Teresa Van Booven of Water Resources attended the Texas Leadership Institute - "When Hollywood Comes to Town."

Timothy Hill of the Western Canyon WTP completed Wastewater Collection training and attended TRWA - CSI and CCC.

Trey Sibert of the San Marcos WTP attended New Team Training.

Wallis Gudge of the Western Canyon WTP attended TRWA - CSI and CCC, and obtained his "C" Wastewater License.

Wilfred Korth of Coletto Recreation attended TWUA Day School, a TCBRTC Workshop - Care and Feeding, and Annual Haz-Com Training.

## Retiree "Red" Schrank Dies

GBRA retiree Norbet "Red" Schrank died Wednesday, March 24, 2010, at the age of 77. Schrank retired from GBRA's Hydro Division in December 1993.



Photo courtesy GBRA archives



# GBRA 2010

## Board Officers Elected

At the December meeting in Seguin, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) Board of Directors elected new officers for 2010. Tilmon Lee “T.L.” Walker representing Comal County will serve a second consecutive term as chair, Grace G. Kunde of Guadalupe County will serve as vice-chair and Oscar Fogle of Caldwell County will serve as secretary/treasurer.

Walker and his wife Donna live in New Braunfels where he is currently president of Sage Capital Bank.

Kunde, a civil law attorney in Seguin, represents Guadalupe County. She began her private practice in 1992 representing individuals, landowners, locally owned banks, and small businesses throughout South Central Texas.

Fogle and his wife Susie own and operate Oak Hill Ranch, where they have a commercial cattle business and conduct several wildlife management practices.

Other members of the GBRA board of directors are Myrna McLeroy, Gonzales County; Michael D. Schultz, Kendall County; James L. Powers, Hays County; Clifton Thomas, Jr., Victoria County; Arlene N. Marshall, Calhoun County; and Frank Pagel, Refugio County.



T.L. Walker



Grace Kunde



Oscar Fogle



### Did You Know

On August 12, 1960, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Fort Worth Office) awarded what was then the largest civil works contract ever to Tecon Construction Company of Dallas and Green Construction Company of Des Moines, Iowa, to build the rolled earth filled dam embankment, spillway, and suspension service bridge for Canyon Reservoir.

# employee anniversaries

GBRA recognizes the following employees for the dedication of service. (These employees started with GBRA between the months of January and April.)

## January

1/4/2010 Steven Maricle, Hydro — New Hire  
1/2/2008 Edwin Boettner, Shadow Creek — 2 yrs  
1/21/2008 James Murphy, Water Resources — 2 yrs  
1/2/2007 Sheryll Kisiah, Canal RWSS — 3 yrs  
1/24/2005 Susan Hubbert, General — 5 yrs  
1/27/2004 Steve Wallendorf, San Marcos WTP — 6 yrs  
1/6/1995 Sandra Terry, General — 15 yrs  
1/27/1988 Sara Vazquez, Victoria WWTP — 22 yrs  
1/5/1987 Samuel Widmer, Coledo Recreation — 23 yrs  
1/4/1983 Alan Schneider, Coledo Reservoir — 27 yrs  
1/16/1981 Curtis Seiler, Coledo Recreation — 29 yrs  
1/31/1981 David Lundin, Port Lavaca WTP — 29 yrs  
1/14/1980 Darel Ball, Water Resources — 30 yrs  
1/14/1980 Mark Henneke, Water Resources — 30 yrs  
1/11/1977 Rodney Voss, Hydro — 33 yrs  
01/28/1976 Bryan Serold, Water Resources — 34 yrs

## February

2/01/1991 Richard Gaona, Calhoun Canal — 19 yrs  
2/05/2009 Trey Sibert, San Marcos WTP — 1 yrs  
2/01/2007 Lamarriol Smith, General — 3 yrs  
2/18/2003 Richard Gonzales, Lockhart WTP — 7 yrs  
2/04/1999 Cheryl Gorden, General — 11 yrs  
2/01/1994 William West, General — 16 yrs  
2/04/1994 Curtis Davis, Victoria WWTP — 16 yrs  
2/27/1984 Linda McPherson, Port Lavaca WTP — 26 yrs  
2/18/1980 Charles Fennell, Hydro — 30 yrs  
2/29/1980 Jimmy Wyatt, Hydro — 30 yrs

## March

03/28/2008 Janae Reneaud, General — 2 yrs  
3/21/2006 Leigh Crettenden, General — 4 yrs  
3/29/2005 Christopher Lewis, General — 5 yrs  
3/15/2004 Michael Helmke, Hydro — 6 yrs  
3/10/1995 Guadalupe Aguillon, Calhoun Canal — 15 yrs  
3/27/1992 William Young, Victoria WWTP — 18 yrs  
3/21/1988 Richard Matheaus, RUD — 22 yrs  
3/31/1986 Marlon McAdams, Coledo Reservoir — 24 yrs  
3/26/1984 Michael Tompkins, Calhoun Canal — 26 yrs  
3/23/1981 John Smith, Water Resources — 29 yrs  
3/04/1976 Michael Schultze, Hydro — 34 yrs

## April

4/5/2006 David Garcia, Port Lavaca WTP — 4 yrs  
4/13/2006 Paulette Cowey, General — 4 yrs  
4/5/2004 Shane McAdams, Coledo Reservoir — 6 yrs  
4/8/2002 Judith Robisheaux, Coledo Recreation — 8 yrs  
4/22/2002 Curtis Gosnell, Calhoun Canal — 8 yrs  
4/11/1995 David Maltony, Hydro — 15 yrs  
4/17/1995 John Manchack, Hydro — 15 yrs  
4/8/1991 Robert Delgado, Lockhart WTP — 19 yrs  
4/7/1987 Reagan Ploetz, Hydro — 23 yrs  
4/24/1987 Roland Henry, Hydro — 23 yrs  
4/16/1982 Darryl Jandt, Hydro — 28 yrs  
4/26/1982 Jim Lumley, Calhoun Canal — 28 yrs

*The information for the employee anniversary list was compiled by Daphne Harder, Human Resources Department of the Office of Finance and Administration.*

Bryan Serold



Photo by Jim Wyatt



Photo from GBRA Archives





Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority  
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## Mark Your Calendar

May 19, 2010

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX

May 18-20, 2010

High Plains Water and Wastewater Training Expo  
Holiday Inn Lubbock-Park, Lubbock, TX  
<http://teex.org/teex.cfm?pageid=EUprog&area=EU&templateid=1809>

June 9-11, 2010

Texas Water Conservation Association Mid-Year Conference  
Sheraton Fiesta Hotel, South Padre, TX  
(512) 472-7216 <http://www.twca.org/meetings/midyear/>

June 16, 2010

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX

July 28-30, 2010

National Water Resources Association Western Water Seminar  
Snow King Resort, Jackson Hole, WY  
(703) 524-1544 <http://www.nwra.org/pdf/2010FWICBrochure.pdf>

July 21, 2010

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX

Aug. 8-10, 2010

6th Annual – Water Issues & Technologies:  
Process Water, Wastewater & Desalination  
Texas A&M University System, College Station, TX  
<http://foodprotein.tamu.edu/separations/scwater.php>

Aug 18, 2010

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX



Photo by LaMarriol Smith