

# **WATER PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

*BY THE LAKES, RIVERS, AND BAYS GROUP February 2014*

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** Central Texas environmental groups began meeting in October of 2013 to address water concerns in this long-term drought, which began in January of 2008. The purpose was to identify basic water commonalities as each group addresses the unique goals and objectives of their organizations. We hope this list of common beliefs will help us move forward to protect our lakes, rivers, bays and estuaries as we address critical water issues. Our next goal will be to meet with developers, planning groups, agencies and elected officials to expand these principles into protecting our ecosystems as development occurs.

**PREMISE:** Water in the Colorado River Basin should be managed in a way that maintains the biological and ecological soundness of its rivers, lakes, bays and estuaries.

## **SURFACE WATER AND GROUNDWATER:**

Since natural spring flows and river base flows from groundwater are connected, these connections should be recognized, further researched, and protected throughout the basin. In order to sustain the Colorado River, its contributing streams, and the Highland Lakes, these connections should be assessed as a critical component of water planning and management. For example, the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer is often described as a distinct and separate water resource, when it is connected hydrologically to the Colorado River.

## **CONSERVATION:**

Investments in water conservation and efficiency, including but not limited to reducing water losses in water distribution systems, should be a top priority and be addressed before major investments in increasing supplies.

We support vigorous conservation efforts by all water users in the Colorado River Basin. Water suppliers in the Colorado River basin should implement ongoing proactive and effective water conservation programs to reduce per capita water use to at least 140 gpcd by 2020.

Agricultural water users should use best available technology to increase water efficiency and reduce overall water use.

## **DEVELOPMENT:**

Major water infrastructure expansion to serve new development should be paid for by the new development served, not subsidized by current residents and ratepayers who do not need and may not benefit from those expansions.

Major new investments in water infrastructure should not be made in environmentally sensitive areas, such as the recharge and contributing zones of the Edwards and other aquifers.

New developments should be designed to be as water efficient as possible through use of city ordinances, restrictive covenants, native landscaping, built-in rainwater harvesting, grey water use, and storm water management techniques that retain and conserve water on site to the maximum extent practicable.

The water supply functions provided by preserving watersheds that feed our water supply lakes and aquifers should be recognized and protected through appropriate land use regulation, infrastructure

planning, and permanent protection (through purchase of conservation easements, etc.).

## **POLICY AND MANAGEMENT:**

Access to clean affordable water is a basic human right. Retail water providers should price water essential to meeting basic human needs affordably. Non-essential water should be more expensive as usage increases, in order to promote efficiency and discourage waste, and to cover the costs of providing water supplies.

Providing sufficient freshwater for the Colorado River and Matagorda Bay supports the aquatic environment and is essential to the health and productivity of these systems. A portion of the water to meet the environmental needs are regarded as firm demands (guaranteed) and should be accounted for and treated as such in TCEQ and LCRA's management of the Colorado River system.

The total amount of surface water available for allocation in the Colorado River Basin, including the combined firm yield of Lakes Buchanan and Travis, should be quantified using the most recent data, including year-to-date data on hydrology, climatology and inflows.

Currently, water use restrictions vary between jurisdictions; we support a uniform definition of water use restriction stages to encourage better consumer understanding and participation (ex. once a week watering stage designation should be uniform).

All water providers should implement their drought contingency plans during periods of declared drought based on factors such as water supply/treatment based emergencies and climatological based droughts (for instance, when the U.S. Drought Monitor declares a severe drought for a county or region). Individual Drought Contingency Plans should be modified to reflect this recommendation.

When environmentally benign and cost effective, Aquifer Storage Reservoirs should be considered as a strategy to meet water needs in the Lower Colorado River Basin.

River Authority, Conservation and Utility District Boards should be elected and directly accountable to the voters and ratepayers that they serve.

## **Endorsers of the Water Principles:**

Brigid Shea, Travis County Commissioner

Charles Flatten, Hill Country Alliance

Bill Bunch, Save Our Springs Alliance

Phil Cook, Bastrop

Jo Karr Tedder, Central Texas Water Coalition

Dorothy Taylor, CTWC

Jennifer Walker, Sierra Club

Steve Box, Environmental Stewardship,  
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\* Affiliations listed for informational purposes only and do not reflect any official position by that entity.