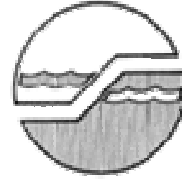


GBCPA Press Release
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Long Live the Trinity

The Galveston Bay Conservation and Preservation Association has applied for a large amount of water rights in the Trinity River to be dedicated to the preservation of the Galveston Bay system. By this action, GBCPA has joined groups down the coast in seeking to preserve important freshwater inflows for sensitive bay systems.

The bays of the upper and middle Texas coast are estuaries, places where fresh and salt water meet. Estuaries are among the most productive natural areas on Earth. Virtually all of the shellfish and many of the popular fish species such as speckled trout and redfish are dependent on the balance between fresh and salt water. The December permit application for Galveston Bay is intended to maintain this balance.

In Texas today, water-short communities are searching for new sources of municipal and industrial water. San Antonio is looking to the Guadalupe and Colorado Rivers while Dallas-area users are attempting to recycle much of the wastewater that previously was discharged into the Trinity River. San Antonio Bay down the coast is the most endangered of the coastal bay systems, followed by the Matagorda Bay system and the Galveston Bay system.

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Trinity 2 of 3

The application by GBCPA is an attempt to put coastal bays on the list of those entities holding water rights. This action is allowed under Texas water law that classifies instream flows and bay and estuarine inflows as "beneficial uses" and allows any user to apply for a water right to dedicate that water to a "beneficial use."

By submitting this permit application, GBCPA is acting in its role as Baykeeper for the Galveston Bay system," said Jim Blackburn, chair of GBCPA. "We must act as stewards for the bay. If we who live on the coast don't stand up and insist upon its protection, no one will."

GBCPA was designated as the Baykeeper for Galveston by the National Waterkeeper Alliance in 2001. To date, most of GBCPA's focus as Baykeeper has been in attempting to prevent the construction of the proposed Bayport

complex. This water rights application adds a second major dimension to the role of GBCPA as Baykeeper.

This application is for 3.8 million acre feet each year. That is a lot of water but it is less than Texas Parks and Wildlife has projected as being needed to maintain the productivity of the Galveston Bay system," said Blackburn. "We have got to place consideration of the future health of bays and estuaries before the agencies and the legislature. It is important and essential to the future of the bay."

GBCPA has been carefully considering the actions it needs to take as the Baykeeper," said Katie Chimenti, the executive director of GBCPA. "This permit application for water rights is the type of action that a steward of a bay system should be taking. We think it will make a difference in the future of Galveston Bay."

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Trinity 3 of 3

The permit application is now under review by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the state agency charged with issuing water rights permits. GBCPA's application will be subject to administrative review before being considered by the Commission. However, the TCEQ is scheduled to act in March on a similar permit action by the San Marcos River Foundation (SMRF) for water rights to protect San Antonio Bay.

"All of us should be concerned about the SMRF application," said Chimenti. "What happens with that permit will directly affect our chances on a permit for Galveston Bay." GBCPA is urging all coastal residents concerned about protection of Galveston Bay, Matagorda Bay and San Antonio Bay to pay close attention to these issues and to contact legislators and let them know about rising public concern.

"There is going to be a major fight in Austin before the legislature on this issue," said Blackburn. "We could lose our right to pursue this permit application if the law is changed."

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