

# GBRA RIVER RUN

*A publication of the GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY Summer 2015*

*Texas' new*

**desal law**

*'a breath of fresh air'*

*SCOTUS Refuses Case*



*GBRA Makes Log Jam Plans*

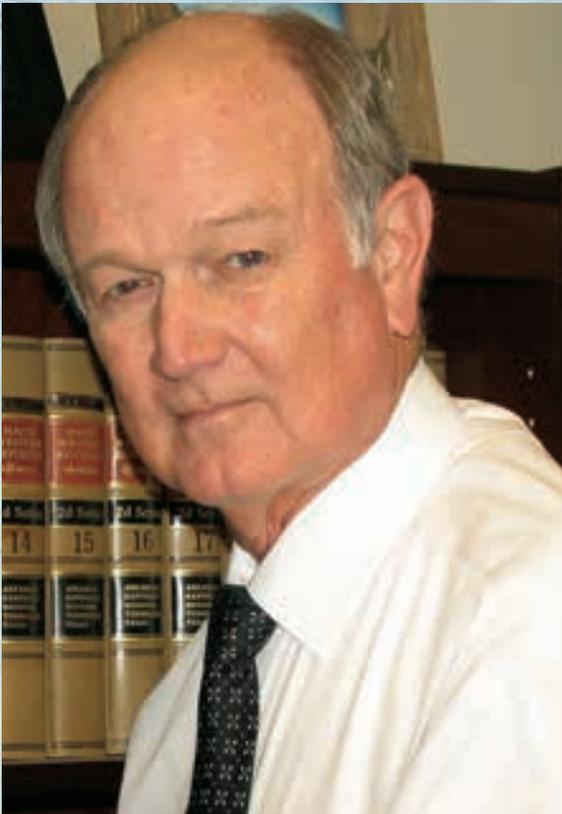


*Memorial Day 2015 Flood*

# From the GM

## When It Rains, It ... Well, You Know

In the year 2007, rain fell across the state in abundance. After that, one could practically count the raindrops from year to year. But for a quick localized flood in the Guadalupe River and Lower Colorado River basins on Halloween 2013, this area of Texas certainly experienced its share of sunshine, parched earth and depleted reservoirs.



Earlier this year, the rain began to pick up the pace. And as the saying goes, when it rains, it pours. By the end of the 2015 Memorial Day Weekend, the Guadalupe River Watershed would lay full claim to its rightful title, "Flash Flood Alley." During the 24-hour period ending 7 a.m. Sunday, May 24, nearly 10 inches of rain fell in Blanco County and another 10-12 inches of rain had fallen in eastern Kendall County with runoff from both areas emptying into the Blanco River. The Blanco River would swell to a record height and rate of flow.

Flooding even caused a temporary closure of Interstate Highway 35 in San Marcos, Texas. Not only were residences and business subject to significant property damage, but unfortunately, the flooding also caused the loss of several lives.

On a positive note, formerly depleted reservoirs in the area were beneficiaries of much needed rain. Over a period of several weeks, including the Memorial Day Weekend, Lake Travis rebounded from about 33 percent full up to 84 percent full. Lake Medina had fallen to less than 3 percent full and by the first week in July was up to 73 percent full. Fortunately, Canyon Reservoir had only fallen to about 77 percent full, but has rebounded to 100 percent. Shortly after the flooding, the flood pool of Canyon Reservoir reached nearly 45 percent full. Be sure to read all about the record-breaking flood of the Blanco River inside on page 14.

Something else that is sure to pique your interest is the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision to deny review in *The Aransas Project (TAP) v. Shaw*, sometimes referred to as the whooping crane case. This

decision essentially puts that litigation to bed. I encourage you to read more about that decision on page 10 in this issue of the *River Run*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. E. West, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

W. E. "Bill" West, Jr.  
General Manager

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Summer 2015

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# Contents

River Run **Summer 2015**

## Departments

- 2 | Field and Office
- 9 | The Trust
- 14 | Inside GBRA

## Features

- 10 | Desal Law
- 14 | Flood

Front cover: Connie Rothe  
Back cover photo: Janet Thome

By Cinde Thomas-Jimenez

## Lupe the Turtle TURNS 25!

In 1989, GBRA launched its fourth grade curriculum program, *Journey Through the Guadalupe River Basin*, and, in doing so, introduced *Lupe the Turtle* to fourth grade students. Lupe and his sidekick, *Edward E. Armadillo* have been working tirelessly for 25 years. A lot of changes have taken place since the program was initiated — changes in schools, in printing processes and technology, and in the river basin itself.

The program was originally developed with creative teacher input — leading to the incarnation of cartoon characters Lupe and Edward. While these two may not look like they have changed over the years, the process of creating them and bringing them to life certainly has. Originally the characters were hand drawn and water color painted by Boerne artist, Dawn Gwin. The pictures were then scanned and color separated, press plates were made for printing and binding. By today's standards, it was a tedious process.

Things have evolved a great deal throughout the years. The program, originally developed as a supplement to Social Studies classes, was revamped in 1998. By 2000, it was clear that there was a need for more of a science emphasis in the student workbook. Dawn was invited to come back to the project to create “new” watercolor artwork to address the topics of watersheds, water quality and water conservation. The teacher's guide was completely rewritten to include references to the state mandated TEKS. The new artwork continues to be used today, but printing technology has vastly changed, allowing for a more streamlined and efficient process.

*Journey Through the Guadalupe River Basin* has been provided as a boxed kit for each classroom. Originally, the kit consisted of 25 student workbooks, a saddle-stitched teacher's guide, a filmstrip that served as a visual tour through the basin, and 25 pencils. The filmstrip was replaced by 35mm slides in 1998, and a poster / transparency of GBRA's statutory district were included. The slides were replaced by a CD in 2000, and the original poster was replaced by a more detailed physical map of the basin.

In 2014 the CD was replaced with a flash drive that includes PowerPoints, videos, digital copies of the student workbook and teacher's guide and the map/poster. The teacher's guide has evolved from being a folded/saddle stitched booklet to a loose leaf, 3-hole punched pages in a three-ring binder and is now



provided in a spiral-bound publication. Teacher requests have kept the pencils as a part of the kit each year, and the number of student booklets has remained 25.

In 2010, Lupe's dedication and long years of studying paid off. The *Journey* program became bilingual. Spanish copies of the student workbook are available to teachers upon request.

Each spring, teachers are asked to reorder for the next school year. Orders in 1989 were taken by phone, then by fax, then email. Now all correspondence is electronic, making it much more efficient and less time consuming for teachers.

The growth of the program is a good reflection of population growth in the river basin. *Journey* reached 5,825 students in 43 schools in 1989, which is quite a contrast to the program's reach today. In fall 2014, 116 public elementary schools in the basin used the curriculum. The cumulative total of students that have been led on the river journey over the past 25 years is about 210,000.

Not bad for a turtle!

# Ft. Worth Zoo Staff Harvests Coletos Spoonbill Eggs

A team of Ft. Worth Zoo staff made a special visit to Coletos Creek's Bird Island in May. Working through Coletos Chief Ranger Wilfred Korth, Shelly Collinsworth and her team worked to harvest Roseate Spoonbill eggs for the Ft. Worth Zoo's "Ark" Program. After collecting 12 eggs, four had already hatched by early June.

Apparently, the Ft. Worth Zoo has held a breeding flock of Roseate Spoonbills as a reserve stock for wild populations since

the 1960s. The zoo developed a mission to provide a captive reserve population just in case Texas' wild flocks began dwindle. Occasionally, there is a need to infuse new genetics into the population to keep it healthy, according to zoo staff.



Photos by Wilfred Korth

# Near-Record Largemouth Bass Caught at Coletos Creek Reservoir



Photo by Jason Lewis

While the fish always seem to be biting in Coletos Creek Reservoir, a very special specimen chewed the hook in the later part of February — so special in fact, it was quite near a lake record catch.

Wayne Eckhardt of Portland, Texas, pulled in a 12 pound, 3 ounce largemouth bass, which was only 10 ounces off of the lake record largemouth bass of 12 pounds 13 ounces caught by the late Jimmy Johnson of Ganado.

# All Drought Stages Rescinded on Area Hydroelectric Lakes



Photo Courtesy GBRA Archives

After significant rainfall in the Guadalupe River Basin, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority officials in early June announced all drought measures were being rescinded on area hydroelectric lakes in Comal, Guadalupe and Gonzales counties.

As of Thursday, June 4, the flow at Comal Springs was 311 cubic feet per second (cfs). Stage I drought measures for the

hydro lakes are only triggered when Comal springflow drops below 250 cfs. The last time the hydro lakes were not affected by drought measures was in April 2012.

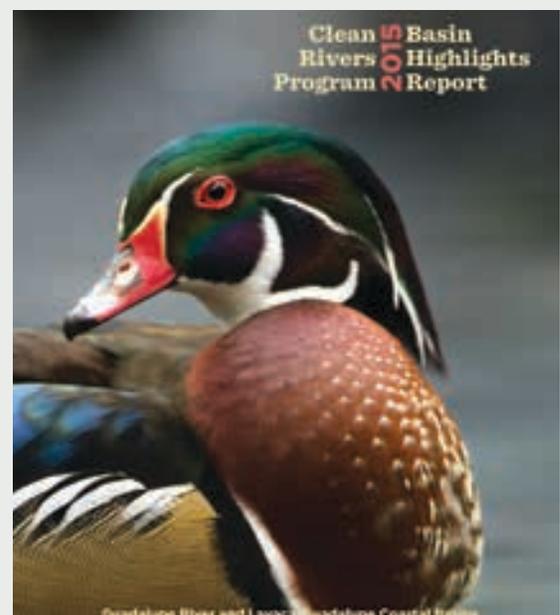
## GBRA Hosted Clean Rivers Program Steering Committee Meeting in March

The annual Guadalupe River Basin Steering Committee meeting for the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) was held March 26, 2015, at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) River Annex in Seguin.

The public meeting was sponsored by the GBRA and the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA), said Mike Urrutia, GBRA director of water quality services.

The Steering Committee is comprised of local leaders and community representatives from throughout the Guadalupe River Basin. "Each year, GBRA and UGRA convene the meeting to provide direction for the general Clean Rivers Program activities in the Guadalupe River Basin, as well as development of the work plan, monitoring plan and review of major reports," Urrutia said.

This year's meeting agenda included a review of the 2014 CRP basin activities, a report from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality on stream assessments, watershed action planning and water quality standards, and status reports on the watershed protection activities going on in the basin.



# GBRA Proposes Short- and Long-Term Solutions to Log Jams

by LaMarriol Smith

After high rainfall events in the months of March, April and May increased flows to the level where the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority Calhoun County Canal crews were able to break up and clear out log jams on the Guadalupe River, GBRA officials reached out to local landowners and federal official in an effort to devise short- and long-term plans for dealing with this recurring problem.

“The immediate concern is the log jam on the San Antonio River primarily in Refugio and Victoria counties,” explained Bill West, Jr., GBRA’s general manager, adding, “Funding for log jams has been a problem, but I believe we are finding ways to tackle that issue.”

On April 29, GBRA officials briefed area constituents about recent log jam work on the Guadalupe River and explained some of the permitting and funding challenges that are faced in working log jams. That meeting resulted

in GBRA officials pledging to develop partnerships with local, state and federal entities as well as private landowners to tackle the jam on the San Antonio River. Funding partners that GBRA has contacted include the San Antonio River Authority, Union Pacific Railroad, area county officials, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). “As a GBRA board representative, I am concerned that our constituents receive assistance with these persistent log jams both now and in the future,”

Dennis Patillo, GBRA Board of Director for Victoria County said. “I recognize the myriad of challenges that GBRA staff faces in trying to provide that assistance, but I am confident we will resolve the log jam problems through teamwork both out in the field and in the office.”

GBRA has sought out and already received a \$150,000 grant from the USFWS to go along with \$50,000 GBRA had budgeted for log jams this year. Additional commitments are needed to cover the remaining cost of the project, which is estimated to be about \$750,000. West said, “A partnership among interested parties can serve as the catalyst to remove the San Antonio River log jam this

summer, after necessary permits have been acquired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.”

The long-term initiative requires support from a higher level. Congressman Blake Farenthold (R-TX, Dist. 27) offered to assist. GBRA officials have requested the Congressman’s assistance in working with the USACE to ensure long-term log-jam maintenance on the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers. Congressman Farenthold said, “Out of a deep concern for the landowners unable to use their fields due to the flooding, I have offered to assist the

GBRA and USACE in coming up with a mutual agreement that will resolve the issue and provide the needed relief for those affected by the log jams.” In addition to assisting in a long-term resolution for the Lower Basin log jam issue, Congressman Farenthold is engaged in discussions



about a delta study to be conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

In March, GBRA cleared the first set of log jams in the “horseshoe” area of the Guadalupe River in Victoria and Calhoun counties. After breaking up those logs, GBRA’s Calhoun County Canal crews floated those logs down to the saltwater barrier and cleared them. The second rainfall rise on the river occurred around April 22, and crews began clearing a jam upstream of the horseshoe on the Guadalupe

and ferrying those logs downstream to the saltwater barrier working well into the first week of May.

“Because of recent high rainfall events, more debris may float downriver and potentially cause additional log jams to occur,” GBRA’s Lower Basin Manager Bryan Serold said. However, another aerial survey of the river is planned in the near future so crews will have a more complete picture of the overall log jam problem.

“GBRA is committed to completing the immediate log jam obstructions, and more importantly, working with partners to establish long-term solutions to address the log jams,” West said.

**“GBRA is committed to completing the immediate log jam obstructions, and more importantly, working with partners to establish long-term solutions to address the log jams.”**

**Bill West**

# Our Day to Shine 2015



GBRA employees and family members make improvements to the McMahan Womens Club for their volunteer project in April.

Photos by Connie Rothe



Photo by Tammy Beutnagel



# U.S. Supreme Court Denies Review in Whooping Crane Case

The United States Supreme Court on Monday, June 22, 2015, denied review in *The Aransas Project (TAP) v. Shaw*, No. 14-1138. The Supreme Court denial came in response to petition by attorneys for TAP after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit denied a Petition for Rehearing En Banc last December, following a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit's reversal of a judgment of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

In a June 30, 2014, decision, the Fifth Circuit panel agreed with defendants that the plaintiff failed to prove its case that diversions of water for use by Texans had led to multiple deaths of federally protected whooping cranes in the winter of 2008.

A lawsuit against the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) initiated by a group wielding the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) to bring a halt to water permitting on the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers by alleging multiple deaths of the endangered whooping cranes that winter on the Texas coast led the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) to intervene as a defendant. With only two whooping crane carcasses and two partial carcasses found during 2008-2009, no evidence supported the double-digit losses claimed by the plaintiffs.

Yet, on March 11, 2013, federal district court Judge Janis Graham Jack "adopted verbatim TAP's proposed findings of fact" and held that the TCEQ caused the deaths of the whooping cranes by issuing water permits that resulted in diverting water from the cranes and ordered TCEQ to immediately stop issuing water permits on the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers. The judge also ordered a costly federal planning process that is duplicative of current state programs.

"This case, which essentially boiled down to defending the state's system of water rights and fending off federal intervention, cost ratepayers and taxpayers more than \$7 million," Bill West, GBRA general manager said, adding, "We worked to challenge and dispel what we believed to be a seriously flawed chain of causation

theory and an even more flawed methodology for counting whooping crane populations that allowed for the species to be counted as dead if it was missing in more than one aerial flyover."

In the Fifth Circuit hearing, GBRA's appellate attorney Aaron Streett of the firm Baker Botts LLP argued that TAP failed to prove proximate cause as a matter of law because the chain of causation from the State to the permit holder to the alleged harm to the cranes was too attenuated and unforeseeable to constitute proximate cause. In the revised panel opinion released in December, the panel made minor clarifications to its proximate-cause analysis but reconfirmed its reversal of the district court.

The Fifth Circuit panel that consisted of judges Edith Jones, Jerry Smith and Emilio Garza agreed, finding "Nowhere does the court [District Court] explain why the remote connection between water licensing, decisions to draw river water by hundreds of users, whooping crane habitat, and crane deaths that occurred during a year of extraordinary drought compels ESA liability... the court's ambiguous conclusion cannot be sustained."

The panel concluded that the district court's opinion misapplies proximate cause analysis and further, even if proximate cause had been proven, the injunction stopping the State of Texas from issuing water permits for the Guadalupe River and San Antonio River basins was an abuse of discretion.

West said the Supreme Court's denial of review allows TCEQ to go forward with its job administering the State's surface water resources and GBRA to continue its mission of environmental stewardship of the resources of the Guadalupe River Basin. We all should work on developing a meaningful plan to address the needs of the flock and work toward growing the flock to a sustainable level. A long-term project that could benefit both whooping cranes and citizens is a proposed integrated water power project (IWPP) to provide desalinated seawater from the Gulf of Mexico to constituents in the designated region.

## Area Students Earn GBRA Scholarships

GBRA officials recently presented five outstanding high school students with scholarships. The students, whose families reside within GBRA's 10-county statutory district, submitted applications and earned the scholarships based on academic and extracurricular achievements.

The purpose of the scholarship program is to provide financial assistance to talented students in GBRA's service area whom otherwise might not be able to attend a college/university or technical/trade school.

These scholarships serve as a recruitment tool to help GBRA find and develop future qualified employees, and they also afford the opportunity to give back to our communities.



(L-R) Brittany Walker of Gonzales, Sara Guice of Seadrift, Thomas Jimenez of Seguin, Sohmer Paige Peterson of Geronimo, and Sarah Hakimuddin of Cibolo.

# San Antonio Bay Foundation Funds Support Project

In May, the San Antonio Bay Foundation (SABAY) awarded \$31,000 to the Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island (FAMI) Water for Wildlife Project.

The project entails converting and rehabilitating old dysfunctional windmill-powered water wells to solar powered pumps. The maintenance of these freshwater drinking sources is critical for wildlife on the remote Matagorda Island.

Funds were made available to SABAY pursuant to a settlement agreement with the Texas General Land Office and Kirby

Inland Marine. These funds are related to a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP), which resulted from the oil spill in the Houston ship channel on March 23, 2014, and made landfall at Matagorda Island.

Dan Alonso, SABAY executive director said, “We recognize the need, and with the additional \$31,000, have provided funding for the Water for Wildlife Project totaling \$41,000.”

For more information about the project or SABAY, contact Alonso at (830)660-4429 or [dalonso@sabay.org](mailto:dalonso@sabay.org).

Photo by Carl Koch



Left to right: Dan Alonso; Gene Colville, SABAY Board of Directors; Fred Lanou, FAMI president; Brett Beasley, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

## Lab Analyst Voluntarily Obtains Certification

Carmen Phillips, a laboratory technician II in GBRA's Regional Laboratory, earned a Laboratory Analyst Section Level D Certification from the Texas Water Utilities Association (TWUA) in May.

To earn the certification, Phillips was required to pass an exam, which she did on her first attempt.

“In Texas, operators must have a license to retrieve a sample from a plant and to work at the plant, but the scientists that perform the analysis in a lab do not have to be licensed or certified. So, it is a testament to Carmen that she voluntarily pursued this certification,” said Josephine Longoria, GBRA Regional Laboratory director. “To my knowledge, Carmen is the first person in the lab to obtain this certification during my 13 years of employment here,” Longoria added.

GBRA allows these certificates to be considered for the incentive program that is available for operators.

Additionally, other states that have “required” certification programs would recognize Phillips’ “voluntary” certificate if she ever accepted a lab position in another state. Phillips has been employed with GBRA since March 2014.



Photo by Josephine Longoria

## Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve Acquired

by Jeff Crosby

Through a unique partnership between Caldwell County, the City of Lockhart and the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust) has permanently protected 265 acres of wetlands just outside of Lockhart. The wetlands on the property were originally built as mitigation for the construction of State Highway 130 stretching from Georgetown to Seguin. Consolidating all of the wetland mitigation requirements into a single location created a large block of habitat in a part of central Texas where this does not exist.

The property contains a diverse mix of habitat types, including over a mile of riparian woodlands along Plum Creek, emergent and forested wetlands, and deep water wetland units. Originally, TXDOT approached the City and County about operating the site as a public park for the local community. Maintaining the site to the environmental standards that are required for wetland mitigation sites led to local officials reaching out to the GBR Trust for guidance.

The GBR Trust saw this as a unique opportunity as wetland habitats of this size are rare in central Texas. Proximity to a large and growing population base allows for significant use of the property by schools and other community



Photo by Jeff Crosby

groups as an outdoor classroom and for additional education programming. There are over five miles of trails that navigate throughout the property providing significant opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The GBR Trust decided to acquire the property from TXDOT, who agreed to contribute to an endowment fund that would assist in the long-term management and conservation of the property.

The GBR Trust is currently developing a management plan for the property and has identified three primary goals:

1. Protect, maintain and enhance the wetland, riparian and additional wildlife habitat on the property.
2. Provide appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting the conservation values of the property.
3. Provide scientific and educational opportunities related to wetlands, wildlife and conservation

Following the completion of the management plan, the GBR Trust will work in partnership with Caldwell County, the City of Lockhart, public citizens and other conservation organizations to implement these goals for the benefit of the local and regional communities as well as the wildlife resources found in the region.

## Trust Searches for Executive Director

The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust is seeking a qualified candidate to fill our Executive Director position. This position is responsible for the management of Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust, an accredited 501(c)(3) land and water trust. This position will perform the following duties or have direct oversight including, but not limited to finances, fundraising, administration, marketing, conservation project development, implementation and

monitoring, conservation easements, establishing contacts with landowners, developing project partners, education and outreach, and board development. Salary range is \$64,640 to \$103,422 and competitive benefits are offered.

For more information on the position visit [www.gbrtrust.org](http://www.gbrtrust.org).

# Texas' new de

By Barbara Elmore

**T**exans who pour over the dilemma of ensuring a reliable water supply for a booming state can add a shiny new piece to their toolbox. House Bill 2031, which the 84th Legislature passed in May, creates a framework for permitting the diversion and use of ocean water from the Gulf of Mexico into water that people can drink--as well as use for many other purposes.

That water planners now see the ocean as a new water source is not startling, especially as prolonged drought has led thirsty communities to truck in water, reuse wastewater, seek new pipelines to meet basic needs, and establish conservation rules.

But the idea has taken a while to catch on. Now it is seeing broad support.

For years, the price of desalinating marine water has been viewed by many state leaders as too expensive to develop, and other water sources made the development of desal plants appear to be unnecessary. Only certain agencies--the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority is one--have urged public policy planners to consider desalination as a viable option.

This year, legislators passed the marine water legislation unanimously and Gov. Greg Abbott signed it into law in mid-June. The historic law creates the structure for an important addition to the authoritative Texas Water Code, the bible of state water management.

"We are establishing a new chapter to deal with marine projects," said Jay Howard of Hillco Partners, a legislative consultant who worked on behalf of GBRA to help move the legislation forward. "We have Chapter 36 that deals with groundwater and Chapter 11 that deals with surface water. This is new water. Setting up a new chapter to deal with marine water is significant."

## How it started

Those charged with finding new water for people to use have pondered the ocean for many years, well before Texas' most recent drought. W.E. "Bill" West, Jr., GBRA general manager, recalls attending a water conference in California more than a decade ago when a prototype desalination project came up for discussion. "The project did not materialize, but that started our interest in the issue."

However, high costs and bad starts on similar projects across the country delayed action. Construction on plants foundered under overrides and company bankruptcies.

"Like any new technology, there are false starts on the leading edge," West said. "People had to learn the hard way."

Two years ago, GBRA and several partners started investigating desalination of marine water by requesting a feasibility study on the creation of a coastal project that would combine power

# sal law

*'a breath of fresh air'*

production with desalination and serve the South Central Texas region. A team of experts, including participants from the General Land Office and University of Texas at San Antonio, selected MWH Global to conduct the study. West expects to see MWH Global's completed report this summer.

MWH Global examined potential locations, the technology such a plant would use to desalinate the water, how much energy would be required to power it, and how to dispose of salt byproducts.

Although early failures made water managers cautious, new technology and plentiful, low-cost energy in natural gas fields near coastal areas have helped propel forward movement. And even though the MWH Global study is focusing on South Central Texas, those who have studied the issue say there is no reason the results of the study cannot be applied across the Gulf Coast.

That is what the recently passed legislation intended, and it's what GBRA sees happening in the future.

Written and shepherded in the House by Rep. Eddie Lucio III, D-Brownsville, and in the Senate by Sen.

Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, D-McAllen, the legislation's purpose is to streamline the regulatory process to reduce the time it takes for marine water desalination projects to get regulatory approval.

"The long-term water needs of this state far exceed the supplies that are available from freshwater sources," Rep. Lucio said after the passage of HB 2031. "It is important that we provide for the state's current and future water needs, and this bill aims to do that."

And even though GBRA has taken the lead thus far by seeking the feasibility study, West predicts that interested participants—a group instead of a single entity—will take the lead in governing how the project itself moves forward.

GBRA started the process in Texas because so many people in the United States, and in Texas, live near an ocean that it just

makes sense for the ocean to play a role in supplying water, West said. The 2010 census showed that more than half of the U.S. population lives within a coastal watershed, a number expected to increase rapidly by 2020. GBRA provides water stewardship in a region that includes many coastal counties.

"Using the Gulf makes sense as far as logistics go," West said. "The cost of desalination has been a limiting factor. But the combination of new technology and the cost of new traditional supplies are narrowing the gap of cost and affordability. Our strategy is one of development of seawater and blending it with other supplies."

## Influence of current drought

Several factors influenced the passage of the legislation, including the severe and prolonged Texas drought and a growing population that puts stress on water supplies across the state, even when there is no drought. Communities whose water supply

dried up in the last few years have employed trucks to bring in water for drinking and resorted to purifying raw wastewater to

drinking standards. And even though agriculture and industry have reused wastewater for decades, the drought-reduced supply of wastewater has resulted in regional fights over who gets to use it.

No part of Texas has been immune from the ravages of drought, and its effects have been obvious in the outdoors, as reservoirs shrank and vast swaths of trees and other vegetation died, as well as in business and industry, recreation, and courtrooms, where entities argue over who is entitled to scarce water supplies.

The legislation that passed in May reflects a balance of interests. Lucio and Hinojosa brought together viewpoints from environmentalists, public utilities, water management authorities, and agricultural and industrial entities. "It's not a perfect bill for

**"The long-term water needs of this state far exceed the supplies that are available from freshwater sources."**

**Rep. Eddie Lucio III, D-Brownsville**



# desal law

everyone, but it's a good balance for all those interests, and all those interests involved testified in favor of the bill," Howard said.

Cost was not an objection to state legislators, Howard said, because the costs of developing the new source of water will be borne by the providers of the water, and eventually, by the users.

GBRA representatives and others interested in participating in a large-scale desalination project went to Austin to answer legislators' questions. "Desalination is a concept that a lot of people like, but there are a lot of rules and it takes a lot of education," Howard added, especially as lawmakers faced more than 6,000 bills vying for their attention.

In the end, legislators saw a need for new water. "We have access to this water in the Gulf, and this is something we can do that other states cannot do," Howard said. "Everyone is looking at ways to develop new water, and this is attractive because the technology is there and we see other projects in other parts of the world."

## Other desalination projects

One of those projects is in California, where regulators adopted permitting rules in early May. California regulators looked at many of the same issues MWH Global focused on in its feasibility study: minimizing harm to marine life and diffusing brine salinity when salt is taken out of marine water and returned into the ocean.

The projected cost of a plant in Carlsbad, Calif., is \$1 billion. Thomson Reuters news service calls the plant "the Western Hemisphere's biggest" and says it will open in November, delivering up to 50 million gallons of water a day to San Diego County.

The preliminary estimate of building such a plant in Texas was more than \$1 billion, but the actual cost won't be known until the

size of the project is identified, West said. The feasibility study, which cost \$2 million, looked at a plant built in phases with the first phase supplying about 50 million gallons of treated water per day. Later phases would eventually bring the plant to a 250 million gallon-per-day capacity.

Meanwhile, the Texas Legislature, with approval of Texas voters, created two funds to make the financing of water projects more affordable and to provide ongoing state financial assistance for water supplies. The Texas Water Development Board has established

**"We started pushing the desalination idea long before other people felt like it was appropriate, and we did so because we understand how long it takes to develop traditional water projects. We knew it would take a long time. This (legislation) is a breath of fresh air."**

**Bill West**

the funds, called the SWIFT and SWIRFT funds: State Water Implementation Fund for Texas and State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas. They were established after voters approved their creation, funded by \$2 billion, in the November 2013 election. The funds will help finance projects in the State Water Plan.

GBRA initially applied for \$136 million in SWIFT money and on the first review, received tentative approval for \$8 million. If the \$8 million receives final approval, it will pay for the desalination feasibility study. GBRA has permission to apply for more funds.

## Moving forward

The new legislation gives the project impetus to move forward, said West. That means, with the completed feasibility study in hand, GBRA will start talking to other potential participants. He envisions these participants organizing into a governing body that will build the desalination plant. This new entity will determine the construction timeline and cost of the plant.

The new desalination plant will be too big to be under one organization's umbrella. Those who decide to participate will dictate the governance of the project. GBRA hopes to be a member of that governing body."

# Continued

West expects one of the participants to be the City of Corpus Christi, which has an agreement to work jointly with GBRA on not only the desalination project, but other projects in GBRA's lower basin. Also interested in the desalination project are coastal ports, including the Port of Corpus Christi and the Port of Victoria.

"Industries in the Corpus Christi area are concerned and interested in a reliable supply of water," said Frank Brogan, who retired in February as managing director of the Port of Corpus Christi and now serves the port in a consulting role. Coastal industries look for alternatives to city water because they don't like to be cut back in times of restricted water usage, and would be interested in seeing a large-scale desalination project move forward, he said. "Location would be important."

Two coastal counties, Nueces and San Patricio, have experienced \$30 billion in industrial development in the last couple of years, Brogan said. Two factors are primary drivers for investment in the Texas ports, which he described as "epic": the Panama Canal expansion project, which should be finished in early 2016, and development of natural gas stores in the Eagle Ford Formation in South Texas. Industries are trying to find a way to get materials processed and on the water to ship globally, he said, and the Port of Corpus Christi, the nation's fifth-largest in terms of tonnage, is the nearest port to the Eagle Ford Formation.

Expansion in and around ports along the Texas coast has been ongoing for several years so that the state can handle increased shipping needs that come this way with the expansion of the Panama Canal, West said. "An additional fresh water supply along the coast is absolutely necessary to accommodate that."

## Other GBRA projects

Contracts may be forthcoming this summer for the GBRA's Lower Basin Project, a plan to build off-channel storage to supply 100,000 acre-feet of water a year through an extension of GBRA's canal system in Calhoun County.

The river authority also is involved in developing a Mid-Basin Project, which would use a combination of ground and surface water to supply the growth corridor off Interstate 35 and State Highway 130 between Austin and San Antonio.

"Meanwhile, to see movement on the desalination front is refreshing," West said.

"We started pushing the desalination idea long before other people felt like it was appropriate, and we did so because we understand how long it takes to develop traditional water projects. We knew it would take a long time. This (legislation) is a breath of fresh air."



Gov. Greg Abbott signs legislation.

Photo by Jay Howard

# Rain

## Brings on the Blanco River's Wrath

By Barbara Elmore

The massive surge of the Blanco River that occurred on a holiday weekend May 23 not only took lives and destroyed property. Powerful floodwaters washed away important streamflow gauges, some of them in place since the 1920s.

But before the gauges went down in three separate locations, they told a story that no eyewitness could, reporting on stunningly high water in a wild river, flowing over land filled with homes and people, land that used to host only crops and cattle.

Many were able to get out of harm's way. But for others, the water rose too quickly in the darkness of night.

The first flood gauge to go down at midnight May 23 was at Wimberley's Ranch Road 12 when the river crested at 40 feet. The Wimberley area is the locale where most lives were lost, as the river washed away the home of nine people on vacation. The force of the river swept their home into a bridge, shattering it. One person survived.

Because the rain gauge washed away, the U.S. Geological Survey had to determine the river's eventual height in Wimberley through other means, using high-water marks and destroyed vegetation. Scientists have determined that the water eventually reached a height of 44 feet and flowed at the rate of 170,000 cubic feet per second. Daily median flow of the Blanco River at that site is 73 cfs.

The river rose 5 feet every 15 minutes from 10:45 p.m. to 11:45 p.m.--20 feet in one hour, according to the National Weather Service forecast office for Austin and San Antonio. Flood stage for the Blanco River at Wimberley is 13 feet.

At 2 a.m. May 24, a second gauge washed away at Kyle, when the river reached 36.5 feet. Finally, at 8:15 a.m. the same day, a third gauge at Martindale was lost to 25-foot-high floodwaters. In San Marcos, a gauge that survived the flood showed the river cresting at 43 feet at 5:30 a.m.

### Heroic action saves lives

Destruction occurred throughout the meandering path of the 87-mile-long river. Bridges and houses went down. At Blanco State

Park, Superintendent Ethan Belicek and Park Ranger Martin Frazier moved campers to higher ground as they watched the water rise.

May 23 was Belicek's sixth anniversary, so he took off work at noon that Saturday to celebrate with his wife Brandy. "We were in the garage, watching the rain," he said. "I knew it would flood--that was not a surprise." Flooding on the Blanco is not unusual during a heavy rain, he said. Around 4 p.m., workers closed the park's low-water crossing gates.

At 6 p.m. Belicek went down the hill to see the river and saw that the park playground, a recently built area called the Naturescape Activity Center, was under water. He and Frazier, who were watching the river from another area of the park, realized that they needed to act.

The park superintendent's house is in the park, about 50 feet above the river on a steep hill, Belicek said. He is required to live onsite, but the house is normally closed to the public. The night of May 23, it became sanctuary.

"I told my wife we'd bring people to the house," Belicek said. In contact via radio, he and Frazier began moving campers and day users and their vehicles as high as they could.

Eventually, Brandy Belicek counted about 75 people at their park home. "I never stopped to do a head count," Ethan Belicek said. "I was just getting people up there and letting my chain of command know what was happening. It went from a nice, mellow evening, to hectic."

He and Frazier shut the park down by midnight. They watched events on TV until 3 or 4 a.m., then made a loop around the park at 6 a.m. May 24. By then, the water had receded enough to allow motorists to use an alternate exit. "We had everyone go back down to the campsite, and Martin fixed the road enough to let people out," Belicek said.

By 10 a.m. March 24, a Sunday, the campers were gone.

### Children's playground wiped out

So was most of the Naturescape Activity Center, the almost-completed park playground built by volunteers. The area is about

10 feet above the river, and the water went 15 to 20 feet beyond that. Almost everything is gone.

Jack Twilley of Blanco, a board member of the Friends of Blanco State Park, said volunteers and Belicek created the playground so that children could learn about nature as they played.

On the north side of the river and 100 yards west of the pool, the NAC included a garden, water collection center and a natural play area separated by age group.

“In the middle was a butterfly garden,” Twilley said. Volunteers installed plants and trees, built a shed, and added two 500-gallon rainwater collection tanks mounted on a rock-elevated platform. “We collected water for the plants and trees around the butterfly garden and the remainder of the naturescape,” Twilley said. “We had built a stream bed too, and the plumbing was in, to show how a stream works.”

They also installed three large playground pieces, including dome climbing structures and a climbing wall. With volunteer labor, donated equipment, and seed money from the Lower Colorado River Authority, Friends of Blanco State Park spent \$42,000 on the NAC.

“It was 95 percent completed, and already in use. We finished it with four, eight, 10 people at a time, with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows,” Twilley said. Belicek’s help was essential, he added.

When this story was written, Friends of the Blanco State Park, had made no decision about whether to rebuild the playground. “We would like to,” said Twilley. “It was unique to the entire Texas parks system.” But he and others are unsure of donors’ willingness to give money again.

Photo courtesy Friends of the Blanco State Park



Ramon Lucio Park

Photo by Charles Hickman

Each streamflow gauge costs about \$25,000 with an annual maintenance cost of \$5,000, West said. The tipping bucket rain gauges that officials requested are equipped with radios for communication. This system allows heavy rainfall to be monitored remotely.

An installation blueprint for the new equipment, and a budget will be ready this summer, West said. He is hopeful that the added monitoring equipment can be installed by fall.

### **‘The river is the park’**

To Belicek, the aftermath in the small river community of Blanco appeared to be the work of a giant mythical lumberjack. “It looks like Paul Bunyan took a trowel and took away the trees and the vegetation,” he said.

His office was also underwater, but he hopes to be re-established in park offices by the end of June. Once the debris is gone, he and others will rebuild the park’s day-use areas, level rutted ground, and prepare to reopen. If workers find no major damage, the park could be back in business by fall.

He has a healthy respect for the river and understands its importance to the park and to the city of Blanco. “The river is the park.”

### **GBRA, communities taking action**

GBRA is in the process of doing a flood prevention study in its basin, which covers 10 counties. “The last phase of it had to do with the Blanco River,” said W.E. “Bill” West, Jr., general manager. “Then we had this event.” Because the flood occurred during the study, he hopes to expand the scope to include river communities that have an interest in flood prevention: San Marcos, Victoria, New Braunfels, Wimberley and Blanco.

USGS, the custodian of measuring equipment on Texas rivers, replaced fallen streamflow gauges soon after the flood. Now, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and other agencies hope to increase the number of gauges throughout the area to avoid a repeat of tragic events.

Charles Hickman, a GBRA engineer who is collecting high-water marks as part of the GBRA study that began last year, said even though the river reached historic heights, washed-out gauges are not unheard of. “This occurs during flooding,” he said. “I’ve seen it happen at other locations.”

Even so, the May 23 flood is by far the biggest on the Blanco River since USGS installed the gauge at Wimberley in the 1920s. Previously, 33.30 feet on May 28, 1929, was the flood of record.

On June 15, officials from USGS, the Texas Water Development Board, GBRA and other agencies met to gather information, and make plans that will better inform monitors when the river rises, said West. The meeting also included NWS, the Texas River Forecast Center in Fort Worth, emergency management coordinators, and city and county representatives from Blanco, Wimberley and San Marcos.

One of the main issues they discussed was the need for additional streamflow gauges and “tipping bucket” rain gauges that can be monitored remotely to offer instantaneous information, West said. Agencies that manage the waterways are hoping to install half a dozen new streamflow gauges and 10 to 12 rain gauges, after engineers and technical workers determine the best places for them to go.



Photos by Charles Hickman



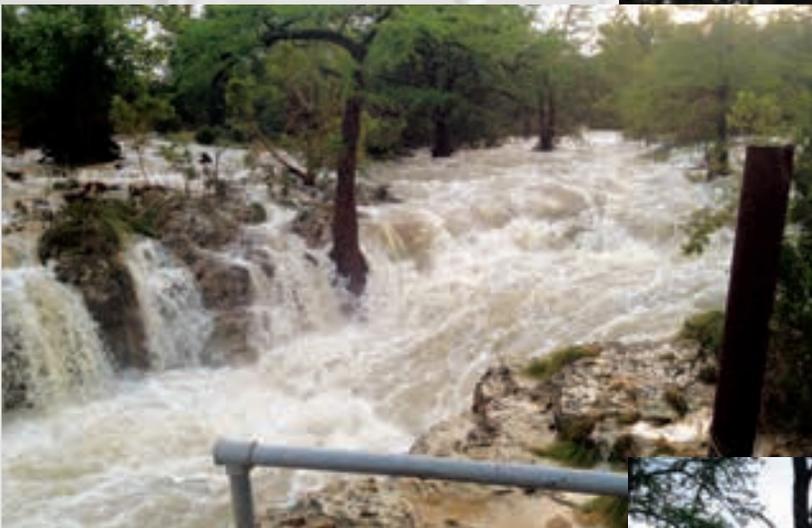
Blanco River downstream City of Blanco



Photos by Charles Hickman



*Blanco River at SH 80*



*Blanco River at Kappa Sigma House*

## GBRA *Training & Licenses*

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

**Dennis Walker** of Buda WWTP attended training for Pipeline Awareness for Excavator Operations.

**Richard Gaona** of Calhoun Canal attended training for Pipeline Safety, and attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Curtis Gosnell** of Calhoun Canal attended trainings for Pipeline Safety, and Tsunami Safety/Gulf of Mexico.

**Rodney Guice** of Calhoun Canal attended training for Pipeline Safety, and attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Billy Penney** of Calhoun Canal attended training of Pipeline Safety.

**Michael Tompkins** of Calhoun Canal attended training for Pipeline Safety, and attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Ryan Boedeker** of Calhoun County RWSS attended training for Pipeline Safety.

**Sheryll Kisiah** of Calhoun County RWSS attended trainings for Supply Side Conservation, and Water Conservation Programs for Medium and Small Utilities.

**Don Koble** of Calhoun County RWSS attended trainings for Utility Drought Prep, Pipeline Safety, Water Conservation Programs for Medium and Small Utilities Webcast #2, Supply Side Conservation, and Water Conservation Programs for Medium and Small Utilities, and attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Wilfred Korth, Jr.**, of Coletto Creek Recreation attended training for National Children and Nature Conference.

**Jason Lewis** of Coletto Creek Recreation attended training for Water Utilities Day School.

**Jason Irby** of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Marlon McAdams** of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**John Urban** of Coletto Creek Reservoir attended the MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Alvin Schuerg** of General attended training for Texas Public Funds Investment Act training.

**Sandra Terry** of General attended training for Texas Public Funds Investment Act.

**James Lucas** of Luling WTP attended training for Team Building.

**Samuel Salas** of Luling WTP attended training for Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**David Garcia** of Port Lavaca WTP attended trainings for Electric Power Custom training - Electrical Safety, and Pipeline Safety.

**Joey Kisiah** of Port Lavaca WTP attended training for Tsunami Safety/ Gulf of Mexico.

**Linda McPherson** of Port Lavaca WTP attended trainings for FISH/ Supervisor, Drought Preparedness, Supply Side Conservation and Tsunami Safety/ Gulf of Mexico.

**Ronnie Parenica** of Port Lavaca WTP attended trainings for TWUA - Disinfection Process, Pipeline Safety, and Supply Side Conservation and received his Class A Water Operator License.

**Stephanie Shelly** of Port Lavaca WTP attended trainings for Utility Drought Preparedness, Supply Side Conservation, Tsunami Safety/ Gulf of Mexico, and Water Conservation Programs for Medium and Small Utilities Webcast #2, and attended MidCoast Hurricane Conference.

**Carmen Phillips** of Regional Laboratory received a Class D Certified Laboratory Analyst License.

**Brian Lyssy** of RUD attended trainings for Team Building and Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety, and TRWA - Water Utility Safety.

**Richard Matheaus** of RUD attended trainings for Math Concepts- PC0217/CC0108, and Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**Jeremy Stanton** of RUD attended trainings for Team Building, Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety, and Operation of Activated Sludge Plants, and TRWA - Water Utility Safety, and Wastewater Collection.

**James Kelley** of San Marcos WTP attended training for Team Building.

**Jerry Sharp** of San Marcos WTP attended training for Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**Mark Wagner** of San Marcos WTP attended training for Team Building, received a Class A Water Operator License and Class C Ground Water Treatment Operator License.

**Tommy Walenta** of San Marcos WTP attended trainings for Team Building and Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**Michael Whitten** of San Marcos WTP attended training for Team Building.

**Edwin Boettner** of Shadow Creek attended trainings for TWUA - Water Utilities Management, TDEM Hazardous Materials Technician Refresher training, and Electric Power Custom- Electrical Safety.

**Jesi Mann** of Shadow Creek attended trainings for TWUA "Accident Incident Investigation," Team Building, and Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety, and received a Class D Wastewater Treatment Operator License.

**Darel Ball** of Water Resources attended trainings for TDEM Hazardous Materials Technician Refresher , FISH/ Supervisor, Public Drinking Water Conference, TEXPers Summer Forum, TXWARN All Hazards Consequence Workshop, Wastewater Worker Safety – "Addressing Concerns on Ebola in Wastewater," and "Preparing for Ebola in the Water Sector," Haz-Mat Technician Refresher, EPA Cyanotoxins, and attended AWWA/WEF Utility Management Conference and TWCA Annual Conference.

**Colten Boothe** of Water Resources attended training for Hach training - Basic Water.

**Josie Gonzales** of Water Resources attended the Certified Interpretive Guide Training Workshop.

**Mark Henneke** of Water Resources attended trainings for FISH/ Supervisor training, and Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society.

**Charles Hickman** of Water Resources attended training for Microsoft Project training (Level 1 Introduction).

## *Training & Licenses, Continued*

**Jaynellen Ladd** of Water Resources attended trainings for Nonprofit Financial Management training, Microsoft Excel: The Basics, and Microsoft Excel: Beyond the Basics.

**Gerardo Rodriguez** of Water Resources attended training for Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**John Smith** of Water Resources attended training for Wastewater Worker Safety - Addressing Concerns on Ebola in Wastewater.

**Teresa Van Booven** of Water Resources attended training for completed Professional Leadership Development.

**Toby Dennis** of Western Canyon attended training for Team Building.

**Hunter Duncan** of Western Canyon attended training for TRWA - Wastewater Treatment.

**Cecil Holliday** of Western Canyon attended training for Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**Allen Lawson** of Western Canyon attended training for Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

**Jorge Rojas** of Western Canyon attended training for Team Building.

**Derek Schedlbauer** of Western Canyon attended training for Team Building.

**Enrique Segura** of Western Canyon attended training for Team Building.

**David Spivey** of Western Canyon attended training for Electric Power Custom - Electrical Safety.

## Recent Retirements at GBRA



Two long-time employees recently bid farewell to the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority through retirements.

With 38 years of service to his credit, Michael "Mike" Gerdes celebrated his retirement with co-workers, friends and other retirees in May. He began his employment with GBRA on Nov. 1, 1976. He worked in the Rural Utilities Division, helping to maintain four of GBRA's wastewater treatment plants and a bio-solid site.

Connie Rothe spent more than 31 years adding that "special touch" to GBRA's publications, events, board relations and activities. Hired Dec. 1, 1983, as a secretary in the General Division, she worked her last day in July. By then, Connie had earned numerous design awards for GBRA publications, ensured all board of directors were properly booked on travel and that their events and activities were suitable for the occasion.

"Their longevity speaks to the kind of employees they were," Bill West, Jr., GBRA general manager said, adding, "We will miss not only their dedication of service, but their presence as well."



Photos by Tammy Beutnagel

# employee anniversaries @ gbra

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

## January

1/28/1976	Bryan Serold	Water Resources	39
1/11/1977	Rodney Voss	Hydro	38
1/14/1980	Darel Ball	Water Resources	35
1/14/1980	Mark Henneke	Water Resources	35
1/31/1981	David Lundin	Port Lavaca WTP	34
1/16/1981	Curtis Seiler	Coleto Creek Recreation	34
1/4/1983	Alan Schneider	Coleto Creek Reservoir	32
1/5/1987	Samuel Widmer	Coleto Creek Recreation	28
1/27/1988	Sara Vazquez	Coleto Creek Recreation	27
1/6/1995	Sandra Terry	General	20
1/24/2005	Susan Hubbert	General	10
1/2/2007	Sheryll Kisiah	Calhoun County RWSS	8
1/2/2008	Edwin Boettner	Shadow Creek	7
1/21/2008	James Murphy	Water Resources	5
1/16/2012	Toby Dennis	Western Canyon	3
1/16/2012	Derek Schedlbauer	Western Canyon	3
1/7/2013	Jorge Rojas	Western Canyon	2
1/2/2014	George Bohl	General	1
1/13/2014	Jesi Mann	Shadow Creek	1
1/12/2015	Adrian Medrano	Lockhart WWTP	New Hire
1/12/2015	John Gerland	San Marcos WTP	New Hire
1/5/2015	Lowell White	San Marcos WTP	New Hire

## February

2/29/1980	Jim Wyatt	Water Resources	35
2/27/1984	Linda McPherson	Port Lavaca WTP	31
2/1/1991	Richard Gaona	Calhoun Canal	24
2/1/1994	William West	General	21
2/4/1999	Cheryl Gorden	General	16
2/18/2003	Richard Gonzales	Lockhart WTP	12
2/1/2007	LaMarriol Smith	General	8
2/20/2012	Manuel Lopez	Hydro	3
2/27/2012	Enrique Segura	Western Canyon	3
2/18/2014	Joann Gonzales	Water Resources	1

## March

3/4/1976	Michael Schultze	Hydro	39
3/23/1981	John Smith	Water Resources	34
3/26/1984	Michael Tompkins	Calhoun Canal	31
3/31/1986	Marlon McAdams	Coleto Creek Reservoir	29
3/21/1988	Richard Matheaus	RUD	27
3/15/2004	Michael Helmke	Hydro	11
3/29/2005	Christopher Lewis	General	10

3/21/2006	Leigh Crettenden	General	9
3/11/2013	Russell Hester	Hydro	2
3/17/2015	Michael Hunt	Calhoun Co. RWSS	New Hire

## April

4/16/1982	Darryl Jandt	Hydro	33
4/26/1982	Jim Lumley	Calhoun Canal	33
4/24/1987	Roland Henry	Hydro	28
4/7/1987	Reagan Ploetz	Hydro	28
4/11/1995	David Maltony	Hydro	20
4/22/2002	Curtis Gosnell	Calhoun Canal	13
4/13/2006	Paulette Cowey	General	9
4/5/2006	David Garcia	Port Lavaca WTP	9
4/17/2010	Brent Howard	Port Lavaca WTP	5
4/18/2011	Billy Penney	Calhoun Canal	4
4/24/2012	James Kelley	San Marcos WTP	3
4/8/2013	Rodney Guice	Calhoun Canal	2
4/14/2014	Carl Westergard	General	1

## May

5/17/1976	Juan Juarez	Hydro	39
5/10/1976	Thomas Hill	Water Resources	39
5/2/1978	Joseph Downey	Luling WTP	37
5/5/1980	James King	Hydro	35
5/4/1981	Alvin Schuerg	General	34
5/31/1983	Alan Zolnosky	Coleto Creek Recreation	32
5/19/1987	Michael Urrutia	Water Resources	28
5/1/1989	Leroy Garza	San Marcos WTP	26
5/1/2001	Yolanda Pierce	General	14

5/12/2003	Cynthia Jimenez	General	12
5/2/2005	Norma Harvey	General	10
5/11/2007	Denise Lyssy	General	8
5/18/2007	Hunter Duncan	Western Canyon	8
5/19/2008	Jaynellen Ladd	Water Resources	7
5/19/2008	Joey Kisiah	Port Lavaca WTP	7
5/4/2009	Clint Retzloff	Hydro	6
5/14/2012	Charles Hickman	Water Resources	3
5/7/2012	Daniel Beckendorf	Coleto Creek Recreation	3
5/27/2014	Jennifer Blinder	Regional Lab	1
5/4/2015	Mary Newman	Water Resources	New Hire

## June

6/25/1973	David Welsch	Water Resources	42
6/27/1977	Jeffrey McKee	Hydro	38
6/1/1983	Carl Korth	Coleto Creek Reservoir	32
6/10/1986	Sammy Salas	Luling WTP	29
6/7/1999	Tamra Beutnagel	General	16
6/1/2000	Todd Votteler	General	15
6/21/2001	Janet Thome	General	14
6/23/2003	Teresa Van Booven	Water Resources	12
6/30/2004	Daphne Harder	General	11
6/15/2009	Allen Lawson	Western Canyon	6
6/8/2015	Todd Hoff	Port Lavaca WTP	New Hire
6/4/2015	Alexander Ortiz	Water Resources	New Hire

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



Photo by Marella Dalme



Photo GBRA Archives

# GBRA Selects New Project Coordinator and an Employee Gains a Promotion



Photo by Tammy Beutnagel

Mary Newman joined GBRA's Business Development and Resource Management area as its new project coordinator in May.

Before taking on her position with GBRA, Newman worked as the endowment coordinator in the Development Department at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Prior to that, Newman had lived in Seguin for more than 27 years where she held several positions during that time with local employers. She also participated as a volunteer with the Seguin Chamber of Commerce.

Newman has two adult children — a daughter in Round Rock and a son in North Carolina. She also has a grandson.

## Hebert Promoted

Jeffery Hebert, who formerly was a distribution/plant operator, recently was promoted to the position of electrical/instrumentation technician at the Western Canyon Water Treatment Plant.

## In Memoriam: Herbert 'Herb' Wittliff 1950-2015

GBRA Port Lavaca Operations Manager, Herbert 'Herb' Wittliff, 65, died Friday, June 26, 2015. He had more than 35 years of service with GBRA at the time of his death.

After graduating from Texas A&M in 1972 with a degree in agricultural engineering and a member of the A&M Corps of Cadets, he joined the U.S. Army where Wittliff was commissioned as a 2nd Lt., and honorably discharged from the U.S. Army Reserve as a Capt. in 1986.

He then began a career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Port Arthur, where he rescued three men from drowning in a canal following a car accident. Wittliff received the American Legion Award for his heroism.

He was involved in numerous community organizations, such as the United Way Appeal, serving as President, Secretary and other positions. Wittliff served on the Coastal Marine Advisory Committee, the Calhoun County LEPC, and judged science fairs in the Calhoun County Fair.

As a member of Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church, Wittliff served as a lector, a member of the Knights of Columbus, a choir member and taught catechism.

Wittliff is survived by his sisters, Paulette Wittliff Icard, Phyllis Wittliff Whiteaker, Rebecca Wittliff, and nieces and nephews.

Family and friends remembered Wittliff during a eulogy and rosary, Tuesday, June 30, and a mass held July 1, at Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church in Port Lavaca. A burial followed at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Yorktown.



Photo GBRA Archives



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## Mark Your Calendar

Aug 4-6, 2015

National Water Resources Association  
Western Water Seminar  
Hyatt Regency Monterey, Monterey, CA  
<http://www.nwra.org/upcoming-conferences-workshops.html>

Aug 19, 2015

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX  
<http://www.gbra.org/board/meetings.aspx>

Aug 28-29, 2015

DesalTech 2015 Conference  
San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, CA  
<http://www.desaltech2015.com/>

Sept 7, 2015

Labor Day Holiday  
GBRA Offices Closed

Sept 16, 2015

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX  
<http://www.gbra.org/board/meetings.aspx>

Sept 30 – Oct 1, 2015

Texas Desalination 2015: Innovation & Reliability  
Radisson Hotel & Suites, Austin, TX  
<http://www.texasdesal.com/events/2015-conference.html>

Oct 2-4, 2015

Come and Take It Festival  
Gonzales, TX  
<http://www.gonzalestexas.com/come-and-take-it/>

Oct 14-16, 2015

Texas Water Conservation Association Fall Meeting  
Wyndham Riverwalk Hotel, San Antonio, TX  
<http://www.texaswca.com/meetings/index.html>

Oct 21, 2015

GBRA Board Meeting  
River Annex Bldg., Seguin, TX  
<http://www.gbra.org/board/meetings.aspx>

Matagorda Island

Photo by Janet Thome

