



For Immediate Release

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TEXAS SWIMMERS REMINDED OF POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS

WACO, Texas (July 14, 2014) – With summer in full swing, people across the Brazos River basin are heading to nearby rivers and lakes. However, the conditions that make the water temperature so delightful can also encourage the growth of a rare microorganism that can be fatal to humans.

The Brazos River Authority encourages visitors to enjoy the water, while being aware of health risks associated with swimming in or around stagnant or slow-moving water.

Primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM), which is most common during the summer, is a rare disease caused by *naegleria fowleri*, an amoeba found in almost all untreated, fresh surface water and in soil. The amoeba thrives in low levels of fresh water that is warmer than 80 degrees and stagnant or slow-moving. The PAM infection occurs when water containing the organism is forced into the nasal passages – usually from diving or jumping into water or from water skiing. The amoeba makes its way into the brain and spinal cord, destroying brain tissue.

Symptoms of the almost-always fatal infection include severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, seizures and hallucinations as the condition worsens. Although PAM is rare those infected usually succumb to the disease within a week.

From 1983 to 2012 there were 28 deaths from PAM in Texas, according to state health officials. One infection was diagnosed in 2013 and none have been diagnosed yet this year. Worldwide, only a few hundred cases have been reported over the last 30 years.

To prevent infection, it is recommended that those taking part in warm, fresh water-related activities use nose clips or hold their noses shut while jumping into water. With the amoeba often found in soil, it is best to avoid stirring up underwater sediment. The Texas Department of Health recommends that people avoid stagnant or polluted water and take “No Swimming” signs seriously.

PAM cannot be spread person to person nor by drinking water. Swimming pools and hot tubs that are properly cleaned, maintained and chlorinated are generally safe, as is salt water.

For more information contact the Texas Department of State Health Services Public Information Office at (512) 458-7400.

About the Brazos River Authority

The Brazos River Authority, with headquarters in Waco, is the oldest river authority in Texas. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1929, the Authority's 42,000 square-mile territory includes all or part of 70 counties; extending from the Texas-New Mexico border west of Lubbock to the Gulf of Mexico near Freeport.

The BRA built, owns, and operates three reservoirs (Lakes Possum Kingdom, Granbury, and Limestone). In addition to these water supply reservoirs, the BRA contracts with the Corps of Engineers for the water supply storage space at eight federal multi-purpose flood control and water conservation reservoirs (Lakes Whitney, Belton, Proctor, Somerville, Stillhouse Hollow, Granger, Georgetown and Aquilla).

The Brazos River Authority operates a regional wastewater system for the cities of Temple-Belton and the Brushy Creek Regional Wastewater System for the City of Round Rock. The Authority also operates wastewater treatment plants for the cities of Dime Box, Clute-Richwood, Sugar Land, and Hutto.

The BRA owns and operates the East Williamson County Regional Water System for the City of Taylor and operates potable water treatment plant for the cities of Dime Box and Leander.

The BRA engages in water quality monitoring activities throughout the Brazos River basin. As a member of the Texas Clean River Program, the BRA samples and tests water from more than 100 locations throughout the basin on either a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. For further information on the Brazos River Authority, please contact Judi Pierce, Public Information Officer at 254-761-3103.