

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Judi Pierce
Public Information Officer
254-761-3174
judi.pierce@brazos.org

RARE WATERBORNE THREAT REQUIRES CAUTION IN BRAZOS BASIN

WACO, Texas (May 31, 2024) – Summer's here, and the call of refreshing lakes and rivers is strong. But before you take the plunge, there's one danger lurking in warm freshwater that swimming skills can't protect against: *Naegleria fowleri*, a rare but serious amoeba. Don't worry; it's not a common threat, but a few easy precautions can ensure a safe and splashtastic summer.

Primary amebic meningoencephalitis, or PAM, is a rare brain infection caused by *Naegleria fowleri* when water containing this amoeba is forced into a person's nasal passages through activities such as swimming, jumping into the water or water skiing. This cause has earned the nickname the "brain-eating amoeba."

Here's why summer's a time for caution: warmer weather brings ideal conditions for *Naegleria fowleri*. These amoebas thrive in freshwater exceeding 80 degrees, which is precisely what happens to the very lakes and rivers we crave to cool off during Texas summers.

Naegleria fowleri is too small to see with the naked eye, but the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes it's a frequent resident in freshwater environments. So, for safety's sake, assume it's there.

The infection can't spread from person to person or by drinking contaminated water. The only way to completely prevent contracting PAM is to not participate in water-related activities that could force water up the nasal passage, including swimming in a lake, the Brazos River, or a stream.

But if you do decide to participate, use nose clips or hold your nose shut while jumping into the water or always keep your head above water.

The amoeba is also found in soil, so avoid stirring up underwater sediment.

Seek immediate medical attention for the development of a headache, fever, nausea, or vomiting after swimming in freshwater, according to the CDC. PAM symptoms begin showing one-to-12 days after infection. Later symptoms can include a stiff neck, confusion, seizures, hallucinations, and coma. Two to three infections are reported each year in the U.S., and there have only been four U.S. survivors, according to the CDC.

Don't let safety concerns put a damper on creating lasting memories with your loved ones. Instead, weave these simple precautions into the fabric of your adventures in the Brazos River Basin.

For more information about PAM, contact your local county health department or the Texas Department of State Health Services at 512-776-7111 or 1-888-963-7111.

- 30 -

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. The BRA also operates wastewater treatment plants for the cities of Clute-Richwood, Sugar Land, and Hutto. The BRA owns and operates a potable water treatment system, the East Williamson County Regional Water System, for the City of Taylor.

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.