



*For Immediate Release*

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**CONTACT: Judi Pierce  
Public Information Officer  
(254) 761-3103**

**BEWARE OF HAZARDS DUE TO LOW LAKE LEVELS**

WACO, Texas (July 22, 2009) -- The Brazos River Authority is warning boaters and others who want to enjoy activities on Brazos River basin lakes to beware of potential hazards due to lower lake levels.

Because of ongoing drought conditions, Lake Granbury is about 3 feet low, Lake Limestone is down about 1.5 feet and Possum Kingdom Lake is about 3.5 feet below full. This shortfall has exposed stumps of trees submerged when the lakes were created, as well as sandbars and other potential hazards.

While Possum Kingdom Lake officials say they are not experiencing such hazards, tree stumps are an issue at Lake Limestone and especially at Lake Granbury.

Although officials said they have not received reports of injuries caused by striking these hazards, Granbury Lake Ranger Randy Johnston said people have reported their watercraft being damaged when they struck a stump. Repairs for such damage can prove costly, he said.

"With the water as low as it is right now, there are stumps out there I've never seen before," Johnston said.

He added that while many of the stumps are obvious to boaters from a distance, some are just beneath the surface and might easily be missed without taking a closer look.

"I would recommend before you get out here and pull a skier, you should come out and survey the area closely," Johnston said.

Particularly rough areas include the northern end of Lake Granbury at Oak Trail Shores and Arrowhead Shores.

At Lake Limestone, most of the hazards are in the lake's upper reaches and tributaries, said Davy Moore, chief lake ranger. While some areas around the lake's side have more exposed stumps, people who keep to the middle should have no problems, he said.

Tiffany Morgan, Brazos River Authority environmental services manager, echoed the sentiment, saying those shallower areas along the lakes' edges are not areas for boating or skiing; even without the newly exposed stumps. Authority regulations require watercraft within 100 feet of a shoreline, boathouse, dock, other watercraft or area where people are swimming or diving to operate at a slow speed that does not create a wake.

Morgan said while submerged trees might be a nuisance for boaters, they provide an ideal habitat for some fish, much to the pleasure of anglers. The trees also offer shelter for other wildlife and release nutrients as they decompose that are important to the food chain and health of the lake's environment.

Because of the benefits of submerged trees, Morgan said she does not know of any manmade reservoirs used for water supply that had widespread tree cutting before they were filled.

Clearing of underwater trees would also prove cost prohibitive.

"The lake level will come back up at some point," Morgan said. "But until then, if people are going to be boating on any lake they just need to be careful."

The Brazos River Authority has free maps of Lake Granbury, showing many of the water hazard areas. To request a copy, call the Central Office in Waco at (888) 922-6272.

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#### ***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 Authority built, owns, and operates three reservoirs (Lakes Possum Kingdom, Granbury, and Limestone). In addition to these water supply reservoirs, the Authority 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 owns and operates a regional wastewater system for the cities of Temple-Belton. The Authority also operates wastewater treatment plants for the cities of Georgetown, Dime Box, Clute-Richwood and Sugar Land. Through an alliance with the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Brazos River Authority operates wastewater treatment plants at Brushy Creek Regional Wastewater System in Round Rock, the city of Hutto and the city of Liberty Hill.

The Authority owns and operates water treatment systems at Lake Granbury (which supplies potable water to wholesale customers in Hood and Johnson Counties), and the City of Taylor. The Authority also operates a potable water treatment plant for the City of Dime Box. A water treatment plant for the City of Leander is operated by the Brazos River Authority through an alliance with the Lower Colorado River Authority.

The Authority also engages in water quality monitoring activities throughout the Brazos River basin. As a member of the Texas Clean River Program, the Authority samples and tests water from 157 locations throughout the basin on either a monthly or quarterly basis.

For further information on the Brazos River Authority, please contact Judi Pierce, Public Information Officer at 254-761-3103.