



## *For Immediate Release*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **TEXAS LAKE AND RIVER SWIMMERS REMINDED OF POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS**

WACO, Texas (June 8, 2012) – With summer starting to heat up, 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 but dangerous microorganism.

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 nearly always fatal infection include severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, seizures and hallucinations as the condition worsens. Although PAM is rare – affecting about one to three people a year in Texas – those infected usually succumb to the disease within a week.

There were 10 known cases of PAM in Texas between 2000 and 2010, according to state health officials. No cases have been diagnosed in Texas since the beginning of 2011. 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.

While the BRA tests for a variety of contaminants, such as *E.coli* at more than 100 sites, no testing is conducted for the PAM microbe.

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.

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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.