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## **Legislative Session ends without passage of PK divestiture bill**

The 80<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative session came to a close on Memorial Day. By now, most residents have learned that Senate Bill 1326 dealing with possible divestiture of Brazos River Authority land at Possum Kingdom Lake did not become law during this legislative session.

Both bills were thoroughly examined by the legislature and like hundreds of other bills introduced in this session; the fate of each was decided by the natural course of the Texas Legislature. Throughout drafting and negotiating, this was an open process which included input from citizens, state and local agencies, and consideration by both legislative bodies.

The Brazos River Authority appreciates the hard work of both Representative Keffer and Senator Estes and their staffs, specifically Trent Thomas and Lewis Simmons. Both offices worked to ensure that both sides of this issue had every opportunity to voice their concerns and be heard.

Throughout the process, the BRA worked in good faith with all parties to achieve a compromise solution. This solution was most closely met by the version of Senate Bill 1326 that passed the Senate but was not successful in the House committee.

When SB 1326 was not moved out of the House, a second effort to pass the divestiture bill came as an amendment to Senate Bill 3, the state's omnibus water bill. This amendment was later removed from that bill as a decision in the Senate/House Conference committee by the author and sponsor of SB 3. Representative Puente explained that SB 3 had become a "Christmas tree," onto which several members attempted to amend legislation that was having trouble making it through the legislature. The PK bill was only one of several amendments removed from the final version of SB3 in the conference committee process.

The BRA is aware that divestiture is a preferred option by some lessees and that the issue will likely reappear as legislation during the next legislative session in 2009. With this in mind, the BRA would like to repeat that we remain committed to maintaining an open dialogue with lessees, as well as local and state elected officials on this important matter. In the end, our goal is to arrive at a solution that is workable for all parties and represents a win-win both for lessees, the BRA and the system customers we represent.

At this time, it is important that lessees are informed as to how the BRA will move forward. As Board Chairman Steve Pena stated in his testimony before the Senate Natural Resources Committee, the Brazos River Authority plans to continue leasing property at Possum Kingdom Lake with the underlying principle of fairness and equitability across the board.

The Authority will continue to implement the majority of the decisions made by the Board in May of 2006. Realizing that the divestiture option calls into question some of the Board's previous decisions, the Board will revisit specific issues such as the term of leases and a rate freeze for those 65 years of age and homesteaded at its July meeting.

The last few months have been emotional for all involved in the divestiture efforts of leased land at Possum Kingdom Lake. The Brazos River Authority remains willing to work with all parties to ensure an amicable environment and a positive future for all individuals living around the lake.

### ***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 Brushy Creek Regional Wastewater System in Round Rock, and the cities of Hutto, Georgetown, Dime Box, Clute-Richwood and Sugar Land.

The Authority owns and operates water treatment systems at Lake Granbury (which supplies potable water to wholesale customers in Hood and Johnson Counties), the City of Taylor and the City of Dime Box. A potable water treatment plant located in Leander is owned jointly by the Lower Colorado River Authority and the Brazos River Authority. The Authority also engages in water quality monitoring activities throughout the Brazos River Basin.

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