

EMBARGOED UNTIL JUNE 23rd at 11am

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Contact:

Jennifer Walker - National Wildlife Federation (512) 627-9931 (call/text) or walkerj@nwf.org

Ken Kramer - Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter (512) 626-4202 (call/text) or kramerkenw@gmail.com

Texas Living Waters Project Unveils 2020 Texas Water Conservation Scorecard

Texas water conservation practices have not improved in the last four years.

Join us for a Telepresser on the Scorecard Today (6/23) @ 10:30:

Dial: 888-392-4564 Enter: 1141847#

June 23rd, 2020 - Austin, TX - The Texas Living Waters Project released the 2020 *Texas Water Conservation Scorecard*, an in-depth analysis and ranking of the water conservation efforts of more than 300 water utilities in Texas. The study found that many utilities are not taking serious actions to advance water conservation.

The Texas Living Waters Project is a partnership of the National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club-Lone Star Chapter, Galveston Bay Foundation and Hill Country Alliance. The *Scorecard* is an evaluation of utilities level of effort to advance water conservation rather than their performance in achieving conservation with the exception of two scoring criteria: their records on water loss and whether they met targets for reducing per-capita water use. Other scoring criteria evaluate a utility's compliance with water conservation planning and reporting requirements, outdoor watering limits, and rate-based incentives for efficient use of water.

Jennifer Walker, Deputy Director of Texas Water Programs, National Wildlife Federation said, "While there has been some meaningful progress on a number of the evaluation criteria in the last four years, overall Texas water utilities as a group have not significantly improved their efforts on water conservation. Some utilities have made progress and they serve as models for what others might accomplish, but much more can be done to conserve water.

On a few measures, such as submitting annual water loss audits, the track record of utilities has improved; but about a third of these audits have errors or other issues, and the rate of water loss by Texas water utilities remains alarmingly high."

Progress on Water Conservation (2016 Scorecard v. 2020 Scorecard):

Average water conservation scores for Texas utilities have stayed relatively the same over the past four years. Although, there has been progress on some metrics.

As reported in the 2016 Scorecard, approximately nine percent of utilities did not submit Water Conservation Plans (these reports are due every 5 years). In the 2020 Scorecard, 22 percent of utilities did not submit Water Conservation Plans. These are reports that are required by the state and are important

because utilities set 5 & 10 year water conservation goals as well as describe the water conservation programs that will be used to achieve those goals.

Water loss from leaking distribution systems continues to be a big issue for utilities. Based on the data that we evaluated, total reported water loss has increased by about 3%. Some water loss is inevitable due to water line breaks, Texas' extreme weather swings, construction, aging infrastructure and other factors. However, a utility dedicated to reducing water loss can save millions of gallons of water per year.

Over half of utilities in Texas still do not have any limitations on outdoor watering in place. Only two utilities (The City of Frisco and the City of Austin) have implemented the recommended no-more-than-once-a-week watering restrictions. Implementing outdoor watering restrictions is one of the most important water conservation strategies considering it makes up approximately 31 percent of single-family residential water consumption statewide.

The number of water conservation best-management practices (BMP) adopted by utilities has not significantly improved in the last four years. The BMPs are developed by the Texas Water Conservation Advisory Council (a group of stakeholders representing diverse interests) in conjunction with the Texas Water Development Board. There are currently 32 BMPs available for utilities to adopt.

Recommendations

On average, across all utilities and scoring criteria, we have found that not much progress has been made when it comes to water conservation in the last four years. Based on our findings from the 2020 *Scorecard*, we've made recommendations to utilities and State officials to advance municipal water conservation in Texas and to better engage the public in that effort.

Some of these recommendations include adopting outdoor watering limitations on an ongoing basis- not just during drought, adjusting water rate structures to reflect the cost and value of water, and implementing measures to reduce water loss. The state should (at the appropriate level) consider options for ensuring enforcement of the requirements that utilities submit annual reports on water conservation and water loss and water conservation plans (due every 5 years).

Ken Kramer, Water Resources Chair of the Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter said, "Our Scorecard demonstrates that Texas water utilities have the potential to dramatically increase their efforts on conservation and thus achieve greater reductions in per capita water use. That will not only save water but also save money for Texas ratepayers and taxpayers. One effective step that most Texas utilities have yet to take is to put reasonable limitations on outdoor watering, especially during our hot summers when much of that water is wasted. We urge utilities to take that step as our state faces the likelihood of hotter and drier years ahead."

Scores on specific utilities can be accessed through the 2020 Texas Water Conservation Scorecard website at www.texaswaterconservationscorecard.org

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