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TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Protecting Texas by Reducing and Preventing Pollution

January 23, 2012

The Honorable Robert Johnston
County Judge
County Courthouse
703 North Mallard, Suite 101
Palestine, Texas 75801

Re: Priority Call Amended in the Neches River Basin

Dear Judge Johnston:

By letter dated November 10, 2011, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) notified you that certain non-municipal diversions with a priority date of August 13, 1913 or later in the Neches River Basin were suspended due to a priority call on surface water from a senior water right holder.

The senior water right holder has now amended the priority call, and the TCEQ has lifted the majority of the suspensions. A copy of this correspondence is enclosed for your reference.

The TCEQ continues to monitor the situation closely and strives to balance protection of senior and superior surface water rights while attempting to minimize the impact to junior water right holders, within TCEQ's authority. Please note that should drought conditions persist or worsen, additional suspensions of junior water rights may again be necessary.

Multiple program areas at the TCEQ are actively engaged in the oversight of available water supplies statewide. We are monitoring drinking water supplies, both groundwater and surface water. We are also working with municipalities that face potential shortfalls of available drinking water. There is a common understanding in all of our programmatic efforts that our decisions have profound impacts on the people of Texas. We are weighing our decisions judiciously, paying particular attention to those potential impacts.

The TCEQ is soliciting your help in disseminating appropriate information to affected parties in the Neches River Basin communities. If this drought cycle worsens, it will be very important that all residents living and working in the Neches River Basin are well informed. The TCEQ has established a drought web page to provide additional information and address questions and concerns. The drought web page is located at: <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/drought.html>. We have also activated the TCEQ Drought Hotline at 1-800-447-2827.

Should you have questions or need additional information, please contact L'Oreal Stepney, P.E., Deputy Director, Office of Water at 512-239-1321.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zak Covar".

Zak Covar
Deputy Executive Director
Enclosures

P.O. Box 13087 • Austin, Texas 78711-3087 • 512-239-1000 • tceq.texas.gov

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