North Texas Municipal Water District Initiates Stage 1 of the NTMWD Water Conservation and Drought Contingency and Emergency Response Plan

Invasive Zebra Mussels Cause Loss of Lake Texoma Water Supply

Wylie, Texas (March 25, 2011)

The North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) is initiating Stage 1 of the NTMWD Water Conservation and Drought Contingency and Water Emergency Response Plan, March 2008, (Plan) effective April 19, 2011.

Stage 1 of the Plan is being implemented as a result of invasive zebra mussels being found in Lake Texoma and the temporary loss of the Lake Texoma raw water supply by NTMWD.

“Although zebra mussels are not harmful to humans and do not contaminate the water supply, they do attach to water facilities and pipes that pump water causing increased operating and maintenance costs,” said Jim Parks, NTMWD Executive Director. “Since Lake Texoma represents a quarter of our water supply, we are working with state and federal agencies to minimize zebra mussels from being transferred from Lake Texoma into the Trinity River basin and ultimately southward to the Gulf of Mexico.”

In August 2009, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department discovered zebra mussels in Sister Grove Creek, a tributary of the East Fork of the Trinity River and used by the NTMWD to transfer water from Lake Texoma. As a result, NTMWD voluntarily ceased pumping raw water supplies from Lake Texoma and has not resumed pumping. The infestation of zebra mussels in Lake Texoma has resulted in a loss of 22.5% of the NTMWD’s total raw water supply. NTMWD has and will continue to collaborate with federal and state regulatory agencies to develop a strategy to minimize the transport of zebra mussels into the Trinity River basin. At this point, NTMWD does not have a firm date for the resumption of pumping from Lake Texoma; however, NTMWD will
continue to collaborate with the federal and state agencies to hopefully resume pumping in latter 2011.

Initiation of Stage 1 of the water plan is intended to raise public awareness of potential drought contingency and water emergency problems. The goal for water use reduction under Stage 1 is a 2% reduction in the use that would have occurred in the absence of drought contingency and water emergency response measures.

“This is a complex environmental and conservation issue,” said Parks. “It is the first time zebra mussels have been found in Texas and NTMWD is the only water supplier transferring water from Lake Texoma to the Trinity River basin. That’s why water conservation efforts are so important. We are working on a solution so this does not become a bigger issue for other water sources in the state.”

The NTMWD board action requests that Member Cities and Customers implement the following water conservation strategies:

- Initiate Stage 1 of the Member Cities and Customers drought contingency and water emergency response plans by April 19, 2011
- Increase public education efforts on ways to reduce water use
- Intensify efforts on leak detection and repair

Extending the NTMWD’s water supply during this water emergency period through the efficient use of our existing water resources is crucial to meeting the long-term water needs of the NTMWD’s Member Cities and Customers.

Zebra mussels were first discovered in North America near the Great Lakes in 1988 and are typically transferred from one river basin to another by boaters and anglers. They are considered to be the most problematic polluting organism in North America because they are very hard to eliminate and not only clog water pipelines but can also cause declines in fish and bird populations.

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