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EDWARDS AQUIFER AUTHORITY SETS PUBLIC HEARINGS ON PROPOSED RULES PROTECTING RECHARGE ZONE FROM FIRES

SAN ANTONIO (February 2, 2010) – The Edwards Aquifer Authority will hold a series of hearings in February to receive public comments on a set of proposed rules that would help protect the aquifer from the threat of contamination resulting from firefighting activities on the recharge zone. Public hearings are scheduled on: Thursday, February 11, at 6:00 p.m. at the Authority main offices in San Antonio; Thursday, February 18, at the New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center in New Braunfels; and Wednesday, February 24, at the Hondo Community Center in Hondo.

The proposed rules would require certain facilities located on the recharge zone to take specific measures intended to prevent pollution of the aquifer via water runoff resulting from fire fighting activities. This would include requiring facilities to maintain spill containment supplies on site and to provide to the Authority maps and facility layouts identifying key features, including wells, drainage patterns, regulated substance traps, and firefighting water connections. The Authority would keep such information in a database to be shared with fire fighters responding to fires on the recharge zone.

The idea for these rules stems from a major mulch fire that burned for three months in northwest Bexar County and threatened to pollute the aquifer in early 2007. As a result, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill No. 585 in 2007 requiring the Authority to adopt rules regarding the control of fires on the recharge zone.

The Authority will accept written public comments on the proposed rules over a 45-day period, which closes at 5:00 pm on Monday, March 15, 2010. The rules can be viewed online at www.edwardsaquifer.org.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority manages, enhances, and protects the Edwards Aquifer, one of the major groundwater systems in Texas serving approximately 1.7 million people. More information on the Edwards Aquifer Authority is available on line at www.edwardsaquifer.org or by calling (210) 222-2204 or (800) 292-1047.

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