Approximately 10 years ago, the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District published its Regulatory Plan designed to arrest the occurrence of subsidence throughout north Harris County by requiring that the pumpage of groundwater be reduced. Such an action would also allow the aquifers to recharge.

To facilitate compliance with the Subsidence District's mandate, the 76th Texas Legislature created the North Harris County Regional Water Authority to act on behalf of about 160 municipal utility districts within its boundaries. The Authority's primary task was to adopt a ***regional*** approach to addressing water supply issues, and to negotiate for a long-term supply of top quality, potable surface water adequate to meet the phased conversion schedule: reduce reliance on groundwater by 30% in 2010; by 70% in 2020; and by 80% in 2030.

The alternative to this approach was for each of the utility districts to establish their own groundwater reduction plans, and to independently secure their own future surface water supplies. Failure to do so would trigger imposition of the Subsidence District's *disincentive fee* of $3.50 per thousand gallons of groundwater pumped -- an amount that continues to exceed the Authority fee!

Since its initial meeting on February 15, 2000, the Authority's board of directors has been committed to the concept of equity -- an assurance that everyone within the Authority's jurisdiction will pay an equal and fair share of the cost necessary to construct an entirely new water delivery infrastructure to bring surface water from the City of Houston's Lake Houston facility to our neighborhoods. In addition, the Board has promised that the Authority's fees would be kept as low as possible...for as long as possible, and this commitment has also been honored.

Initially, a fee of $0.25 per 1000 gallons of water pumped from groundwater wells was imposed in 2000 -- with fees escalating annually over the decade to enable compliance with the 30% reduction mandate. To accomplish this goal, the Authority has installed approximately 70 miles of new water lines throughout the community to deliver surface water to our neighborhoods for the first time in 2010.

Over the past five years, an innovative groundwater transfer program has allowed us to help utility districts in need of interim water supplies to obtain them from districts with water to spare; *without the necessity of drilling expensive new water wells.* The lines constructed for the groundwater transfer program will also be utilized for the surface water conversion. This has not only helped districts needing water immediately, but offered the added benefit of being constructed under favorable economic conditions. The program has also been instrumental in allowing the Authority to contain costs as much as possible.

The Authority also partnered with the City of Houston several years ago to construct a major transmission line to bring surface water from the City's Northeast Water Purification Plant to the Authority's 2010 pumping and storage facility. This partnership resulted in millions of dollars in savings.

Looking forward...

New residential and commercial development in our community requires an adequate water supply, and this sustained growth continues to drive up future demand projections. Over the past several years, additional factors -- rising fuel and electric power costs, financial market issues, and increasing costs of materials -- have had a dramatic impact on the Authority's construction costs, as well.

At the October 5, 2009 board meeting, the directors authorized an increase in the Authority's fee charged for each 1,000 gallons used by the customer. This increase funds the purchase of surface water available under contract with the City of Houston, as well as the operation and maintenance of the entire delivery system.

Facts About the Conversion to Surface Water in Northwest Harris County...

- The North Harris County Regional Water Authority was created by the 76th Texas Legislature (1999) to obtain and deliver a long-term supply of drinking water at the lowest responsible cost for the water users within its boundaries in order to comply with Harris-Galveston Subsidence District mandates to reduce dependence on groundwater.
- The mandate calls for reducing our reliance on groundwater 30 percent in 2010; 70 percent in 2020; and by 80 percent in 2030.
- In 2010, our total anticipated water demand will be 96.5 million gallons a day (mgd), of which 29 mgd must come from surface water.
- The individual water districts will continue to supply water to their customers, and all residents and water users throughout the Authority will help pay for the new water delivery system and the supply of surface water.
- On October 5, 2009 the Authority Board of Directors adopted a Rate Order that established groundwater and surface water fees. The Authority's fees (sometimes identified on water bills as the NHCRWA fee) have funded construction of the new surface water delivery infrastructure. The fees will continue to cover debt service requirements and bond covenants, as well as fund the maintenance and operation of the surface water delivery system.

3 Top Water Savers...

1. Find and Fix Leaks — Probably the single greatest water waster is a leaking toilet! A leak of one gallon every six minutes (not an unusual amount) totals 10 gallons an hour, or 240 gallons a day. This is almost equal to the average amount of water consumed each day in a single family home!
2. Take Shorter Showers -- If every individual in this area showered for one minute less per day, for example, the water saved would be in excess of 125 million gallons in a single year! Installing water-saving shower heads or flow restrictors can save another 500 to 800 gallons per month.
3. Water your lawn only when it needs it. Step on your grass. If it springs back when you lift your foot, it doesn't need water. After October, turn OFF your automatic irrigation system -- your lawn doesn't need it during the dormant phase. By not overwatering your yard, you can save 750-1,500 gallons of precious water per month!

The water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow!

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Some Important Information About the RISING COST OF WATER

North Harris County Regional Water Authority