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COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and other distinguished Members of the Committee. My name is Larry Groth. I am the City Manager of Waco, Texas.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 3418, the Central Texas Water Recycling Act of 2005. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to Congressman Chet Edwards for introducing this legislation and to Congressman John Carter for cosponsoring this measure. Both Congressman Edwards and Congressman Carter have been very supportive of Waco and the initiatives to support water resources throughout Central Texas, and I appreciate their work on this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, as background I would like to first briefly describe the water resources of Central Texas and McLennan County and then show the critical role that water recycling maintains in our overall efforts to provide a sustainable water supply for City of Waco and for communities throughout McLennan County and Central Texas. The key water resource in McLennan County is Lake Waco. Originally built by the City of Waco in 1929 and enlarged by the Corps of Engineers in 1964, Lake Waco provides the sole-source water supply for the city of Waco and a number of our neighboring cities.

Today, water demands are continuing to increase as rapid growth is occurring, particularly along the IH35 corridor. As challenging, has been the potential for water quality degradation of Lake Waco. The City of Waco has taken the lead in addressing both of these challenges. The City recently funded a Corps of Engineers' enlargement of the Lake Waco water supply pool, at a cost to the local taxpayers of over $30 million, but this has added a valuable water supply for the future.

Upstream pollution is a major cause of taste and odor problems and results in the potential of elevated organics measured as trihalomethanes or THMs. To properly address this problem, efforts have been on going both in watershed protection as well as in advancing our water treatment methods and capacity.

The comprehensive but costly watershed protection effort to stop pollution before it enters Lake Waco has been on going for many years. It involves extensive coordination and cooperation with a large number of local, State and federal agencies.

To provide improved drinking water quality and specifically reduce taste and odor, the city is currently undertaking major upgrades to its water treatment system. The initial phase of improvements will be completed by 2006 at a cost of $15.5 million.

All of these investments in upgrades to the regional water treatment facilities, in the on-going watershed protection program, and in the enlargement of Lake Waco are substantial for the City of Waco and its citizens. As a result, the City is actively pursuing means to maximize our investment and to conserve our valuable water resources. Water recycling and reuse of reclaimed wastewater effluent is the key component of this effort. H.R. 3418 will help us to succeed in this effort.

Let me briefly describe the reuse and reclamation project that the City of Waco and cities that comprise the Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewerage System are jointly pursuing. The member cities of this Regional System are Waco, Woodway, Robinson, Hewitt, Bellmead, and Lacy-Lakeview.

Role of Reuse

The cooperative efforts underway among these cities provide not only for efficient regional wastewater treatment but also for the opportunity to benefit from reuse of treated effluent. Reuse is important in achieving conservation of our water resources. With the population of Central Texas along the Interstate Highway 35 corridor growing rapidly, water demands are continually increasing. Then, seasonable demands are also significant. With temperature in Waco reaching 108 degrees late last month, and setting a new record, it emphasizes the seasonal effects on water use and water demands. To help address the future demands from steadily increasing population as well as the spikes in demand due to seasonal water use, the Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewerage System has recently completed initial studies on a project known as the "McLennan County/Waco Regional Satellite and Reuse Project." This project will provide a unique combination of reuse benefits at an outlying treatment facilities located in the City's major growth corridor.

With this background, let me summarize the specific need for and benefits of the reclamation and water recycling project.

Today, the growth areas of the City of Waco's wastewater collection facilities are hydraulically overloaded. Specifically, the Flat Creek Lift Station and associated force mains are currently receiving peak flow-rates 40 percent over their capacity. Concurrently, the Texas Department of Transportation is mandating that the City of Waco relocate this Lift Station and associated force mains by 2007 in order to accommodate the widening of Interstate Highway 35. This area is adjacent to the City's major industrial district, which can potentially benefit from recycled water supplies.

In addition, the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant, which currently treats all wastewater generated by the City of Waco as well as five other member cities, is nearing its permitted discharge capacity. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is requiring plans for the expansion of the existing wastewater treatment capacity.

A comprehensive engineering solution to this wastewater challenge is the construction of a satellite wastewater reclamation plant and facilities to provide benefits from the reuse of the reclaimed effluent. The benefits to this plant are tremendous, a few of which are outlined below:

- The expense of relocating and expanding existing Lift Stations, approximately $2.1 million, is avoided.

- Removing 3 MGD of average daily wastewater flow from the existing wastewater treatment plant will not only bring the plant back to within its permitted discharge parameters, but will also avoid costs associated with expanding the plant.

- The satellite reclamation treatment plant and reuse project would provide capacity for future growth in the "high growth" corridor in Waco.

- And significantly, the reclaimed water produced at the proposed reclamation plant can be readily delivered to dozens of end users within the nearby vicinity. Not only would this reclaimed water be a revenue generator, it would also help reduce the summertime peak water demands at Waco's water treatment plant.

Support for HR 3418

Mr. Chairman, we strongly support H.R. 3418, and the support it will provide for the McLennan County/Waco Regional Satellite and Reuse Project. The city of Waco along with the others cities comprising the Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewerage System have committed significant funding to support the development of this project.

In summary, this legislation will not only provide for conservation of our community's water supply but will also reduce cost to the taxpayers and provide benefits to the environment as treated effluent is not dumped into the river but is used to sustain habitat in our parks and recreational areas. Recycling of highly treated wastewater provides an additional valuable resource for a large number of identified reuse applications, including golf courses, landscape irrigation, industrial cooling water, and other industrial applications. The initial projects eligible for funding under this legislation can provide up to 10 million gallons per day of reuse water; thereby, reducing the water demand on Lake Waco. This is enough water supply to meet the needs of over 20,000 households.

We welcome the opportunity to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to design, plan and construct a consolidated system to improve the efficient use of water resources in McLennan County. Our staff has discussed the reuse and reclamation project with the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman, Members of this Committee, thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.