**Quantifying Water Savings During Drought**

The successful implementation of drought contingency plans is a vital, economic strategy for meeting the long-term water needs of the state. In 2009, the San Antonio Water System estimated the implementation of their drought plan reduced water demands by 24,000 to 30,000 acre-feet, at a unit cost of $25 per acre-foot.

The TCEQ requires all drinking water suppliers in the state to prepare a Drought Contingency Plan. A requirement of the plan is for water suppliers to list quantified targets for water use reduction.

During the drought of 2011, many of the water suppliers in the state implemented their drought contingency plans. The implementation of these plans provided suppliers an opportunity to evaluate their goals for water use reduction.

Drought contingency plans are to be filed every five years to coincide with the regional water planning process. The next deadline is 2014.

Regional water plans are designed to identify water supply strategies to meet water demands during the repeat of a drought of record. Yet, most of the plans propose new water supplies to allow people to use as much water as they would in a normal year without any restrictions, as if the drought plans did not call for reduction in water use during a drought.

For example, during the summer of 2011, the City of Llano implemented drought contingency measures. For 2011, the City’s per capita use was 205 gallons per capita per day (gpcd); in the regional water plan, per capita use for the City is estimated to be 245 gpcd.

Overestimating water demands can create the apparent need for expensive water supply projects. Water use reduction targets developed in Drought Contingency Plans need to be accurately reported and incorporated into the regional water planning water demand numbers to reflect more accurate water needs during the repeat of a drought of record.