

## **FIRST WATER RIGHTS DONATED TO TEXAS WATER TRUST**

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EL PASO, Texas -- A West Texas rancher and attorney has donated 1,236 acre-feet of water per year to the Texas Water Trust to provide water for fish and wildlife in the Rio Grande.

The donation marks the first water rights ever deposited in the Texas Water Trust. The trust was created in 1997 by the historic water reform law Senate Bill 1 as a way to protect river instream flows, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, or bay and estuary inflows. As an ancillary benefit, it also safeguards river flows for outdoor recreation such as fishing and boating. The trust is part of the Texas Water Bank, a water rights marketing clearinghouse also created by SB1.

"I donated to the water trust because I wanted to see the Rio Grande running," said Colquitt "Kit" Bramblett, who grew up on his family's ranch in southeast Hudspeth County. The ranch has 23 miles of river frontage and about 500 acres of farmland with associated water rights. Bramblett is the county attorney for Hudspeth County, although he's had a longstanding law practice in El Paso and still keeps an office there.

"The river ran from the 1970s until this spring, when it dried up and all the fish died," Bramblett said. "I'd like to see some more people donate water. I'd like to see some water in that river." The stretch of the Rio Grande from El Paso to Big Bend National Park dried to a trickle this summer, shutting down popular rafting trips.

Bramblett first conveyed his water rights to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, which then deposited them in the Texas Water Trust. The Texas Water Development Board administers the trust.

"This sets a wonderful example for others to follow," said Larry McKinney, TPWD Resource Protection Division Director "There are many incentives to place water in trust, not only for fish and wildlife protection, but for water quality, for aesthetics, for whatever reason people would want to have water flowing in a river. A secondary benefit for the donor can be a tax deduction for a charitable donation."

For more information about donating to the Texas Water Trust, contact Colette Barron with TPWD at (800) 792-1112, ext. 7008 or by e-mail at [colette.barron@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:colette.barron@tpwd.state.tx.us). General information is also on the water development board Web site (<http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/waterbank/wtrust.html>). The TWDB currently waives all fees for deposits to the water trust.

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