

**Nueces River Authority
830-278-6810**

For Immediate Release:

**Corpus Christi Caller Times
Uvalde Leader News
San Antonio Express News
Leakey Star
Canyon Broadcaster
Frio Nueces Current
Hondo Anvil Herald
George West Progress
Zavala Sentinel
Crystal City Chronicle
Beeville Picayune**

Nueces River Authority recognized for Environmental Excellence in Education

The Nueces Basin headwaters is known for its clear flowing rivers and the clean water it produces for downstream drinking water supplies. More and more people come to the area to enjoy them. “But more and more people making more and more water dirty means our pristine rivers are at risk of becoming polluted,” according to Sky Jones-Lewey, Resource Protection and Education Director for the Nueces River Authority. “And this is what has motivated sponsors and supporters of NRA’s Headwaters Education Program to take initiative to provide protection through education,” she continued. “We cannot expect people to protect what they do not understand. People used to learn from living on the land. Often their very existence depended on land stewardship. But, today, most kids have no idea where their water comes from or why it is clean. In my experience, the irony is that those living closest to these precious resources seem to know the least about how to protect them. Instead of Do's and Don'ts, they need How's and Why's,” according to Lewey, who created NRA’s Headwaters Stewardship Education program which recently received a 2008 Texas Environmental Excellence Award.

“Up To You” is the battle cry for this successful homegrown education campaign which is aimed at cultivating personal responsibility for river protection. Delivered in symbolic script, the message is branded on litterbags, posters, tee shirts and greeting cards and is distributed by local sponsors. Sixty-five river related businesses have joined the campaign since 2004, producing and distributing brightly colored, river-ready, litterbags in the Frio, Sabinal and Nueces Canyons. The bags carry the campaign logo and clever facts about pollution printed in English and Spanish. Participating tube and kayak rental businesses encourage recreationists to take a litterbag with them as they float the rivers.

Clean Rivers Ríos Limpios



The logo and its theme of personal responsibility also are found on the program's educational centerpiece, a 24-square foot scaled plastic relief model of the Nueces River Basin, which educators take to fifth and sixth-grade classrooms in forty schools each year, and growing. This hands-on approach enables students to run their fingers over the terrain and, literally, trace the connections between creeks, rivers, and bays. Using food coloring to illustrate pollutants and spray bottles to make rain, they see how tainted runoff makes its way downstream, eventually to the bays, estuaries and Gulf of Mexico, affecting water supplies and the environment along the way.

The program's financial contributors, to date, have included Friends of the Frio, the First State Bank of Uvalde, the Hill Country River Region, San Miguel Electric Cooperative, Medina County Groundwater Conservation District, Wintergarden Groundwater Conservation District, Evergreen Groundwater Conservation District and Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

“There is a need to communicate the powerful “Up to You” environmental message basin-wide from Rocksprings to Corpus Christi”, says Lewey. “Our campaign has been very successful in raising awareness and placing responsibility for river protection squarely where it belongs, on the individual, but more needs to be done.”

The Texas Environmental Excellence awards are given each year to celebrate the bold efforts of citizens, communities, businesses, and organizations to preserve and protect the Texas environment by recognizing the state's most outstanding pollution prevention projects. Award-winning programs like that of the Nueces River Authority, reflect the goals of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) itself: to protect our state's human and natural resources and ensure clean air, clean water, and the safe management of waste.

According to NRA Executive Director, Con Mims, “The need for natural resource education is large. This award validates our efforts and encourages us to continue, improve and expand our education program. We, currently, are seeking funding for this growth.”

NRA invitees attending the awards ceremony in Austin last month were NRA teachers; Dee Worley, Stephanie King, Jo Ann Laxon; Melissa and Jerry Bates of Happy Hollow, advocates of river protection on the Frio River; and Ken Cave, Executive Director of the Texas Hill County River Region and William Dillard, Senior Vice-President, First State Bank of Uvalde, program sponsors. Also attending were Laurie Curra, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; Laura Marbury, Environmental Defense; Donna Hoffman, Sierra Club; Susan Allen Lynch of Rio Frio; Pamela Casebolt, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board; and Shawn Harrington and Karen Ford of White Hat Creative, the design firm responsible for the “Up 2 You” campaign.



Accepting the award for the Nueces River Authority were Rocky Freund, Deputy Executive Director and Sky Jones-Lewey, Resource Protection and Education Director.

