



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 23, 2011

**CONTACT:** Jace Houston  
(936) 588-7111

## **SJRA Approves Funds for Catahoula Wells in Willis**

At its board meeting on June 23, 2011, the San Jacinto River Authority authorized the execution of an agreement with the City of Willis to provide funds from the SJRA's GRP program for the construction of two water wells into the Catahoula Aquifer. The proposed wells would be used to offset Willis' current consumption of groundwater from the Jasper Aquifer, which is being depleted due to the growth in population and water demand in Montgomery County.

"This agreement is a win-win on so many levels," explained Jace Houston, SJRA Deputy General Manager of Administration. "Because Willis is a member of the SJRA's Groundwater Reduction Plan, the SJRA is able to fund the cost of the wells, and all the members of the GRP benefit from the reduction in pumpage from the Jasper Aquifer. This drives down the overall water cost for all of us and potentially delays or reduces the amount of surface water that is needed from Lake Conroe."

Another benefit is the sharing of risk. Although a handful of local utilities are now drilling wells into the Catahoula, it has never been used as a source of water supply in Montgomery County, so there is very little data on the aquifer's long-term reliability. Willis City Manager Hector Forestier said after the SJRA board meeting ". . . By working with our partners in the SJRA's GRP, we can share the cost of the wells, share the benefit of the groundwater conversion, and spread the risk to all those who stand to benefit. We believe the risk of the wells not being productive is small, but they are still very expensive to install, and this is the best way to explore this possible new source of water."

In addition to providing an alternative water supply, another important benefit of the Catahoula wells is the collection of important data to make predictions about the aquifer's long-term dependability. "Smart development of the Catahoula Aquifer requires a two-pronged approach," Houston said. "The first step is to go ahead and install wells in locations where you feel the most confident you'll get high-quality reliable water, but at the same time, you have to be working on comprehensive studies and modeling of the aquifer to make better determinations of how much water can be safely and reliably used."

At its May meeting, the SJRA board of directors voted to encourage the Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District to continue its comprehensive analysis of the Catahoula Aquifer. Forestier explained ". . . Willis is in a great location to use the Catahoula, and we're ready to move forward, but the data collection and modeling work being done by Lone Star is extremely important for long-term efforts to maximize this resource."

# # # #