

March X, 2011

VISPO Status Report Number 1

Dear Irrigator:

This Status Report follows our January 5, 2011 letter and the informational meetings held in December 2010.

The VISPO is a program being developed by the EARIP to compensate irrigators with permits to withdraw water from the Edwards Aquifer for reducing or suspending irrigation when the aquifer is at specified low levels.

First and foremost, the EARIP appreciates the interest shown by all persons who attended the VISPO informational meetings as well as those who followed-up with calls seeking clarification. We especially appreciate those who submitted responses indicating interest in participating in the VISPO.

The EARIP received responses from approximately 12% of the irrigators who were sent informational letters. Most of the responses indicated the amount and type of water and which program the responder was interested in enrolling. Some of the letters we received offered questions, comments and support for the program, although a few letters expressed opposition to the program. In total, slightly more than 17,000 acre-feet of water was submitted as an indication of interest.

The EARIP has determined that as a result of the amount of positive interest shown by irrigators for the VISPO, it is in the interest of all aquifer stakeholders to move forward. We are pursuing the development of funding mechanisms to implement the VISPO and other components of an appropriate environmental program to address statutory requirements to provide long-term protection for aquifer-dependent threatened and endangered species. In response to the comments received, we have made a few changes to the program and posted information on the EARIP web site. The most notable changes are the trigger level has been reduced from 650 feet to 645 feet at the J-17 index well. The lower level will reduce implementation frequency from 38% to 33%, based on historic records for the period 1947 - 2000. Also, we are going to put more emphasis in securing water in counties other than Uvalde and Medina to reach our goal. You can now follow the progress of the VISPO program at this link - <http://earip.org/Article.aspx?ID=19>.

If you have any questions, please call Rick Illgner at the Edwards Aquifer Authority, (210) 222-2204.

Thank you for your consideration of the VISPO.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Gulley
Program Manager
Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program

RLG/mb