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Brazos River Authority receives grant to study Golden Algae

The Brazos River Authority has received a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for research and potential control of Golden Algae in the Upper Brazos River. The grant, in the amount of \$214,516, will supply 95 percent of the costs of the project with the Authority providing the remaining five percent.

The goal of the project is to develop a cost-effective means to control or prevent toxic Golden Algae blooms. Golden Algae (*Prymnesium parvum*) is a type of algae that grows near the water's surface. As it matures, the Algae releases a dark brown or golden substance similar to the color of tea. The toxin is harmless to humans and animals, but fatal to fish.

Golden Algae blooms have plagued the majority of rivers in north and west Texas causing catastrophic losses in the fish community in both rivers and lakes.

The Golden Algae Study will focus on a large-scale treatment solution tested in England by the Centre for Aquatic Plant Management. The British project involved the application of bales of straw to areas where Golden Algae has been noted in the past. The straw is submerged just below the surface of the water. It is thought that the process of decomposition releases chemicals from the straw that inhibits algal growth.

The Authority test area will include six coves on Lakes Granbury and Possum Kingdom. Bales of straw will be applied to the cove areas in the months prior to and during historic Golden Algae blooms, typically October thru May. During this time, bi-monthly water quality sampling will be performed.

Should significant decomposition occur, a second application of straw bales will be placed in the coves. If Golden Algae data shows no significant increase in population size, no secondary application will be made.

The project will begin in late September to early October, 2005 and continue until May, 2006.