Greater Houston Partnership **May 7, 2008**

Resolution of the Board of Directors in Support of Activities to Improve Surface Water Quality

The Greater Houston Partnership urges entities in the region to work together to reduce bacteria contributions to our bayous, lakes and streams. The Partnership supports the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) in its actions to improve surface water quality through efforts such as the Bacterial Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process.

The Partnership also supports concurrent investment in relevant research to:

- refine understanding of possible human health risks from water-borne organisms;
- reassess the applicability of current surface water quality standards throughout the TCEQ's triennial review process; and
- consider alternative strategies and best management practices that achieve reductions in bacterial levels generated from both point and non-point sources.

Daniel J. Wolterman, Chairman

Jeff Mosley, President and CEO

Daniel G. Bellow, Secretary

GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP
Chamber of Commerce • Economic Development • World Trade

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 7, 2008

TO: Greater Houston Partnership Executive Committee

FROM: Doug Foshee
Chairman, Environment Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Resolution of the Board of Directors in Support of Activities to Improve Surface Water Quality

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RECOMMENDATION

The Greater Houston Partnership urges entities in the region to work together to reduce bacteria contributions to our bayous, lakes and streams. The Partnership supports the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) in its actions to improve surface water quality through efforts such as the Bacterial Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process.

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BACKGROUND

The Houston region consists of thousands of miles of watercourses that provide beautiful landscapes, habitat for urban wildlife and many recreational opportunities for residents. Elevated bacteria levels in some waterways pose a possible health risk to people swimming or wading in them. These types of water activities are referred to as contact recreation for the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) requires states to develop water quality standards and review these standards on at least a triennial basis. The state of Texas established standards that protect the purposes for which water bodies in the state will be used, and defined measurements that will assure the water quality is good enough to attain those uses.

The contact recreation standard measures the level of certain bacteria to estimate the relative risk of swimming or other water sports involving direct contact with the water. Sources of bacteria found in bodies of water may include inadequately treated sewage; improperly managed animal waste from livestock, pets in urban areas, aquatic birds and mammals; or failing septic systems. Bacterial concentrations are based upon the concentration of indicator bacteria, not necessarily pathogens, present. The current water

quality standard for freshwater contact recreation states that the geometric mean of indicator bacterial colonies should not exceed 126 per 100 ml. In addition, single samples of indicator bacteria should not exceed 394 bacterial colonies per 100 ml. It is possible to swim in water that does not meet this standard without becoming ill; however, the possibility of becoming ill is higher than it would be if bacteria levels were lower.

The TCEQ is currently reviewing the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, including the standards for contact recreation use. The agency is reviewing the range of applicable recreational categories and the numerical criteria that are appropriate to effectively protect recreational uses.

The CWA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) require all states to indentify water bodies that do not meet, or are not expected to meet, applicable water quality standards for designated uses. The TCEQ works with federal, regional and local agencies to monitor and determine which water bodies are meeting applicable standards. The TCEQ TMDL Program then develops a report for those water bodies that do not meet the standards. A TMDL report defines an environmental target by determining the extent to which a pollutant must be reduced in order to attain and maintain uses of the water body. A bacteria TMDL is developed for water bodies with unsafe levels of bacteria that would impact contact recreational use. The Commission formally adopts TMDLs which are then submitted to the EPA for review and approval.

Based on the environmental target in the TMDL, the state develops an implementation plan (IP) to mitigate sources of pollution within the watershed and restore full use of the water body. An IP puts the TMDL into action by outlining the steps necessary to reduce pollutant loads through regulatory and voluntary actions. IPs are approved by the TCEQ, but are not subject to EPA approval.

IMPLEMENTATION
To implement this recommendation, the Partnership would communicate its support of this resolution to local and state leadership.

RESOURCES REQUIRED
This resolution can be implemented within current budgetary constraints.