

Water relief flows to Wichita Falls

Reuse plan for effluent gets state approval

By John Ingle

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The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has given Wichita Falls a temporary lease on life with the approval of a project that will bring some water relief to the city.

Andrea Morrow, a spokeswoman for TCEQ, said in an email Friday night, “the TCEQ conditionally approved full-scale operation of the City of Wichita Falls’ Temporary Direct Potable Reuse (DPR) Project for a period not to exceed six months.”

The agency said that due to severe drought conditions in the area, the TCEQ will allow the city to supplement its drinking water supply with treated wastewater effluent.

The state agency said the city met all requirements outlined by TCEQ for the project to go operational and resupply the public system.

“The City completed the verification test of the DPR Project,” Morrow said in a statement. “The TCEQ has reviewed the information provided by the City from the verification test that shows that the drinking water produced from the DPR Project meets all state and federal drinking water standards.”

That means the drinking water provided through reusing treated wastewater is a viable source for drinking water and other uses.

TCEQ said the temporary approval is dependent upon the “design, operations, monitoring, reporting and automatic alarms and shutdowns at the treatment plant.”

The unending drought in the region began in October 2010 and has robbed the area of more than 45 inches of rain since then. City leaders have taken steps in addressing the drought and loss of water, including the direct potable reuse project to return roughly 5 million gallons of water per day to the drinking system.

The project, as it is now, takes treated wastewater effluent — which is cleaner than lake or river water — and pumps it from the River Road Wastewater Treatment Plant to the Cypress Water Treatment Plant. The water would then go through microfiltration, reverse osmosis and conventional water treatment processes to provide 100 percent drinking water for consumers.

Daniel Nix, operations manager for the system, said they are combing through the information from TCEQ.

He said they will get with the contractor to ensure particular aspects of the project are in place.

Nix said TCEQ’s decision is a positive movement in addressing the city’s water issues.