

# Executive Summary

## 2006 Survey of Citizen Knowledge, Understanding and Concerns About Water and Watershed Issues in the Upper Trinity River Watershed

In May 2006 the Environmental Science Program at the University of North Texas engaged the UNT Survey Research Center to conduct a survey of citizens in the Upper Trinity River Watershed to determine their knowledge, understanding and concerns on water and watershed issues. Representatives from the City of Denton Utilities, the North Central Texas Council of Governments and faculty of the UNT Environmental Science Program contributed to the development of survey instrument with the assistance of the UNT Survey Research Center. The survey was administered by telephone interviews to 1000 randomly selected citizens in the watershed. Results of the surveys have a +/- 3.1% accuracy.

All or parts of the following counties are included in the Upper Trinity River Watershed, Montague, Cooke, Grayson, Jack, Wise, Denton, Collin, Parker, Tarrant, Dallas, Rockwall, Johnson, Ellis and Kaufman.

The survey was conducted to develop an understanding of citizen's knowledge, understanding and concerns about water and watershed issues. It was also conducted to help focus and target water education programs in the watershed. The survey establishes a baseline that can be used in the future to evaluate the success of water education programs.

The Survey Report is organized around results on Environmental Issues, Water Issues, Water Quality, Water Sources, Water Pollution, Wastewater, Priorities and Funding and Sources of Information used by citizens to get information about water. The report also contains an analysis of responses by demographics of the responders. A copy of the survey instrument is in Appendix A. A digital copy of the Survey can be obtained at [www.ias.unt.edu](http://www.ias.unt.edu). Point of contact for the report is Dr. Ken Dickson, 940-565-2228 or dickson@unt.edu.

Some Conclusions Are:

- There is little understanding of the watershed concept by respondents
  - 92% responded no when asked if they live in a watershed
  - People living in rural areas were more familiar with the watershed concept than people living in urban areas

- 75 % of respondents said they knew what storm water is, but only 23% knew that storm water is not treated by wastewater treatment plants. Overall, respondents had a limited understanding of storm water
- The results of the survey showed that respondents have a poor understand of the urban water cycle.
  - 45% didn't know the source of their drinking water
  - 42% did not know where wastewater from their homes goes
  - 53% don't know where water goes after being discharged from a sewage treatment plant
- Respondents ranked the major causes of water pollution as:
  - 72% industrial wastes
  - 59% disposal of oil and antifreeze
  - 54 % disposal of household hazardous wastes
  - 51% sanitary sewer overflows
  - 49% litter and trash
  - 49% agricultural pesticides
  - 44% pesticide and fertilizer use on yards
  - 33% storm water runoff
- Many residents of the watershed are extremely concerned about environmental issues.
  - 66% are extremely concerned about adequacy of water supplies
  - 58% are extremely concerned about drinking water quality
  - 58% are extremely concerned about chemical contamination of water
  - 57% are extremely concerned about air quality
  - 56% are extremely concerned about loss of trees
  - 54% are extremely concerned about their personal health and drinking water
  - 46% are extremely concerned about loss of agricultural lands to development
  - 43% are extremely concerned about water pollution
  - 42% are extremely concerned about loss of wildlife habitat
- Women and minorities generally had higher concern levels for environmental and water issues than men or people with advanced degrees or people with high incomes.
- 85% of respondents indicated that local and county governments should place a high priority on protecting their regional water resources
  - 52% supported funding of water quality protection through local funding efforts such as tax increases and impact fees
- The most frequently used sources of news and information identified by the respondents were:

- Television (41%)
- Internet (20%)
- Newspaper (19%)
  
- News and information sources considered **most trustworthy** for environmental information per the respondents were:
  - 60% water/sewer/utility billing inserts
  - 58% county extension agents
  - 51% news articles in newspapers
  - 47% government publications/websites
  - 46% news features on TV
  - 43% news features on radio
  
- News and information sources considered least trustworthy by respondents were:
  - 56% billboards
  - 51% advertising on TV
  - 47% advertising on radio
  - 43% advertising in local newspapers