



## Immediate Release

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## **Flint Hills Resources Grant Creates New Future for Aquarium Distance Learning Program**

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas— The Texas State Aquarium is announcing a three-year grant totaling \$258,300 awarded from Flint Hills Resources. The grant will support “Aquavision”, the Aquarium’s advanced two-way video technology program that delivers videoconference education sessions to school children. These sessions address science, math, social studies and reading objectives under the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), providing schools with valuable teaching programs that help meet TEKS across the curriculum while building on students’ natural interest in marine life. The programs will be provided free of charge to elementary and middle school children in the Corpus Christi, San Antonio and Austin areas.

Aquarium President and CEO Tom Schmid says, “I am really excited about the opportunities we now have to expand this program, thanks to the good folks at Flint Hills Resources. Flint Hills is deeply committed to environmental education, and without their previous support, we simply could not have created this tremendous program. This most recent gift will allow us to further expand and enhance this important initiative.”

In 2003, through a \$250,000 infrastructure grant from Flint Hills Resources and a \$330,000 TARGET grant funded through the Education Service Center Region 2 and the Texas Education Agency, the Aquarium developed this innovative videoconferencing program designed to provide real-time, interactive distance learning lessons to elementary schools in the Coastal Bend area. The three-year TARGET grant provided funding for the Aquarium to redesign and adapt nine existing elementary educational programs into a videoconference format as well as providing for delivery of the adapted educational programs to four pilot schools within the ESC 2 region. Under the TARGET grant, the Aquarium delivered 305 programs between 2003 and 2005, reaching more than 6,900 students.

The TARGET project was complete in December 2005. The generous funding from Flint Hills Resources will allow the Aquarium to expand this wonderful learning experience to other schools.

With this grant, Flint Hills Resources will provide a total of 450 distance learning sessions reaching an estimated 11,250 school children, and will also provide resources for the Aquarium to develop nine middle school level distance learning programs. These new programs will address the critical need to support academic achievement at the middle school level.

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*The mission of the Texas State Aquarium is to inspire appreciation and wise stewardship of the Gulf of Mexico. The Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. [www.texasstateaquarium.org](http://www.texasstateaquarium.org)*