

1/23/08
Time Start: 1:30 pm
Time Stop: 2:35 pm

Teleconference Call:

Work Group 3 ~ Monitor the implementation of water conservation strategies by water users in regional water plans.

Council & Other Participants

Spokesperson Gary Walker

Comer Tuck
Ken Kramer
Jim Parks
C.E. Williams
Wayne Halbert
Norman Johns

Donna Howe
Linda Christie
Denise Hickey
Tom Gooch
Scott Swanson
Amy Hardberger

TWDB Staff

Vanessa Escobar
John Sutton
Aung Hla

Gary Walker called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm and opened it up for a brief overview of the last teleconference call and pending action items. Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) staff gave an overview of a few items. In a previous teleconference the workgroup members had requested that a document be put together identifying the conservation strategies within all the Regional Water Planning Groups (RWPG). For that action item TWDB staff created a pdf which is now posted on the Water Conservation Advisory Council (Council) Webpage.

An overview was also given regarding the Draft Loan Rules as they pertain to Water Conservation Plans. With House Bill 4 & Senate Bill 3 all entities with 3,300 connections or more will have to develop a water conservation plan and report annually on the status of that plan. The effective start date of this statute is May 2009 for submitting the plans and annual reports would start being submitted May 2010. Also related to the new legislation, the TWDB has developed policy which will be formally approved at the February or March Board Meeting. With the approval of the policy, the TWDB will officially be able to prioritize loans for State Water Plan projects funding to entities that have demonstrated conservation savings or will achieve significant water conservation savings by implementing the proposed project for which their financial assistance is sought. With the last legislature there were funds established for conservation projects in the State and Regional water plans. Applications for those funds will be reviewed on a twice a year cycle. In terms of conservation we are going to be looking at their water use surveys and their percentage reduction in Gallons Per Capita per Day (GPCD).

A question was asked if an entity did not have conservation improvements included in their plan, would they be eligible for TWDB loans? The answer to that was that if an entity has no improvement in conservation included in their plan, then they get no points or credit in that particular category. The TWDB staff will use a method of ranking based on points accrued in multiple categories. Theoretically missing out on those few points in the conservation category may prevent an entity from receiving the funds. However, an entity can be approved for funds without a good conservation track record, but they would still have to submit a conservation plan before being approved and awarded funds.

A question was raised about which definition of GPCD was going to be used in reviewing these applications. The answer to that was that the current definition only accounts for the municipal water use where industry is taken out. Municipal includes commercial and institutional water use divided by the population of the entities. This definition is what is available at this time,

although in the future we are aware that there may be a revision of definitions in order to more appropriately assess the usage.

A question was raised about whether the entities using Best Management Practices (BMPs) would receive credit for that in their loan approval process. The question was asked because there are several entities that will inevitably have their GPCD go up due to a number of uncontrollable factors. In their case the conservation goal would be for their GPCD to not go up over the years by such a large percentage as oppose to being reduced over the years by a percentage. Would those entities have an unfair disadvantage? The answer to that was that there will be a type of appeal process available where an entity can plead their case and provide further information about their increasing GPCD.

The workgroup moved on to review the Task Force recommendation #13 to try and identify components that are useful in guiding the charge of this workgroup. A question was raised as to how often are status updates provided regarding the strategies included in the Regional Water Plans? The answer to that was that this is the task that this workgroup is charged with. The new mandated annual status reports that are to start being submitted in 2010 may help provided the referenced updates for those who will use water conservation strategies. Presently though, information is received once every five years when the regional water plans are developed and revisions are made. Other than that, there is no mechanism in place for annual or biennial reports on conservation strategy implementation. It was agreed that besides just monitoring the implementation of strategies, that the charge for this workgroup is also going include developing a strategy or mechanism for how we are going to monitor the implementation of strategies.

A point was brought up that one difference between the Task Force Recommendation #13 and this workgroups charge is that in #13 it refers to all retail public water suppliers, and in the charge it talks about all water users in regional water plans. It was stated that water user groups, as defined in the regional water plans, basically includes municipal, agricultural irrigation, mining, steam electric water users, etc.

Someone asked if it could be agreed on that the first thing this workgroup needs to do is come to a consensus and adopt a procedure that involves the definition of terms and methodologies to be used. The second step would be to work on acquiring a baseline for these various water user groups. This baseline would have to include the need to obtain the data in a uniform and timely manner, as well as the need to use the appropriate units of measure to gauge each unit.

A question was raised if whether we could broaden the categories we typically think of in the regional water plan. With that we could put together some methodologies of what we are trying to accomplish. A response to that was that perhaps we could further break down categories into residential, commercial, institutional etc in order to develop a useful unit of measure for those categories. Another response was that overall the process will need to be standardized and agreed to.

A question was raised as to what the definition of monitor should mean. This is asked because maybe monitoring the implementation is a lot easier of an accomplishment than what we may be thinking. The regional water plans typically have goals in terms of numbers but they also have very specific things in terms of actual strategies that are recommended for the water use groups to do in order to achieve more water conservation. Is there a way to capture information about various water user groups for which water conservation strategies were recommend to see if they are actually adopting and implementing those strategies, by leaving aside any numerical measurements. Perhaps this workgroup should initially focus more on how we can start

gathering information about these water user groups to see if the strategies are actually being implemented. A comment was made in response to this suggestion. It was stated that right now the only thing that we can gather as far as data is concerned that tells us what is being done is on a voluntary basis. As a region planning group, there really will not be a report but every five years. Measurement may require a much more detailed level of information where monitor may require a broader level of detail.

A question was raised whether a survey could be distributed through the Regional Water Planning Groups, to their constituents. The survey would ask about an entity's conservation strategies, and what level of implementation have they received. These questions would in fact be a level of monitoring what has been implemented. A response to this suggestion was that it may be one possibility. For one thing not every regional planning group will have the resources necessary to gather that information and provide it back to the TWDB. Other possibilities that may work would be to do a spot a check with a certain number of regional planning groups and actually have a certain number of surveys sent from the TWDB to water use group in those particular regions that have either committed to or been recommended to use water conservation strategies. A point was brought up that there may be other existing reporting mechanisms that will help provide information. There may also be the possibility of working with a university and having a student effort to conduct surveys.

Someone suggested that it may not be necessary for us as a Council to have actual data gathered by the time we need to submit a report in Fall 2008 to the Legislature. Our time spent this year may be more progressive if we came up with methods by which the implementation of water conservation strategies could be monitored. Part of our methods could include the reports from water users in 2009.

A point was brought up about entities using Drought Contingency Plans, and water restrictions. There was some concern as to where the line is between water conservation and water restrictions. It was suggested that there be some attention to those who are achieving conservation via a drought contingency plan because they can skew GPCDs inaccurately. A comment in response to this was made stating that this specific level of detail would be something to address later down the road.

For right now it was suggested that this workgroup come up with a 'road map' of where monitoring of water conservation implementation should go on the future.

There was a question about the Water Use Surveys currently being used and whether they required a level of mandate, or monetary expenditures to implement. The reason this is asked is because it might be a potential avenue for asking for some of the necessary information. Perhaps a more general level of monitoring could take place through revision of the Water Use Survey.

It was suggested that a document be put together as to what are the existing reports that are already required by TWDB, through rules and policies, that would begin to give us some of the information that we are looking for in terms of water use groups and their implementation of strategies. For example if someone could describe the information provided in a Water Use Report. Another example could describe the reporting and updating requirements of a Water Conservation Plan along with a description of the information in a Water Conservation Plan. This single document could help give us an initial assessment of what is already being done so we don't repeat the efforts. The TWDB agreed to provide some information about the following reports: Water Conservation Plans, Water Loss Audit, 3 Year Report, Annual Report, Water Use Reports, etc.

A comment was made that in the future the Council may need to make a recommendation for additional procedures or processes as part of the planning process so that the RWPG can have more communication with the water user groups. The Council may also need to eventually make a recommendation that more comprehensive information be sought through some of these existing report and surveys.

It was stated that the Council will have to be prepared with their recommendations by August – September 2008 if you want to have the information included in Fall 2008 Report.

Scott Swanson stated that he could send the workgroup a spreadsheet as to what types of reports the TCEQ could provide down the line.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Immediate Actions	Long Term Actions
After next council meeting or conference call the TWDB will pull together a single document providing a summary and description of the following reports: Water Conservation Plans, Water Loss Audit, 3 Year Report, Annual Report, Water Use Reports etc.	.
Scott Swanson stated that he could send the workgroup a spreadsheet as to what types of reports the TCEQ could provide down the line.	