

**July 28, 2020 Meeting Materials for the
General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the
Interregional Planning Council**

1. Agenda
2. Meeting presentation
3. Draft July 21, 2020 meeting minutes
4. Draft Action Plan
5. Draft Best Practices - Walthour
6. Ideas for Enhancing Engagement of RWPG Members and the General Public
7. Region A, B, F, I, and M Policy Recommendations in the 2021 Initially Prepared Plans
8. Best Management Practices Guide for RWPG Political Subdivisions
9. Communication Process to Region M Board Members

1. Agenda

General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the Interregional Planning Council

JULY 28, 1:30PM

Meeting will be conducted via GoToWebinar and can be accessed with the link below.

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5143421244707918862>

Webinar ID: 559-212-515

PLEASE SEE: <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/ipc/committees.asp>

**The Chairman of this Committee may choose to address the items identified in this agenda in an order outside of the pre-arranged numbering.*

1. Call to order and welcome
2. Public comment
3. Consider minutes from July 21, 2020 Committee meeting
4. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – Action Plan for Committee Work and status of assignments
5. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – General Best Practices for Future Planning
6. Consideration and Action, as appropriate – Committee reports and recommendations to the Interregional Planning Council regarding General Best Practices for Future Planning
7. Discuss next steps: methods to move forward including scheduling of Committee meetings, background materials needed for future meetings or discussion and steps that can be accomplished before future meetings
8. Discussion of agenda for future meetings
9. Public comment
10. Adjourn

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large print or Braille, are requested to contact Melinda Smith at melinda.smith@twdb.texas.gov or at (512) 463-6478 two (2) work days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Direct links to this information can be found on our website at
<http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/ipc/committees.asp>

To view/listen to the General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee Meeting on Tuesday, July 28, 2020, please use GoToWebinar. If you are a visitor for this meeting and wish to address the Committee, you will have an opportunity to do so under agenda items number 1 and 9 through the GoToWebinar application.

Additional Information may be obtained from: Elizabeth McCoy, Regional Water Planner, Texas Water Development Board, 512/475-1852 elizabeth.mccoy@twdb.texas.gov

Emergency Mtg: No

2. Meeting presentation

Interregional Planning Council

General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee

July 28, 2020

I. CALL TO ORDER

Call to order and welcome

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Limit comments to 3 minutes each.
- Please state your name prior to commenting.
- Those on video Go To Webinar – Click “raise hand” on your screen.
- Those with telephone access – The organizer will unmute phone attendees to provide public comment.

3. CONSIDER
APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Consider approval of minutes from the July 21, 2020 Committee meeting

4.
CONSIDERATION
OF AN ACTION
PLAN

- Review draft committee action plan
- Status of assignments

5. DISCUSSION OF GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

- Discussion of topics identified to review/research:
- Simplified planning
 - Communication with RWPG and Members
 - Improving the Regional Water Planning Process
 - Engagement (allow video-conferencing long-term?)
 - Chapter 8 policy recommendations
 - Best Management Practices Guide for Political Subdivisions
 - TCEQ distribution system requirements in relation to planning (require TCEQ as a non-voting member to planning groups?)
 - Region M Best Practice on Communication

6. CONSIDERATION
OF
RECOMMENDATIONS
TO THE COUNCIL

- Discuss report to the 7/29 Council meeting
- Discuss written report outline

7. NEXT STEPS

- Next meeting: August 6, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.
- Background materials needed
- Assignments/accomplishments for next meeting

8. AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- Public comment
- Approve committee minutes
- Status of assignments
- Consider committee reports and recommendations
- Discuss next steps

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Limit comments to 3 minutes each.
- Please state your name prior to commenting.
- Those on video Go To Webinar – Click “raise hand” on your screen.
- Those with telephone access – The organizer will unmute phone attendees to provide public comment.

ADJOURN

3. Draft July 21, 2020 meeting minutes

General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the Interregional Planning Council Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2020, 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

held via GoToWebinar Videoconference

Committee decisions bolded and italicized in document

Participation: Committee Members present 4 of 5: Steve Walthour (Region A), Allison Strube (Region F), Kelley Holcomb (Region I), and Tomas Rodriguez (Region M). Russell Schreiber (Region B) was absent.

Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance: None

Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Board Members and Staff: Sarah Backhouse, Elizabeth McCoy, Temple McKinnon, Matt Nelson, and Reem Zoun.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Committee Chair Steve Walthour (Region A) called the meeting to order. Sarah Backhouse (TWDB) determined that a quorum was present.

2. Public Comment – No public comments were offered.

3. Consider Minutes from the July 15, 2020 Committee Meeting

The committee considered the minutes of the July 15, 2020 meeting. Tomas Rodriguez (Region M) made a motion to approve the minutes. Allison Strube (Region F) seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – Action Plan for Committee Work and Status of Assignments

Mr. Walthour introduced the draft committee action plan and reviewed actions and assignments identified to date. Actions to be completed include: research on simplified planning by Mr. Walthour, research on membership engagement by Kelley Holcomb (Region I), review of Chapter 8 recommendations by the full Committee, provide steps for information dissemination to membership by Mr. Rodriguez, research on Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) drinking water rules in relation to planning by Russell Schreiber (Region B), and several items on report development by the Committee.

Mr. Walthour proposed that the committee use this meeting to provide updates on the status of assignments and discuss resources needed to complete their tasks. The committee set July 28, 2020, as the deadline to complete research into assigned topics.

5. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – General Best Practices for Future Planning

Mr. Walthour provided an update on his research into simplified planning. Mr. Walthour developed the following draft problem statement on the issue of simplified planning: The simplified planning process is not functional under Texas Water Code (TWC) Section 16.053. Regional water planning groups (RWPG) only receive official census data every ten years, and in some regions of Texas review of the census data, as well as updated groundwater and surface water availability information from the previous planning

cycle, shows that there are no significant changes to population, water availability, water supplies, or water demands in the regional water planning area. Requiring RWPGs to at a minimum update groundwater and surface water availabilities that have not significantly changed is a waste of volunteer RWPG members' time.

Mr. Walthour proposed that RWPG members' time and state financial resources could be redirected to solving other water planning issues through special studies or focused professional services in communication of the regional plans to the public. Mr. Walthour suggested this issue may require legislative action and outlined multiple potential solutions that could improve the simplified planning process, including:

- Amend language in TWC Section 16.053(i) to discontinue requirements to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if availability numbers have not changed significantly;
- Allow RWPGs to petition the TWDB for simplified planning, where the TWDB can determine if simplified planning would be most effective;
- Consider requiring development of regional water plans every 10 years instead of every five years. Although, this may not work for all regions; or,
- Strike simplified planning from the statute if it does not provide value.

Mr. Walthour requested that his write up on simplified planning issues be distributed to members prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Holcomb briefly presented challenges and potential solutions identified on the topic of RWPG member engagement. Mr. Walthour suggested the committee review Mr. Holcomb's write up on engagement and discuss the topic further at the next meeting.

The committee then discussed Chapter 8 policy recommendations. Mr. Walthour submitted a summary of Chapter 8 policy recommendations related to best practices from the 2016 Region A Regional Water Plan. Ms. Strube noted that the Region F Regional Water Plan recommends a 10 year planning cycle as well as recommendations on groundwater, weather modification, and coordination with TCEQ on water availability modeling. Mr. Holcomb shared that the Region I Regional Water Plan includes project specific recommendations. He offered to prepare a condensed list of Region I best practice recommendations prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Walthour asked all members to prepare a similar summary of best practice recommendations included in the regional water plans for their regions. This may help identify additional issues for the committee to address. Mr. Rodriguez added that the Region M Regional Water Plan contains ten pages of recommendations. The main recommendations focus on issues related to annual discharge from Mexico and plugging abandoned oil and gas wells. Mr. Rodriguez noted it may be difficult, but he will try to summarize recommendations prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Rodriguez presented Region M's communication process with RWPG members. He explained that Region M established water users fees to fund the administrative costs for the RWPG. One month before a scheduled meeting, LRGVDC staff, the Region M chair and vice-chair, RWPG consultant, and TWDB staff have a call to discuss the agenda for the meeting. LRGVDC staff then publish the agenda and host the RWPG meeting. Meetings are held in Weslaco, Texas, which is approximately 165 miles from Laredo and 295 miles from Eagle Pass.

Regarding TWDB communications, when the Region M chair receives information from TWDB, Bureau of Reclamation, TCEQ, or other state agencies, the chair forwards the information to the LRGVDC administrator who then forwards the information to Region M members. Region M also holds orientation for new members once a year. Annual orientations are broken into two sessions and benefit both new and old RWPG members. Mr. Rodriguez added these processes have worked well for Region M.

Mr. Holcomb noted Region I has similar issues with RWPG travel and access. This seems to be a common issue across the state. Travel for RWPG activities is time consuming since regions cover large geographic areas. He added that this can influence RWPG engagement. Mr. Holcomb asked how this can be addressed to improve or enhance RWPG member and general public engagement. Ms. Strube offered that people are becoming more accustomed to virtual meetings. Virtual RWPG meetings could help address issues with travel and improve engagement in the future although there may be some resistance to this idea from existing members.

Mr. Walthour observed that it has been interesting to hear from RWPG chairs on the Council that there are multiple RWPGs that are unaware of available TWDB information. He added that TWDB is trying their best to get information out to planning groups, but it appears that a lot of information that is sent out to RWPG chairs and political subdivisions may not be disseminated out to the RWPG members. Mr. Walthour offered a recommendation that TWDB should invest in professional media consultants to assist TWDB staff in developing the suite of digital platforms that can effectively deliver better messages to more RWPG members and the public.

Mr. Holcomb agreed with the recommendation and added that TWDB generates a lot of data, and it's can be a lot of information to consume. It is easy for this information to get lost in daily flood of emails and communication. He added that more communication is not necessarily better or effective and hiring someone to provide expertise on communication would be helpful. Ms. Strube also agreed and added that people may be inclined to watch a 3-4 minute video over reading a ten page document. Utilizing different platforms and ways to present the information in trainings or new member orientations could improve engagement. Mr. Rodriguez agreed that presenting messages in 3-5 minutes helps keep viewers' attention. He added that there may be limits to how some information from TWDB can be summarized.

Mr. Walthour explained that the TWDB needs professional support to improve how they disseminate information. Mr. Holcomb added that for the last 18 months Region I has focused on trying new ways to present information. The region has made a point to provide information to members earlier to review. This extra effort has not had a noticeable impact on engagement. Region I continues to have limited engagement and discussion from members at meetings. Mr. Holcomb is not sure how to get past this issue. Mr. Walthour noted that what has really struck him is that RWPG chairs on the Council aren't aware of the resources that are available. Part of the issue seems to be that people aren't paying attention to the information that is being sent out. He added that this is something that can be worked on.

Mr. Walthour asked if there was an update on Mr. Schreiber's review of TCEQ requirements. Mr. Schreiber was unable to attend the meeting but had provided an update on his work to TWDB to share with the committee. Ms. Backhouse noted that Mr. Schreiber researched the planning rules related to wholesale contracts. He found that wholesale demands in regional planning are based on contractual amounts. He suggested that there may be an issue with how TCEQ interprets the drinking water rules.

The Region B consultants do not believe the TCEQ understands why or how the minimal flow rate in the drinking water rules affects the planning process. He suggested this issue does not need to be addressed in the committee report because the rule may be appropriate, but the application of the rule may need to be reconsidered by the TCEQ. Ms. Backhouse added that the RWPG contract guidance includes a statement that says retail distribution connection pressurization and the distribution system daily peaking capacity regulatory rules are not applicable to the regional water supply planning process since retail system level capacity is not a condition relevant to annual supply at the water user group level. If there are consultants that have concerns with this, TWDB can follow up with them.

Mr. Rodriguez added that TCEQ has strict rules that must be met. Mr. Holcomb described his experience working with TCEQ, TWDB, and the Army Corp of Engineers on permitting for Lake Columbia. He noted that at the time agency representatives were adamant that the 0.6 gallons per minute raw water rule was a peak demand factor and not a planning or federal permitting issue. He has not seen any interested in connecting the dots between agencies and processes. Mr. Walthour suggested this topic falls into the category of misunderstanding how different agencies and groups apply to the regional water planning cycle. Maybe this is something that could be addressed in a frequently asked questions document. Mr. Rodriguez agreed with Mr. Holcomb and added that the Best Management Practices Guide for RWPG Political Subdivisions is a good resource for the topics the committee is discussing.

Mr. Walthour proposed adding improving the regional water planning process to the committee's list of topics to review. He noted brainstorming for process improvements has primarily been done by TWDB staff and the 16 RWPG chairs. He suggested that this does not adequately allow development of a value-type stream that would make the process more efficient. He added that there are over 300 RWPG members that are only engaged when they are provided documents to review or attend meetings. Mr. Walthour suggested TWDB leadership should incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the regional water planning process. The core principle is to reduce and eliminate non-value added activities and waste by engaging the RWPG membership. The value of such a program would potentially lower costs and improve productivity of the RWPG membership. Mr. Walthour added that Chairs' conference calls don't provide adequate opportunity to share best practices, and there is no formal process to document best practices. Regional water planning is a bottom up process, but it takes leadership to implement program changes if changes are needed. Mr. Walthour asked if this could be added to the committee's list. Mr. Holcomb agreed that this is key and asked that Mr. Walthour's notes on the topic be shared. Members agreed the topic be added to the committee's list.

6. Consideration and Action, as appropriate – Committee reports and recommendations to the Interregional Planning Council regarding General Best Practices for Future Planning

Mr. Walthour reviewed the outline for Interregional Planning Council report to the TWDB. He asked members to keep the outline in mind when preparing information for the next meeting. The committee's section of the report will cover the following: review of existing practices and conditions, problem statement, goal statement, and recommendations, including to whom recommendations are directed.

Ms. Backhouse noted that committees have been asked to consider how TWDB support staff can help with report development. Mr. Walthour proposed the committee will prepare documents for the TWDB staff to compile into the committee's report. Mr. Holcomb added that TWDB and Council chair Suzanne Scott are reviewing the process for compiling committee reports into a cohesive document for the Council's report. Mr. Holcomb suggested that assigning one principal writer from each committee would

be a good process. Ms. Strube added that TWDB support to compile the committee report would be helpful.

Mr. Holcomb noted that TWDB is going to tie the Council report together into one voice after the September 30 Council meeting. Temple McKinnon (TWDB) confirmed that TWDB will review the Council report and provide final uniformity and polishing. Ms. McKinnon asked the committee to provide guidance to TWDB support staff on expectations for document production. Mr. Walthour recommended the committee follow the outline when preparing the documents that will then be compiled into the committee report. He requested that TWDB staff compile committee documents into an acceptable format for the committee report. No objections were noted to this approach.

Mr. Rodriguez recommended that the committee review the Best Management Practices Guide for RWPG Political Subdivisions when making recommendations to see if the recommendation is already covered in the document. Mr. Rodriguez noted that he doesn't have many objections to the current regional water planning process.

Mr. Walthour reminded the committee of the Deliberations by Discussion Topics document that provides a list of best practices discussed by the Council. Mr. Walthour recommended the committee review the list and see how the committee's recommendations may address these issues.

7. Discussion of Next Steps

The next committee meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on July 28, 2020. Mr. Walthour asked members to submit any materials they prepare for the meeting to TWDB staff to disseminate. Mr. Walthour noted he will review the Best Management Practices Guide for RWPG Political Subdivisions and be prepared for discussion of the document at next meeting.

Ms. Backhouse noted that TWDB is compiling 2021 Initially Prepared Plan Chapter 8 policy recommendations and asked if the committee would like to be provided what is currently prepared for the regions committee members are representing. Ms. Strube confirmed this would be helpful. Mr. Rodriguez asked for confirmation that members should review the most recent recommendations for their regions. Mr. Walthour confirmed that members should review recommendations from the 2021 Initially Prepared Plans. Mr. Walthour asked if a member could work directly with TWDB staff? Ms. McKinnon confirm this was allowable as long as there is no collaboration between members outside of meetings.

8. Discussion of Agenda for Future Meetings

The agenda for July 28, 2020 meeting will include consider approval of minutes, status of assignments, consider committee reports and recommendations, and discuss next steps.

9. Public Comment – No public comments were offered.

10. Adjourn – Mr. Walthour adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:50 p.m.

4. Draft Action Plan

Draft Action Plan – General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee

Expected Outcome: *Identify General Best Practices recommendations for the full Council to consider and compile the committee’s report section.*

Action Steps	Responsible	Deadline	Resources	Potential Barriers	Result
<i>What Will Be Done?</i>	<i>Who Will Do It?</i>	<i>By When?</i>	<i>What do you need to complete this step? (e.g., documents or data)</i>	<i>What could get in the way of task completion?</i>	<i>What is the outcome of the task?</i>
Research topics of simplified planning and membership engagement	Steve (simplified planning), Kelley (engagement)	7/28/2020			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Review Chapter 8 policy recommendations	Full Committee	7/28/2020			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Provide steps for information dissemination to membership	Tomas	7/28/2020			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Research TCEQ drinking water rule in relationship to planning	Russell	7/28/2020			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Complete initial draft of committee report section	Assignments TBD				Draft document for committee to review and discuss
Review and edit draft committee	Full Committee				Finalize

report section					committee report
Submit committee report to IPC	Full Committee				Deliver document to full IPC
Present committee report to IPC	Committee Chair				Approval of committee report by full IPC

5. Draft Best Practices - Walthour

Interregional Planning Council Best Practices for Future Planning Committee

Steve Walthour – Draft

July 21, 2020

Simplified Planning Process.

Existing Practice

Sections 16.053(i) The regional water planning groups shall submit their adopted regional water plans to the board by January 5, 2001, for approval and inclusion in the state water plan. In conjunction with the submission of regional water plans, each planning group should make legislative recommendations, if any, to facilitate more voluntary water transfers in the region. Subsequent regional water plans shall be submitted at least every five years thereafter, except that a regional water planning group may elect to implement simplified planning, no more often than every other five-year planning cycle, and in accordance with guidance to be provided by the board, if the group determines that, based on its own initial analyses using updated groundwater and surface water availability information, there are no significant changes to the water availability, water supplies, or water demands in the regional water planning area. **At a minimum, simplified planning will require updating groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan, meeting any other new statutory or other planning requirements that come into effect during each five-year planning cycle, and formally adopting and submitting the regional water plan for approval.**

Problem

The simplified planning process is not functional under Section 16.053. Regional water planning groups only receive official census data every ten years, and in some regions of Texas review of the census data, as well as updated groundwater and surface water availability information from the previous planning cycle shows that there are no significant changes to population, the water availability, water supplies, or water demands in the regional water planning area. Requiring the regional water planning group to at a minimum update groundwater and surface water availability values that have not significantly changed is a waste of volunteer regional water planning members' time

Goal

Make the process more efficient and reduce waste of State financial, personnel and volunteer resources by redirecting those resources to solving other water planning issues through special studies or focused professional services in communication of the regional plans to the public.

Recommendations

There are multiple paths to improve the simplified planning process that would allow regional water planning groups to use the process.

- Simply amending the language Section 16.053(i) by discontinuing the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if those availability numbers have not changed significantly.
- Allow the regional water planning group to petition the TWDB for simplified planning where the TWDB can determine if simplified planning would be most effective.
- Consider requiring development of the State Water Plan every 10 years instead of every five years, with sponsorship of special studies between planning cycles. This would allow full updates of the State Water Plan following updated population census. It also may better align the regional water plans with the schedule specified for the GMA process, which is critical to defining the amount of groundwater supplies that are available for regional planning purposes
- Or strike simplified planning from the statute because it takes up space and has little value.

This issue will require legislative action.

Communication with RWPG and Members

Existing Practice

TWDB Staff have provides resources to RWPG such as Best Management Practices, New Member Orientation Guides, uniform understanding related of specific requirements and other resources available for regional water planning. TWDB staff have offered orientations that takes about 45 minutes during a RWPG meeting and are willing to provide whatever support RWPG need.

Problem:

Members of multiple RWPGs are unaware of the above described resources and assistance are available. TWDB correspondence is often not recognized as information that should be distributed to the membership because it is not recognized as applicable to the planning process or is simply not viewed because of email overload. Some RWPGs have declined TWDB's orientation services.

Goal

Training RWPG members to make better informed decisions by understanding the planning process and resources available.

Recommendations

Simply requiring that RWPGs go through TWDB staff guided orientation at the beginning of each cycle or require RWPG leadership to read and follow the Best Management Practices Guidelines provided by the TWDB could help mitigate this issue. However, there are multiple tools to communicate to RWPG members other than by email, websites, or in person training. The TWDB should invest in professional media consultants to assist TWDB staff in developing the suite of digital platforms that can effectively deliver better messages to more RWPG members. This issue could be address by the TWDB.

Improving the Regional Water Planning Process.

Existing Practice

Most significant amendments of the planning process is based on recommendations from the 16 RWPG chairs, the TWDB staff, recommendations form the RWPG at the end of the planning cycle and amendments to applicable statutes. Chairs meet in conference calls which is a possible avenue of sharing best practices, and TWDB work sessions provided another avenue for improving the process.

Problem:

Currently modifications to RWPG process does not adequately allow for all RWPG members to provide substantial input on how to make the process better because it is at the end of the cycle at the time the group is working on its final report. Chairs' conference calls are scheduled but cover so much information that Chairs don't have the opportunity to brainstorm new ideas and prior work sessions held by TWDB are no longer held or results aren't formally documented. Additionally, over 300 RWPG members do not have direct input to improve the process. Only engaging a small subset of the RWPG leads to non-engagement by the rest of the membership.

Goal

Improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the RWP process.

Recommendation

The Texas Water Development Board leadership should incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the RWP process. The core principle is to reduce and eliminate non-value adding activities and waste by engaging the RWPG membership to map out entire value steam in planning. The value of such a program would potentially lower costs and improve productivity of the RWP membership.

6. Ideas for Enhancing Engagement of RWPG Members and the General Public

**Committee on
General Best Practices for Future Planning**

Ideas for Enhancing the Engagement of
RWPG Members and the General Public
In Future Water Planning Processes
July 21, 2020

Challenges

- General communications related issues
- Information overload
- TWDB develops and makes available significant amounts of information and material that is valuable to the planning process, however, it doesn't appear to be making its way to the RWPG members or the general public
- Lay-person issues
 - Highly technical and complex subject matter
 - Members of the public don't have the knowledge base to readily consume the information provided
 - The time investment required and availability and access to public meetings

Potential Solutions

- More focus on new member orientation
- Educational programs or speakers on each RWPG agenda
- Work sessions to “deep dive” into more complicated topics
- Standardized, easy to do adopt practices and protocols that apply to all regions
- Increased standardization amount RWPG's
- Better methods to encourage public participation
- Funding for better methods of disseminating of information
 - Surveys
 - Targeted email blasts
 - Website updates for all RWPGs
 - Potential for one way conferencing

7. Region A, B, F, I, and M Policy Recommendations in the 2021 Initially Prepared Plans

**REGION A, B, F, I, and M POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
IN THE 2021 INITIALLY PREPARED PLANS (IPP)**

Prepared in support of the General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the Interregional Planning Council. Please note that this document does not include 2021 IPP policy recommendations of specific unique stream segments or unique reservoir sites. Policy recommendations from the IPPs have been grouped into four categories by TWDB staff.

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Region A

Legislative Action

- **Manage groundwater resources through local groundwater conservation districts.** There remain certain areas of the PWPA that are not within the boundaries of a groundwater district. Many of these areas do not have substantial quantities of groundwater or located in areas with no aquifers. However, areas with groundwater should be included in a local district contained within the regional planning area to create an equitable situation with regard to groundwater management, provided that it is feasible and locally supported.
- **Create a water conservation reserve program for irrigated acreage management.** A water conservation reserve program should be created to make it economically feasible for farmers to convert irrigated acreage to dryland.
- **Encourage the federal government to continue to support Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participation.** This program continues to help protect local groundwater resources. As properties currently in CRP are coming out, property owners may convert and reestablish the properties to irrigated agriculture and utilize higher volumes of groundwater.
- **Evaluate policy barriers to use playa lakes for conservation purposes.** The State should evaluate the current legislative barriers to using playa lakes. The barriers should be removed or reduced to allow using the playas for aquifer recharge or other beneficial water supply purposes.
- **Maintain the functionality and viability of the Water Conservation Advisory Council.** The group currently operates on a volunteer basis with no state or federal funding.
- **Provide funding for administration of the regional water planning process.** Current funding only allows reimbursement of direct expenses for administrative activities. The public process requires considerable coordination and staff assistance to comply. The costs to administer the PWPA regional planning process are \$70,000 per year, which is funded solely through local funds. As a result of the lack of funding, several planning areas are struggling to identify and maintain a political subdivision administrator.
- **Provide funding for educational events including demonstrations of irrigation conservation strategies to encourage adoption.** Irrigation conservation relies on the adoption of measures by individual producers. Education is the first step to making long-term conservation efforts become a reality.
- **Provide funding for more information on agricultural water use to better inform the TWDB baseline estimates and irrigation conservation strategies.** Considering that agricultural use accounts for more than 90 percent of total usage in the PWPA, a thorough understanding of agricultural water use is critical to the future of the region. Many of the agricultural conservation strategies are dependent on knowing the water use and acreage by crop.
- **Updated analysis of groundwater supplies and availability.** The PWPG supports continuing funding of the TWDB's groundwater availability models for the major and minor aquifers of Texas. The PWPG appreciates TWDB's leadership in this initiative and recognizes the importance of the data that comes from these models. Therefore, the PWPG stresses how imperative it is to continue funding this effort at an amount similar to or greater than the past.

TWDB Action

- TWDB should establish and continue to promote clear guidelines for eligibility for funding and needs assessment for very small cities and unincorporated areas. Statements to the effect that "entities which fall under the planning limits retain eligibility for state funding assistance for

water-related projects without having specific individual needs identified in the Regional Water Plan" would greatly enhance the ability of these small systems to provide their users with a safe and adequate supply of water.

- TWDB should continue to improve the monitoring and quantification of small communities, county-other, manufacturing, and livestock operator water use to provide better information for planning purposes.
- Clarification of relationship between drought contingency planning and regional water supply planning. It is not clear what role drought contingency planning has in the regional planning process.
- TCEQ should be made an ex-officio member of the RWPGs and be required to attend RWPG meetings to provide input on known water quality/quantity problems.
- **Brush control.** TWDB guidance is needed on how to account for brush control projects in the context of a source of "new surface water" for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and other uses. The Canadian River watershed has more than 50% cover of mixed brush species that are amenable to control for rangeland improvement and water enhancement purposes.

Other Agency Action

- **TCEQ - Continue to evaluate the rules governing reuse to encourage the use of wastewater effluent.** The current regulatory environment provides a number of barriers to encourage the reuse of wastewater effluent. TCEQ should re-evaluate the current rules and change the rules to provide and quantify incentives for municipalities, industries and agriculture to reuse wastewater effluent.
- **TCEQ - Updated analysis of surface water supply inflows and availability.** The regional surface water supply has steadily decreased over the past ten to fifteen years to the extent that regional lakes experienced new historical low storage levels. The existing tools to assess the reliable supply from regional surface water do not include the recent droughts. The Legislature did recommend that four river basin Water Availability Models be updated, including the Red River Basin. It is recommended that TCEQ also extend the current Water Availability Model for the Canadian Basin to capture the current drought in the PWPA.

General Issues

- **Enhance groundwater recharge.** Groundwater accounts for a major source of water in the PWPA. Recharge rates are near zero for most of the area over the Ogallala aquifer with slopes around playas having the highest rates. Other regional aquifers, such as the Seymour Aquifer, may be more amenable to enhanced recharge. Means of enhanced recharge also include any man-made structure(s) that slow down or hold surface water to increase the probability of groundwater recharge. With current drought conditions, alternative sources of rechargeable water need to be identified and studies conducted to determine the feasibility of enhancing recharge with these water sources.
- **Salinity and brush control projects for the Canadian River and/or Red River Basin.** Although there have been salinity and brush control projects recently implemented in the Canadian and Red River Basins, future State Water Plans should continue to plan for future salinity and brush control projects and their funding to continue to improve water quality and quantity in the basins.

Region B

Legislative Action

- **Funding for Comprehensive Studies.** In preparing the Region B Water Plan there are several regional water planning, management, and conservation related issues which will require additional funding for data collection and administrative activities in order to adequately assess their viability or feasibility as a cost effective management strategy for Region B. For example, additional funds are needed to further evaluate and cost-share in the implementation of brush management programs in an effort to increase water yields, to identify and designate unique stream segments and/or reservoir sites for protection of these areas, and to implement various other chloride control measures and wastewater reuse programs throughout Region B.
- **Conservation.** Region B supports the efforts of the State-appointed Water Conservation Task Force and encourages the practices of water conservation within the region and state. The Regional Water Planning Group also recognizes the differences in water use and needs among water users and different regions. Region B encourages the Legislature to allow each region to establish realistic, appropriate and voluntary water conservation goals for the region. These goals should only be established after sufficient data on water use have been collected using consistent data reporting requirements. The use of the measurement of gallons per capita per day is appropriate only for residential water use or as a guideline for historical trends for a single entity. Region B does not support the establishment of statewide standards for water use.
- Based on the results of the Lake Kemp and Lake Arrowhead brush management studies, it is recommended that the State consider providing adequate funding to implement brush management and other land stewardship programs in an attempt to increase watershed yields.
- Region B recommends that the state support both federal and state efforts to rehabilitate existing sediment control structures and encourage funding and support for the construction of new structures and other land management practices in watersheds that would produce the greatest sediment control benefits.
- Region B requests that the Legislature continue to extend the protections for unique reservoir sites in order to ensure that reservoir sites such as Lake Ringgold that are identified as water management strategies remain protected under the Texas Water Code until applications and permits are filed.
- It is recommended that the state fund the development, implementation, and evaluate the necessary management strategies adopted as part of this regional plan. This includes strategies identified to meet a specific need as well as general strategies to increase water supply in the region.
- It is recommended that the Legislature support the grass-roots regional water planning process enacted by SB1 and strongly encourages the process be continued with adequate state funding for all planning efforts including administrative activities and data collection.
- It is recommended that the state continue to fund agricultural water use data collection and agricultural water use management/conservation projects.
- With regards to conservation it is recommended that the Legislature continue to allow each region to establish realistic, appropriate, and voluntary water conservation goals as opposed to the establishment of statewide standards.
- Senate Bill 1 requires future projects to be consistent with the approved regional water plan to be eligible for TWDB funding and TCEQ permitting. It is recommended that surface water uses that will not have a significant impact on the region's water supply and water supply projects

that do not involve the development of or connection to a new water source should be deemed consistent with the regional water plan even though not specifically recommended in the plan.

- Given a new drought of record, firm water availability from existing and new surface water supplies may be overstated. Therefore it is recommended that funding be provided to update the hydrology for all Water Availability Models (WAMS) with additional funding for regular maintenance updates.

TWDB Action

- Region B recommends that the gallons per capita per day (gpcd) calculation of water use be based on residential water use only.
- With irrigation being such a large component of water use, it is recommended that the economic model be updated and that the future crop mix and base year irrigation demands be reevaluated.

Other Agency Action

- ***Regulatory Review of Nitrate MCL.*** In Region B, there are a number of small user groups which utilize water with nitrate levels in excess of 10 mg/l. For the most part this supply is their only source of water, and advanced treatment for the removal of nitrates is very costly. Presently these systems employ bottled water programs for customers that may be sensitive to nitrate concentrations (pregnant women and infants). It is the consensus of the Region B Water Planning Group that the TCEQ review its MCL standards for smaller systems which have no cost effective means to comply with the current nitrate MCL of 10 mg/l, and consider funding new studies to determine the health effects of nitrates in drinking water.

General Issues

- It is recommended that the Chloride Control Project on the Wichita River and the Pease River be made a regional priority in order to enhance the water quality of Lake Kemp and Lake Diversion and reclaim those lakes as a viable cost effective short term and long term regional water supply source.

Region F

Legislative Action

- **Surface water policy recommendations.**
 - Require that any time a request is made to amend a water right, if the change involves an increase in the quantity, a change in the purpose of use or a change in the place of use, all water rights holders in the basin must be notified.
 - The water availability models show that the Colorado River Basin is over appropriated. Region F opposes any legislation that would repeal or modify the “junior priority provision” for interbasin transfers from the Colorado River Basin (Water Code 11.085 (t)).
 - Review the State’s surface water policy of prior appropriation to see if this is a policy that will work in Texas over the next 50 years.
 - Recommend that State water law be amended to incorporate river basin subordinations as set forth in regional water plans.
- **Groundwater policy recommendations.**
 - To support retention of the Rule of Capture while encouraging fair treatment of all stakeholders, and the State’s policy that groundwater districts are the preferred method for managing Texas’ groundwater resources.
 - To support local control and management of groundwater through confirmed groundwater conservation districts, while providing encouragement and incentives for cooperation among the groundwater conservation districts within the region.
 - That all persons or entities seeking to export a significant amount of water from a groundwater district must submit notice of their plan to the affected GCD and the Regional Water Planning Group.
 - All state agencies with land within GCDs must be subject to groundwater district rules and production limits and must provide information on existing and proposed groundwater projects to the relevant Regional Water Planning Group.
- **Environmental policy recommendations.**
 - That brush control and desalination are Region F priority strategies for protecting environmental values while developing new water supply for municipal and other economic purposes.
 - That because of the very limited water resources in this region, there must be a carefully managed balance in the development, allocation and protection of water supplies, between supporting population growth and economic enterprise and maintaining environmental values. Consequently, while recognizing the need for, and importance of, reservations of adequate water resources for environmental purposes, the RWPG will not designate any special stream segments until the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, working in cooperation with local entities such as groundwater districts, county soil and water conservation districts, local conservation groups and landowners, completes comprehensive studies identifying and quantifying priority environmental values to be protected within the region and the quantification of minimum stream flows necessary to maintain those environmental values.
 - To support legislative funding and diversion of TPWD resources, for undertaking the studies described above; and
 - To support the creation of cooperative local stakeholder groups to assist the TPWD in studies described above.

- There are insufficient water supplies within Region F to meet projected municipal, agricultural and environmental needs through 2070; therefore, Region F RWPG opposes the export of surface water outside of the region except for existing contracts for such export, and will give priority consideration to needs within the region, including protection of environmental values, in evaluating any future proposed contracts for export.
- Land (range and cropland) conservation and management practices (including brush management and proper follow-up grazing and burn management) are priority strategies to provide optimum conditions for most efficient utilization of the region's limited rainfall. These practices should receive top priority for funding from the Texas legislature and State agencies charged with protecting and developing our water resources.
- **Interbasin Transfers.** The State of Texas has 23 river basins that provide surface water to users in 16 regions. The current statutes require any new water right diverted from one river basin to another to become "junior" in priority to other rights in that basin. Also, as part of the water rights application, an economic impact analysis is required for both basins involved in the transfer. These requirements are aimed at protecting the basin of origin while allowing transfers of water to entities with needs. The Region F Water Planning Group:
 - Supports retention of the junior water rights provision (Water Code 11.085(s) and (t)).
 - Urges the legislature and TCEQ to study and develop mechanisms to protect current water rights holders.
- **Brush Control.** Brush control is recognized as an important tool in the management and maintenance of healthy rangelands that can allow for more efficient circulation of rainfall into the soil profile. This in turn can add to the effectiveness of aquifer recharge and restoration of streams and springs.

Region F supports brush control where it has the greatest effect on rivers, streams, and springflow, such as riparian zones, and areas of the region with the highest rainfall per year. Region F recognizes that the key to water restoration is managing the land to promote a healthy and vigorous soil and vegetative condition, of which brush control can play an important part.

Region F supports legislative efforts to promote funding for brush control activities for the purpose of river, stream, and spring enhancement in those areas that allow for the greatest success. The Region F Water Planning Group recommends the Texas legislature continue to support the State Water Supply and Enhancement Program through:

- Funding for on-going maintenance of brush removal in the region, and
- Continued cooperation with federal agencies to secure funds for brush control projects that will improve water quality.
- **Desalination.** There are significant reserves of brackish groundwater in Region F. Region F Planning Group recommends the Texas Legislature continue to provide funds to assist local governments in the implementation of development of these water resources.
- **Weather Modification.** There are currently two operational weather modification programs in the region – the West Texas Weather Modification Association (WTWMA) and the Trans Pecos Weather Modification Association (TPWMA). The WTWMA estimated a 15% increase in rainfall in their targeted area during 2014 due to their rain enhancement efforts, while the TPWMA estimated a 6.8% increase. Weather modification is one of the region's recommended strategies, together with brush control and desalination, for augmenting water supply. Recommendations include:

- Support legislative funding for operational programs, research, and evaluation of impact on rainfall.
- Support the creation of additional programs.
- **Reuse.** Reuse of water is a major source of “new water” especially in Region F. Reclaimed or new water developed from a demineralization or reclamation project can be stored for use in aquifers that have been depleted. Region F Water Planning Group recognizes the importance of reuse for the region and State, and recommends the following:
 - Support legislation that will encourage and allow the reuse of water in a safe and economical manner.
 - Work with the State’s congressional delegation and federal agencies to develop procedures that will allow reject water from demineralization and reclamation projects to be disposed of in a safe and economical manner.
 - Support legislation that will encourage and allow aquifer storage and recovery projects to be developed and managed in an economical manner.
 - Support legislation at both the State and federal levels to provide funding for demineralization, reclamation and aquifer storage and recovery pilot projects.
- **Groundwater Conservation Districts**

There are 16 established groundwater conservation districts in Region F that oversee groundwater production in more than half of the region. Region F recognizes and supports the State’s preferred method of managing groundwater resources through locally controlled groundwater districts. In areas where groundwater management is needed, existing districts could be expanded or new districts could be created taking into consideration hydrological units (aquifers), sociological conditions, and political boundaries. Recommendations include:

 - Legislation developed for managing the beneficial use and conservation of groundwater must be fair for all users.
 - Rules and regulations must respect property rights and protect the right of the landowners to capture and market water within or outside of district boundaries.
 - The region does not support the use of historical use limits in granting permits.
 - The region does not support the use of groundwater fees for wells used exclusively for dewatering purposes.
 - The legislature should support the collection of groundwater data that would be used to carry out regional water planning.
 - The region also recognizes that the State has groundwater resources associated with state lands that may or may not be governed by local groundwater districts. Region F encourages the State to review its groundwater resources on all state-owned land and how those resources should be managed to the benefit of all of Texas.
- **Funding.** The Region F Water Planning Group recognizes that the ability to implement the water plan will depend in part on the ability to fund the recommended projects. The TWDB and Texas Legislature have responded to this concern by providing different funding vehicles for water projects, including the State Water Implementation Fund that is specifically dedicated to implementing projects identified in the State Water Plan. However, many entities are still struggling with financing water projects. For many of these entities, the regional water planning process is essential in identifying water needs and potential strategies. The Region F Water Planning Groups recommends:
 - The State provides increased grant funding to smaller communities with limited financial resources for implementation of strategies in the regional water plans.

- The State should continue to fund the regional water planning process at a sufficient level to adequately address the Legislative requirements and provide a planning assessment for the many smaller communities in rural Texas.
- Consider providing adequate funds for the administration of the regional water planning process since the TWDB and the Legislature has continued to increase the responsibilities of the administrator.
- **Frequency of State Water Plan Development.** The State is required by law to develop and update the State Water Plan every five years. The 2022 State Water Plan will be the fifth plan since the passage of SB1. Over the past 20 years, the regional and state water plans have captured the local water supply issues and a comprehensive path forward has been developed. In response to recommendations that the development of the State Water Plan be conducted every 10 years instead of every five years, with funding of special studies between planning cycles, the Texas Legislature provided a simplified planning option for non-census planning cycles. The simplified planning option still requires the planning groups to develop and independently verify most, if not all, of the data required under the standard methodology. The simplified planning option does not meet the intent of changing the planning cycle from every five years to ten years. It also does not provide a funding mechanism to conduct more in-depth region-specific special studies. Region F recommends that the Texas Legislature reconsider changing the planning cycle from five years to ten years with the opportunities for regions to apply for funding for special studies during non-regional planning periods.

TWDB Action

- **Allow Waivers of Plan Amendments for Entities with Small Strategies.** Region F recommends that the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) allow waivers for consistency issues for plan amendments that involve projects resulting in small amounts of additional supply rather than requiring the regional water planning groups to grant consistency waivers. With the change in structure of the TWDB, TWDB Directors are fully capable of making such decisions.
- **Coordination between TWDB and TCEQ Regarding Use of the WAMs for Planning.** The TWDB requires that the Water Availability Models (WAMs) developed under the direction of TCEQ be used in determining available surface water supplies. The models were developed for the purpose of evaluating new water rights permit applications and are not appropriate for water supply planning. The TWDB and TCEQ should coordinate their efforts to determine the appropriate data and tools available through the WAM program for use in regional water planning. The TWDB should allow the regional water planning groups some flexibility in applying the models made available for planning purposes.
- **Expand Consistency with the State Water Plan for SWIFT Funding to Include Adopted Regional Water Plans.** The current legislation specifies that a water supply project must be in the adopted State Water Plan for eligibility for SWIFT funds. To allow the TWDB sufficient time to develop the State Water Plan, there is a one-year period between when a regional water plan is adopted and when the TWDB approves the corresponding State Water Plan. During this year period the State Water Plan is based on recommended projects in a superseded regional water plan. Under current law, if a project is included in the current regional water plan but not in the superseded plan, the project sponsor must amend the superseded plan to receive SWIFT funding. This could mean that the regions and project sponsors are expending funds for a process that has already been completed for the current regional water plan. It is recommended that the consistency requirement with the State Water Plan for eligibility for SWIFT funds be expanded to include the currently adopted regional water plan.

Other Agency Action

- **TCEQ – Water Quality.** Region F has multiple water sources that are impaired for water quality. Local geologic formations contribute salts and total dissolved solids to streams and reservoirs. Some groundwater sources are affected by elevated minerals (including arsenic and fluoride), nitrates, and radionuclides. For many smaller communities, these impaired water sources are the only available water supply. Region F recognizes the challenges in developing new water supplies and/or treating the impaired water supply for these communities.

To provide greater certainty in supply development and use of impaired water sources, Region F recommends:

- TCEQ authorize small, rural water suppliers who currently cannot afford the necessary capital improvements to their existing water systems and who have no reasonable available alternate water source to utilize bottled water options to the fullest extent possible and apart from the threat of TCEQ enforcement. The alternative is for the water supplier to receive grants, not loans, to construct, operate, and maintain a treatment system to reduce drinking water constituents that exceed the established MCLs of the federal drinking water standard level.
 - The State of Texas sponsor an oral ingestion study to determine the epidemiology of radium in potable water before enforcing minimum MCLs for radium. Region F is concerned about enforcement of State and federal regulations for radium in drinking water. A cluster cancer investigation was conducted by the Texas Cancer Registry of the Texas Department of Health and found that the cancer incidence and mortality in the area were within ranges comparable to the rest of the State. The Texas Radiation Advisory Board also expressed concern that EPA rules are “unwarranted and unsupported by public health information (specifically epidemiological data)”.
 - TCEQ revise its policy on requiring the use of secondary water standards, particularly TDS, when granting permits. Meeting secondary water standards should be the option of local water suppliers who must consider local conditions such as the economy, availability of water, community concerns, and the volunteer use of technologies such as point-of-use.
- **Railroad Commission – Oil and Gas Operations.** Protection of the quality of the region’s limited groundwater resources is very important within Region F. Prevention of groundwater contamination from oil and gas well operations requires constant vigilance on the part of the Railroad Commission rules. Orphan oil and gas wells that need proper plugging have become a problem and a liability for the State, the oil and gas industry as a whole, and the Texas Railroad Commission. In response to this problem, the State initiated a well plugging program that is directed by the Railroad Commission. This program enables a large number of abandoned wells to be properly plugged each year and has accomplished much by preventing water pollution.

In light of the importance of local groundwater supplies to users in Region F and the vulnerability of these supplies to contamination, the Region F Water Planning Group recommends:

- Stringent enforcement of the oil and gas operations rules and supports the levy of fines by the Commission against operators who violate the rules.
- Continuing support for the industry funded, Commission supported abandoned well and plugging program.

- The Legislative Budget Board and the Texas Legislature provide adequate personnel and funding to the Railroad Commission to carry out its mandated responsibility to protect water supplies affected by oil and gas industry activities.
- The Texas Legislature restore funds to the industry-initiated and industry-funded well plugging account, which were transferred to the general revenue following the 2003 budget crisis. The well plugging fund is not tax money, but industry funds contributed for a specific purpose.
- The clean-up and remediation of all contamination related to the processing and transportation of oil and gas. This includes operational or abandoned gas processing plants, oil refineries, and product pipelines.

General Issues

- **Uncommitted Water.** The Texas Water Code currently allows the TCEQ to cancel any water right, in whole or in part, for ten consecutive years of non-use. This rule inhibits long-term water supply planning. Water supplies are often developed for ultimate capacity to meet needs far into the future. Some entities enter into contracts for supply that will be needed long after the first ten years. Many times, only part of the supply is used in the first ten years of operation.

The regional water plans identify water supply projects to meet water needs over a 50-year use period. In some cases, there are water supplies that are not currently fully utilized or new management strategies that are projected to be used beyond the 50-year planning period. To support adequate supply for future needs and encourage reliable water supply planning policy recommendations include the following:

- Opposes cancellation of uncommitted water contracts/rights.
- Supports long term contracts that are required for future projects and drought periods.
- Supports shorter term “interruptible” water contracts as a way to meet short term needs before long-term water rights are fully utilized.
- **Instream Flows.** Region F is located in an arid area with much of the rainfall occurring in short bursts. This results in widely varying stream flows with many streams being intermittent, having water only part of the year. During drought, stream flows can be very low, but this is a natural occurrence and the ecological environment in Region F has developed under these conditions. Region F recognizes that future flow conditions in Texas’ rivers and streams must be sufficient to support a sound ecological environment that is appropriate for the area. As required under Senate Bill 3, TCEQ has established instream flow requirements for the Colorado River Basin and Brazos River Basin. No instream flow requirements have been established to date for the Pecos River Basin. Under current policy, these standards apply only to new water rights and some amendments to existing water rights. Region F supports this policy and believes it is imperative that existing water rights are protected now and in the future.
- **Municipal Conservation.** The Region F Water Planning Group recognizes the importance of water conservation as a means to prolong existing water supplies that have shown to be vulnerable under drought conditions. The Water Conservation Task Force presented to the Texas legislature a summary of conservation recommendations, including statewide municipal conservation goals. Since that time, the legislature has created the Water Conservation Advisory Council which was given multiple duties including monitoring new technologies for inclusion by the TWDB as best management practices. Considering the drought-prone nature of Region F and the role of the Water Conservation Advisory Council, the Region F Water Planning Group:
 - Supports that conservation targets should be voluntary.

- Supports the State's efforts to encourage conservation by providing technical assistance to water users and not force conservation through mandatory goals for water use.
- Recommends the State continue participation in research and demonstration projects for the development of new conservation ideas and technologies.
- Supports the funding of a statewide public information and education program to promote water conservation. Water conservation can only be successful with the willing support of the general public.
- Recommends consideration of excess use rates, water budget rates and seasonal rates that encourage water conservation, and recognition of water conservation as an appropriate goal in determining water rates.
- **Electric Generation Industry.** Region F encourages the use of higher TDS water for electric generation when possible to conserve available fresh water sources within the region. In addition, Region F encourages the continued assessment of generation technologies that use less water

Region I

Legislative Action

- **Continued Funding by the State of the Regional Water Planning Process on a Five-Year Cycle.** The ETRWPG believes the grassroots planning effort created by Senate Bill 1 is important to the state of Texas and should be continued. In addition, the ETRWPG believes that the most fair and efficient method of financing continuation of this effort for future planning cycles is to continue funding of this effort by the state with administrative expenses for the region being provided from sources within the region. There are important tasks that need to continue. Improvement of data for the next planning cycle is very important. State funding of those efforts needs to be made available.
- **Funding for Additional Groundwater Modeling.** The ETRWPG recommends that funding for groundwater modeling for development of desired future conditions (DFCs) and modeled available groundwater (MAGs) be provided to the TWDB. This would improve the development of DFCs and MAGs by enabling a consistent, standardized approach across Groundwater Conservation District (GCD) boundaries to groundwater modeling.

TWDB Action

- **Flexibility in Determining Water Plan Consistency.** In previous planning cycles, the ETRWPG has expressed concern that small cities and unincorporated areas that fall under the group of “county-other” may not have specific water needs and water management strategies identified in the regional water plan due to the nature of aggregating these entities. As such, there is concern that these entities may not be eligible for state funding assistance. The ETRWPG is also concerned that there is not sufficient flexibility in identifying and implementing water management strategies as it pertains to permitting and funding such projects. Water suppliers need to have a full range of options as they seek to provide new water supplies for Texas' future. It is impossible to foresee all the possibilities for new water supplies in a planning process such as this, and changing circumstances can change the timing, amounts, and preferred options for new supplies very quickly. The inclusion of alternate strategies in regional water planning is the first step in providing this flexibility. In addition, the ETRWPG recommends that the following steps be taken to address these concerns.
 - The TWDB should add language to their guidance for funding that allows entities that fall under the planning limits to retain eligibility for state funding of water related projects without having specific needs identified in the regional water plans.
 - The TWDB and the TCEQ should interpret existing legislation to give the maximum possible flexibility to water suppliers as they seek to serve the public and provide new supplies. Changes in the timing of supply development, the order in which strategies are implemented, the amount of supply from a management strategy, or the details of a project should not be interpreted as making that project inconsistent with the regional plan.
 - Willing buyer/willing seller transactions of water rights and treated water should not be controlled by this regulation. Such transactions may be beneficial to all concerned and may simply not have been foreseen in the planning process.
 - The TWDB and TCEQ should make use of their ability to waive consistency requirements if local water suppliers elect strategies that differ from those in the regional plan.
- **Funding.** In order to take advantage of the variety of funding options available through the TWDB, increased flexibility by the agency is needed. For example, TWDB guidance currently

excludes the replacement of aging infrastructure from eligibility for funding through the existing Water Infrastructure Fund & State Water Implementation Fund for Texas. The ETRWPG recommends that the TWDB expand existing programs to assist entities with funding replacement and repairs to aging infrastructure and/or allow replacement of water supply infrastructure to be funded through the Water Implementation Fund program. This would include existing well fields, transmission lines, and storage facilities.

In addition, the TWDB does not provide for sufficient flexibility in categorical exclusions for Environmental Information Documents that are required for funding of water projects. Increasing flexibility regarding these exclusions could ease the crisis in funding available for water projects.

The TWDB offers the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) to certain areas in need of water projects. The EDAP provides grants, loans, or combination grant/loans when requirements are met:

- for water and wastewater services;
- in economically distressed areas; and
- present facilities are inadequate to meet residents' minimal needs.

However, requirements to meet the EDAP are very difficult for local governments and areas to administer, causing otherwise eligible local governmental entities to elect to not pursue the EDAP funding. EDAP requirements should be revised to reduce unnecessary and difficult requirements for eligibility, including requirements for model subdivision planning.

- ***Standardized Processes for Regional Water Plan Development.*** The process of permitting a federal water project, such as a reservoir, is a long, detailed, and resource intensive projects that must follow federal guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The ETRWPG recommends that the TWDB develop guidelines for regional water planning evaluations of federally permitted water projects that will produce documentation that can be integrated and used in the NEPA process. In addition, the TWDB is encouraged to continue to develop relationships with federal authorities to allow the use of the state and regional water planning population projections in the NEPA process.
- ***Allow Groundwater Supplies to Exceed the Modeled Available Groundwater.*** TWDB policy regarding the use of MAGs in regional water planning currently states that the MAG values are a cap for water supply and strategy development. However, the MAG is not necessarily considered a cap for permitting purposes by GCDs according to Chapter 36 of the Water Code. In addition, MAGs are unenforceable in areas with no groundwater regulation (i.e., with no GCDs). Chapter 36 describes the process of managing to DFCs. The MAG is an estimate of the groundwater availability based on the DFC, but Chapter 36 provides flexibility for GCDs to permit above or below the MAG based on local knowledge, usage patterns, and other factors. The ETRWPG recommends that the TWDB allow groundwater supplies to exceed the MAG in the regional water plan if the Regional Water Planning Group obtains written agreement from the relevant GCD. This approach assumes that the strategy is consistent with the management plan of the GCD, but allows for minor shortages to be covered without excessive administrative actions, such as alternate strategies that would ultimately require a plan amendment. It also allows a GCD to apply local knowledge to account for variations in permitting approaches and usage patterns, while honoring the DFCs associated with the aquifer. This approach could also be used in areas with no GCDs if the Regional Water Planning Group demonstrates compliance with the DFCs.

Other Agency Action

- None specified.

General Issues

- **Water Reuse.** The ETRWPG recommends that current regulations as they pertain to the reuse of treated wastewater (i.e., water reuse) should be reviewed and amended, as necessary, to encourage the development of these resources.
- **Uncommitted Surface Water.** The Texas Water Code currently allows the TCEQ to cancel any water right, in whole or in part, for ten consecutive years of non-use. This rule inhibits long-term water supply planning. Water supplies are often developed for ultimate capacity to meet needs far into the future. Some entities enter into contracts for supply that will be needed long after the first ten years. Many times, only part of the supply is used in the first ten years of operation.

The regional water plans identify water supply projects to meet water needs over a 50-year use period. In some cases, there are water supplies that are not currently fully utilized or new management strategies that are projected to be used beyond the 50-year planning period. To support adequate supply for future needs and encourage reliable water supply planning, the ETRWPG:

- Opposes unilateral cancellation of uncommitted water contracts/rights;
 - Supports long term contracts that are required for future projects and drought periods; and
 - Supports “interruptible” water supply contracts as a way to meet seasonal and short-term needs before long-term water rights are fully utilized.
- **Clarification of Unique Stream Segment Criteria.** Consideration of the designation of stream segments of unique ecological value (unique stream segments) is a component of regional water planning throughout the State. For some, however, there is a significant concern about the use of unique stream segments because of a lack of clarity about how the designation might be used in the future. In particular, there are concerns about the possibility of restriction of property rights for landowners adjacent to designated unique stream segments. House Bill 1016 of the 84th Texas Legislature proposes language specific to the Region L Water Planning Area, providing clarification by stating that the designation of a river or stream segment as being of unique ecological value:
 - means only that a state agency or political subdivision of the state may not finance the actual construction of a reservoir in the designated segment;
 - does not affect the ability of a state agency or political subdivision of the state to construct, operate, maintain, or replace a weir, a water diversion, flood control, drainage, or water supply system, a low water crossing, or a recreational facility in the designated segment;
 - does not prohibit the permitting, financing, construction, operation, maintenance, or replacement of any water management strategy to meet projected water supply needs recommended in, or designated as an alternative in, the 2011 or 2021 Regional Water Plan, and
 - does not alter any existing property right of an affected landowner.

The ETRWPA supports the proposed clarifications found in House Bill 1016 and recommends that these clarifications be incorporated into the regional water planning process on a statewide basis.

- **Recommendations Regarding Water Management Strategy Prioritization.** The ETRWPG has previously commented on the prioritization process that was required in 2013 by the 83rd Texas Legislature through House Bill 4. The Region’s comments and concerns about the prioritization process included in the 2016 Plan are included as Appendix 8-B of the 2021 Plan. Specific recommendations of the ETRWPG associated with the referenced technical memorandum include the following:
 - Project Description: Care should be taken in development of the DB17 to provide more clarity, resolve problems, and minimize risk of inappropriate scoring. In addition, a commentary section should be added to the scoring template to enable additional detail to be added by the RWPG as necessary.
 - Scoring to Minimize Ties: Water planning regions should be allowed to add their own unique scoring criteria to be used specifically for the purpose of breaking scoring ties.
 - Uniform Standard 2A: Uniform Standard 2A should be modified to provide for a maximum score for new surface water sources if modeling suggests a sufficient quantity of water would be available.
 - Uniform Standard 3C: This standard should be modified to eliminate the advantage in scoring given to project sponsors with only one recommended WMS.
 - Uniform Stand 3D: A more detailed scoring breakdown is needed to distinguish between two WUGs served and numbers of WUGs greater than two.
 - Projects Shared across Regions: Clarification is needed on how projects serving more than one region will be integrated into one list.
 - Evaluation across Water Type and Water Use Categories: The prioritization process should be modified to minimize the comparison of raw water and treated water strategies or water use categories.
 - Rolled up Projects: The TWDB should clarify the definition of what constitutes a rolled-up project.

In addition, the ETRWPG recommends that, for purposes of prioritization of water management strategies identified in a regional water plan, the definition of a “project” be clarified to exclude strategies that do not have a capital cost associated with them. This will significantly reduce the effort required to prioritize identified projects by eliminating the requirement to prioritize strategies that will not need to seek funding anyway.

Region M

Legislative Action

- Recent droughts make it imperative that the Rio Grande Water Availability Model (WAM) is continually updated. The naturalized flow record in the current Rio Grande WAM extends from 1940 through 2000. The period from 1999 to 2000 was among the most severe modeled droughts, and the drought that continued into 2003 is likely a new drought of record, which could significantly impact water availability, as the basis for planning. The state should fully fund the revision and update to the WAM to extend the naturalized flows using the most current data available.
- The State should appropriate sufficient funds to the Texas Railroad Commission to allow for capping abandoned oil and gas wells that threaten groundwater supplies.
- The Texas Legislature should continue to provide technical and financial assistance to implement WMSs identified in the regional water plans. In 2013 the Texas legislature passed House Bill 4 and Senate Joint Resolution 1, which created the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) and the State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas. Companion legislation, House Bill 1025, provided \$2 billion in initial funding for SWIFT from the state's Economic Stabilization Fund. In November of 2013, Texas voters approved the funding to support the implementation of projects recommended by the State Water Plan.
- The Texas legislature should appropriate funds to continue the regional water planning process.

TWDB Action

- The Lower RGV farmers, as a result of the uncertainty of surface water delivery and the fact that most farmers do not own their own Rio Grande water rights, are limited in their ability to provide collateral for loans for on-farm conservation and improvements. This makes many of the loan programs currently available to farmers in other regions of Texas difficult for farmers in the RGV to access. Additionally, in many cases the types of irrigation conservation measures used in the RGV are installed underground as opposed to aboveground equipment like center pivots used in the High Plains. The TWDB and the State of Texas should work with farmers in the region to develop loan programs that enable on farm water conservation specific to this region.

Other Agency Action

- **TCEQ** – The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) should work with the Rio Grande RWPG to review rules on converting water rights from one use to another and considers appropriate rule amendments, if necessary. As water rights are converted from irrigation to municipal and the WAM is updated, it is recommended that the conversion factor rule and operational rules should be reevaluated. These conversions may have the effect of reducing the water volume demand on the Rio Grande making the reservoir system less efficient. In this regard it is noted that the conversion rule is an administrative rule in that it was not required in the court adjudication in the Valley Water Suit Judgement or in the adjudication case covering the Middle Rio Grande.

General Issues

State Issues

- The RWPG recommends continued evaluation of the connection between the pumping of groundwater and its impact on surface water, specifically the impact of pumping groundwater in the Pecos and Devils River watersheds on the flows into the Rio Grande. For example, current

studies indicate that up to one-third of the recharge flows into Amistad Reservoir depend on flow from the Pecos and Devils River valleys and Goodenough Springs, which are shown to be sensitive to groundwater pumping. There is not a Groundwater Conservation District (GWCD) in the area, which could provide a mechanism for local management of these interconnected resources. The RWPG recommends enforcement of current laws and consideration of new laws establishing rules for permitting that acknowledge the impact of groundwater development on surface water.

- There is not a mechanism or entity in the RGV to accept on-farm irrigation conservation loans from the TWDB and to lend those funds to farmers for on-farm water conservation.
- Stakeholders who depend on the water of the Rio Grande should be involved and informed of state activities related to negotiations with Mexico regarding implementation of the 1944 Treaty.
- The State should continue to consider the impacts of climate change in terms of Regional Water Planning and future water supplies. The US Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Rio Grande Basin Study evaluated climate impacts on the availability, which should be considered in future planning efforts.
- The State should encourage IBWC to give Mexico delivery credit of the annual minimum 350,000 acft from only the named tributaries as stipulated in the 1944 Treaty.
- The State should assist in finding new technical and financial resources to help the region combat Arundo Donax, aquatic weeds, and salt cedar and thus protect its water supplies. The Region M WPG encourages funding for projects aimed at eradicating Arundo Donax, aquatic weeds, and salt cedar in the Rio Grande watershed and for ongoing long-term brush management activities. The USDA has studied and implemented a biological controls program with costs and quantified water savings, and continued work and monitoring is recommended WMS in this Plan.
- The State should continue providing technical and financial resources to fully develop the regional groundwater availability models. The Brackish Resources Aquifer Characterization (BRACS) 2014 report for the Lower RVG is an essential resource as brackish groundwater desalination continues to be one of the recommended strategies to meet future needs.
- The RWPG encourages entities within the region to cooperate to resolve water issues through such means as regional water and wastewater utilities. The Rio Grande Regional Water Authority, Southmost Regional Water Authority, and other entities have pursued and, in some cases, constructed regional projects that supply water to multiple cities.
- The formation of GWCDs should be encouraged as a means to protect groundwater supplies, which are increasingly being tapped as a new water supply for municipal, industrial use, and mining use. As the aquifers in Region M are more extensively developed, the impact of pumping has started to be seen in spring flows and drawdown Region M supports new and expanded groundwater districts to protect the regional groundwater resources, and recommends that the state provide continued technical assistance regarding formation, structure, and technical basis for GCDs to operate meaningfully.
- Educational programs for farmers, ID Boards of Directors, and ID employees are recommended and should be supported by the TWDB, TCEQ, and universities in Texas.
- The Rio Grande Center for Ag Water Efficiency (Texas AWE) flowmeter demonstration and calibration facility is intended to be available as an educational, testing, and calibration resource for districts looking to implement or expand their metering programs. Continued funding and expanded use of these facilities is recommended by the Region M WPG.

- Continued evaluation of ID infrastructure is recommended, including the work that has been done by Texas A&M University through the Texas Water Resource Institute and the ID Engineering and Assistance Program. This program has assisted districts in mapping and evaluating the current state of their conveyance systems and rates of urbanization. These measures can assist districts in prioritizing improvements so that the greatest gains are made with the least cost.
- Since the Watermaster program collects funds through assessed fees, it is recommended that the fund balances be rolled over into the operating budget for the next fiscal year. It is also recommended that the Watermaster Advisory Committee (WAC) continue to oversee the Watermaster budget.
- It is recommended that the United States be officially recognized as a water user by Mexico and allocate water to the United States as a part of its annual water allocation process.

Federal and International Issues

- The State of Texas, the US Congress, and the IBWC should renew efforts to ensure that Mexico complies with Minute 309 and set in place means to achieve full compliance with the 1944 Treaty, including enforcement of Minute 234, which addresses the actions required of Mexico to completely eliminate water delivery deficits within specified treaty cycles. Water saved in irrigation conservation projects in Mexico should be dedicated to ensure deliveries to the Rio Grande pursuant to the 1944 Treaty under Article 4B(c) and Minute No. 309.
- The United States and Mexico should reinforce the powers and duties of both sections of the IBWC pursuant to Article 24(c) which provides, among other things, for the enforcement of the Treaty and other agreement provisions that "... each Commissioner shall invoke when necessary the jurisdiction of the Courts or other appropriate agencies of his Country to aid in the execution and enforcement of these powers and duties."
- Projects funded by national and international agencies to modernize and improve the facilities of IDs in the Rio Grande Basin should be supported and given priority. In particular, both countries should support continued grant funding for conservation projects.
- The conservation irrigation projects are authorized through the Bureau of Reclamation for improvement to the irrigation systems of IDs in the Rio Grande Basin in the United States should be supported, and the US Congress should be encouraged to appropriate money to pay for approved projects.
- For purposes of clarity, the IBWC should approve a Minute setting out the definition of "extraordinary drought" as that term is implicitly defined in the second subparagraph of Article 4B(d) as an event that makes it difficult for Mexico "... to make available the run-off of 350,000 acre feet (431,721,000 cubic meters) annually." A drought condition occurs when there is less than 1,050,000 acft annually of runoff waters in the watersheds of the named Mexican tributaries in the 1944 Treaty, measured as water enters the Rio Grande from the named tributaries, of which the US 1/3 share is 350,000 acft. For better water management in the Lower Reach of the Rio Grande, downstream of Anzalduas Dam, both countries should reaffirm operational policies that Mexico continue to take its share of waters through the Anzalduas canal diversion at the Anzalduas Dam or account for its water at that point, including any diversions by Mexico from the proposed Brownsville Weir Project storage, to the extent of its participation in the project and at other points of diversion by Mexico users downstream of Anzalduas Dam.
- IBWC should convene a binational meeting of water planners and water use stakeholders in both countries within 6 months following completion of the annual water accounting where an

annual deficit in flows from the named Mexican tributaries in the 1944 Treaty occurs. This meeting would be designed to share data and information useful in planning for water needs and contingencies in the intermediate future.

- IBWC should restore the Rio Grande below Fort Quitman, Texas.
- The IBWC should assume all local and regional financial responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of El Morillo Drain.
- IBWC should coordinate bilateral efforts to review and evaluate existing sources of data regarding groundwater development in both countries in the Rio Grande Basin below Fort Quitman to the Gulf of Mexico. This effort should be focused on the potential impact on surface water supply in the Rio Grande watershed, with the goal of pursuing such actions as may be necessary to evaluate present conditions and promote programs protecting the historical surface water supply in affected regions.
- Regional watershed planning should be encouraged on both sides of the Rio Grande throughout the basin, including efforts to promote binational coordination of long-range water plans.
- Interstate compacts between affected states in Mexico, similar to the Rio Grande compact and Pecos River compact between affected states in the United States, which deal with apportionment of available water supply from the Rio Grande and its tributaries to each state consistent with existing domestic and international law, should be encouraged.
- The Rio Grande RWPG joins with the far West Texas and Plateau RWPGs to encourage funding for projects aimed at eradicating Arundo Donax, salt cedar, and aquatic weeds in the Rio Grande watershed and for ongoing long-term brush management activities. These activities are not constrained to state or national boundaries and would benefit from widespread support.
- The RWPG supports US Congressional legislation that authorizes the US State Department to report to Congress periodically on the status of Mexico's deliveries of water to the Rio Grande for US use.
- The IBWC should give Mexico delivery credit of the annual minimum 350,000 acft from only the named tributaries as stipulated in the 1944 Treaty.
- The El Morillo drain system does not currently convey the design flow; the pump station is capable of operating at the design flow, but the channel is not currently capable of conveying the full design flow. The RWPG recommends that the IBWC and CILA make the necessary improvements to convey the design flow.

8. Best Management Practices Guide for RWPG Political Subdivisions



Best Management Practices Guide for Regional Water Planning Group Designated Political Subdivisions

Fifth Cycle of Regional Water Planning

Water Use, Projections, & Planning Division

Regional Water Planning

**Maintained and published by the Texas
Water Development Board on behalf of
Regional Water Planning Group
administrators**

Latest updates to this document as of February
2020 are highlighted in yellow.

February 2020

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide an orientation to the responsibilities of acting as a regional water planning group's (RWPG) designated political subdivision and/or administrative agent, and to provide suggestions on some of the best administrative practices that may be used by a political subdivision in the execution of their duties on behalf of the RWPG. This guide has been distributed to the 16 RWPG political subdivisions for review and input.

Each five-year planning cycle, an RWPG must designate a political subdivision to act as a representative of the RWPG and apply for and receive financial assistance from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to develop a regional water plan or revision pursuant to 31 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §355, Subchapter C. Examples of designated political subdivisions include river authorities, municipalities, or councils of governments.

The political subdivision enters into a primary contract with the TWDB on behalf of the RWPG and administers the contract throughout the planning cycle. The political subdivision also executes and administers a subcontract with the primary technical consultant on behalf of the RWPG that mirrors the requirements laid out in the primary TWDB contract. Political subdivisions may expend a portion of these funds for direct costs related to public notice and other administrative costs. In addition, some planning groups also authorize their designated political subdivision to raise local funds from the region's stakeholders in order to cover expenses not eligible for reimbursement through the TWDB's grant funds.

In the capacity of serving as the RWPG's administrative agent, the political subdivision (or other identified entity) organizes the RWPG meeting locations, public notices, agendas, meeting presentations, handouts, and meeting minutes.

Political subdivisions may familiarize themselves with and utilize the RWPG administrative resources located on the TWDB's Regional Water Planning (RWP) Fifth Cycle Working Documents webpage. Hyperlinks to useful TWDB webpages and documents mentioned throughout this document are found in Section 6.

2 TWDB requirements¹

RWPGs and their designated political subdivisions must adhere to the TWDB's rules on regional water planning and regional water planning grants, as well as requirements in the TWDB grant contracts. This section highlights the specific responsibilities within the TWDB's rules and notable contract requirements that are directly applicable to the political subdivisions.

2.1 Political subdivision and administrator responsibilities from 31 TAC §355 and §357

1. Obtain designation by the RWPG as the political subdivision in order to be eligible to apply for, receive, and administer TWDB funds on behalf of the region (§357.12(a)(4); §355.90(b)(5)).
 - This process must occur before or at the beginning of each new five-year planning cycle.

¹ See the TWDB water planning rules pamphlet (Section 6) for full rule requirements.

- The RWPG must provide a written designation to the TWDB Executive Administrator (EA) naming their authorized political subdivision.
2. Apply for planning grant funds through a formal Request for Application (RFA) process (§355.91).
 - Public notice requirements for this application are subject to §357.21(e).
 - Utilize the most up-to-date online “Regional Water Planning Public Notification Quick-Reference” document that is located on the TWDB’s RWP Fifth Cycle Working Documents webpage.
 - The RFA Process typically occurs twice during the planning cycle.
 - The TWDB will provide a special webpage for application instructions and supporting documentation during each RFA process.
 3. Execute contracts with the TWDB by the specified deadline (§355.93), including the following:
 - The initial TWDB/political subdivision contract that will contain initially committed grant funds.
 - All TWDB/political subdivision contract amendments that are issued during the planning cycle.
 - All political subdivision/consultant subcontracts and consultant sub-subcontracts must also be updated to reflect changes or additions to the TWDB/political subdivision contract and submitted to the TWDB for acceptance.
 4. Political subdivisions must adhere to the limitations of use of contractual funds that are identified in the expense budgets footnotes and elsewhere in these contracts (§355.92).
 5. Procure technical consultants at the beginning of each planning cycle in accordance with §355.92(c) and submit the required Certification of Procurement (COP) form to the TWDB.
 6. Submit either RWP advance or reimbursement payment requests with all necessary backup documentation to the TWDB on a quarterly basis as stated in the TWDB contract. These funds are utilized to reimburse eligible political subdivision, consultant, and voting member expenses.
 7. Ensure all meetings of the RWPG, committees, and subcommittees are posted and held in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and additional Chapter 357 public notice requirements for specific RWPG activities (§357.21).
 - Post notices, meeting agendas, and materials in accordance with §357.21. An Excel file tool has been provided on the TWDB’s RWP Fifth Cycle Working Documents webpage, under ‘Administrative Documents’, to help calculate when various notices and/or documentation should be provided for a RWPG meeting and RWPG activities.
 - Maintain and use contact lists (depending on the activity) for voting and non-voting RWPG members, any person or entity who has requested notice of RWPG activities, county clerks within the regional water planning area (RWPA) (if notices are not posted on RWPG host website), each mayor of a municipality that is located in whole or in part of the RWPA with a population of 1,000 or more or which is a county seat, and each county judge of a country located in whole or in part of the RWPA.
 - Notification lists for surface water rights holders, public water utilities, and general/special law districts and river authorities may be obtained from the TWDB’s RWP Fifth Cycle Working Documents webpage.
 8. Maintain RWPG membership contact information and provide membership lists to the TWDB (§357.11(f)). Since the vast majority of planning group communications occur via email, it is recommended that the political subdivision request updated email address information from planning group members at every RWPG meeting. This could be successfully accomplished by utilizing a sign-in sheet for RWPG members prefilled with their name and current email

addresses, with an adjacent space to write updated email addresses. Full contact information may be solicited on a less frequent schedule.

9. Provide copies of updated bylaws to the TWDB (§357.11(c)). It is recommended that the planning groups review and/or update their bylaws at least at the beginning of each planning cycle in order to account for legislative or other changes that may have occurred since the previous bylaws update.
10. Follow draft and final regional water plan (RWP) submittal requirements, including holding a public hearing on the initially prepared plan (IPP) (§357.50) (see the “Regional Water Planning Public Notification Quick Reference Document”).

2.2 Notable contract requirements

At the beginning of each planning cycle, the TWDB will present a regional water planning contracts webinar as a refresher on important contract requirements. The current webinar is available as an on-demand video on the TWDB’s RWP 5th Cycle Working Documents webpage. Some of the important items covered in the webinar include the following:

1. All contract-related question emails should be sent to the TWDB’s Contracts Department (contracts@twdb.texas.gov) with the appropriate regional water planning project manager copied on the email.
2. All subcontracts must be submitted to the TWDB for review and acceptance prior to submitting invoices for reimbursement. Complete subcontracting guidelines are available on the TWDB website.
3. Consultant procurement and the COP form.
 - Every contractor and subcontractor must be listed on the COP.
 - COP responsibility resides with the entity that procures the subcontract.
 - COP forms must be submitted to the TWDB for review and acceptance prior to submitting subcontracts for review and acceptance, and invoices for reimbursement.
4. Payment request submittals, including the associated but separate task progress reports, are due on a minimum quarterly basis as part of the payment request as specified in the TWDB/political subdivision contract.
 - Advance/reimbursement request packets should be emailed to invoice@twdb.texas.gov and include copies of invoices, receipts, and statements. Provide details of travel information and proof of payment to subcontractors.
 - The TWDB will provide a payment request checklist to the political subdivision (a checklist template is available online).
 - If the political subdivision chose the “advance” method of distributing RWP funds, then these advances must be deposited into a separate interest bearing account and the “interest earned” amount must be recorded on the payment request checklist.
 - Advance requests may be submitted once 90 percent of the previous advance has been expensed.
 - Advances are distributed on a 20 percent maximum of total committed funds basis.
5. Adjustments may be applied to the TWDB/political subdivision contract task or expense budget, in line with the following contract requirements:
 - If the requested adjustment is less than 35 percent of either a task’s total budget or expense line amount, there is flexibility to do so informally by notifying the TWDB of this change in writing via email to contracts@twdb.texas.gov and the region’s project manager.

- If the requested adjustment exceeds the 35 percent threshold of either a task's total budget or expense line amount, the political subdivision must submit a request for a Budget Memorandum and obtain approval from the TWDB. The request must be approved by the RWPG at a regular RWPG meeting provides approval to the political subdivision to request adjustments to the TWDB/political subdivision contract task or expense budgets, then the political subdivision may send the request by email to contracts@twdb.texas.gov and the region's project manager. The request should include a written documentation of why the revision is necessary, the date the planning group approved the budget memorandum request, and a table showing the current budget and the proposed revision (contact the regional project manager, or contracts@twdb.texas.gov for a budget memorandum template).
- Please note that the TWDB considers subcontractor budgets as "working budgets" only and if revisions are needed, the political subdivision simply needs to send an email request to the TWDB contracts department providing the revised subcontract budget information. It is the discretion of the political subdivision whether subcontracts are amended following budget memorandums. Additionally, subcontracts should reflect the estimated total study cost allocated for tasks, as applicable; however, contractors are responsible for managing expenses within the committed amount. Clauses may be added to subcontracts limiting reimbursement up to committed amounts.

Please refer to the online TWDB contracts webinar for additional contract information.

It is also important to note that some task budgets may require scoping and a written "Notice to Proceed" prior to commencing reimbursable work, as noted in the contract.

3 Recommended Best Practices for Political Subdivisions

This section includes recommendations and information for political subdivisions related to communication, new member orientations, administrative costs, and web posting and newsletter distribution.

3.1 Communication with RWPG members

1. Request updated planning group member contact information at each RWPG meeting.
2. Forward all TWDB communications and data provided in emails to planning group members (the TWDB provides information to chairs, political subdivisions, and technical consultants) with the intent of creating more interest from the members and facilitating their engagement in the planning process by receiving these informational emails directly from the planning group's representative.
3. Forward meeting notices and agendas to neighboring planning groups via their liaisons. Liaisons should then pass along this information to their respective RWPGs.
4. During development of the draft RWPG meeting agenda, it is recommended that the political subdivision solicit comments from planning group chair and/or officers, consultants, and the TWDB project manager in order to ensure that the final agenda will meet necessary action item requirements.
 - Include a standing agenda item for updates from groundwater management area representatives, liaisons, and other non-voting members.
 - Include a standing agenda item to receive public input. RWPGs may want to consider the practice of handling items on the agenda so that members of the public have an opportunity to address the RWPG on an item before a vote is taken.

- Encourage the technical consultant to provide a planning process recap and next steps during each full RWPG meeting.
5. The Excel template on the TWDB's RWP Fifth Cycle Working Documents webpage may be used for calculating public notice deadlines for various types of meeting requirements, comment period requirements, and for scheduling political subdivision tasks prior to an RWPG meeting.
 6. Encourage technical consultants to provide meeting materials to members as far in advance as possible to allow for additional time for members to review and digest the material and make informed decisions.
 - It is recommended for this to occur at least one week before the meeting via email attachments or email links to the RWPG's website.
 7. Communicate with the membership to encourage meeting materials to be reviewed prior the scheduled meetings.
 8. Encourage appropriate time for agenda item discussion.
 9. Survey RWPG members occasionally to determine how frequently they feel the group should meet, within budget limitations, in order to effectively develop their regional water plan.
 10. Survey RWPG members occasionally to determine the preferred location, acknowledging facility constraints, to hold planning group meetings.
 11. Ensure that the RWPG's required website is kept up to date and that members are able to successfully navigate the website and access documents. Some RWPGs have the political subdivision directly perform the ongoing maintenance of the planning group's website while others delegate the maintenance to the consultants.
 12. Ensure that planning group members are aware of how they can access the groups bylaws.
 13. Ensure that planning group members are aware of the RWPG's terms of office and process for selecting new members. Note that groundwater management area representation should be appointed in accordance with the [2011 TWDB letter to RWPGs](#) regarding Senate Bill 660. This information will be reviewed following each Legislative Session to determine if there are new districts. Table 1 in the letter is correct as of 8/16/18.
 14. Encourage all planning group members to attend committee meetings to assist with informed decision making.
 15. Facilitate interregional cooperation as appropriate.

3.2 New member orientation

Planning groups have different methods of orienting new members. Many political subdivisions either call or hold meetings with new members to provide such orientations. Orientations may occur during planning group meetings, or held separately for the new members. Examples of topics covered by political subdivisions to new members include an overview of the state and regional water planning process, planning group history, open meetings requirements, groundwater and surface water law, and environmental flows. Examples of documents provided to new members include a copy of the region's bylaws, previous meeting packages or presentations, a copy of the current plan or plan summary (available online), a list of members and consultants, a map of the region, and the TWDB regional water planning rules pamphlet.

A [new member guide](#) maintained by the TWDB includes information on the regional water planning process, key roles and responsibilities, funding the planning process, required planning considerations, plan contents, and TWDB resources. The TWDB website includes a dedicated new RWPG member page, and additionally, TWDB staff is available to present regional water planning 101 as requested.

3.3 Paying for administrative costs

The TWDB RWP contracts contain Task 10 funding to cover eligible RWPG public participation activities as defined in the TWDB/political subdivision contracts. Eligible expenses are direct non-labor administrative costs as well as certain travel costs for voting members to attend RWPG meetings, if approved under §355.92(b)(1). These activities and the associated funds are reimbursable to the political subdivision and the technical consultants. As an example of the amount of time a political subdivision spends in their RWPG administrative role, Region N's political subdivision estimates 240 hours and \$60,000 per year was required to cover their administrative expenses for the previous 4th cycle of planning and this cost was paid for 100% with local funds.

For planning group administrative costs that are not eligible for reimbursement with the TWDB's funds, some RWPG's (A, C, I, O, M, N, L) have obtained additional local funds that may be necessary to support the administrative work performed by the political subdivisions.

Examples of how political subdivisions account for ineligible administrative expenses include the following:

- Some political subdivisions pass through all Task 10 funds for eligible reimbursable activities to the consultant, and the political subdivision volunteers all of its time and resources that are necessary to sufficiently perform contract administrative duties that are not eligible reimbursable activities.
- Some political subdivisions pass through all Task 10 funds for eligible reimbursable activities to the consultant and the political subdivision is authorized by the planning group to solicit local funds from RWPA stakeholders to cover their ineligible administrative expenses.
- Some political subdivisions split Task 10 funds for eligible reimbursable activities with the technical consultants, and the political subdivision is also authorized by the planning group to solicit additional local funds to cover the remaining ineligible administrative activities.
- Historically, most voting members have not requested to be reimbursed with RWP funds for their meeting travel expenses. Some of these members are reimbursed by their employers while others cover these costs themselves. Reimbursement of travel expenses to an RWPG member requires RWPG approval under §355.92(b)(1) and must meet the specifications listed in the contract expense budget.

3.4 Web posting and newsletter distribution

New for the Fifth Cycle of RWP is the requirement that all RWPGs have either an external website or an RWPG-dedicated webpage on the RWPG administrator's website. The required RWPG external website content includes RWPG meeting notices, agendas, materials, and plan information. Materials could include presentations and handouts, and meeting minutes can also be posted on the RWPG website. The RWPG could post additional links to relevant materials available on the TWDB website to save the planning group time and storage space, such as links to the current adopted regional water plans, the 2017 State Water Plan, Interactive State Water Plan, current planning cycle information, and water planning data.

Also new for the Fifth Cycle of RWP is the eligibility of expenses incurred in the development, production, and distribution of an RWPG newsletter. The maximum amount of eligible expenses that can be reimbursed as stated in the contract is up to 3% of Task 10 funds, not to exceed \$5,000.00.

4 Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act

Effective September 1, 2017, SB 347, 85th Legislative Session, requires that, in addition to RWPG meetings and hearings, RWPG committee and subcommittee meetings are subject to the Texas Government Code (Gov't Code) §§ 551 and 552 (Texas Open Meetings Act and the Public Information Act).

Although the TWDB is not in a position to provide legal advice to the RWPGs, an interpretation of Texas Water Code (TWC) §16.053(h)(12) (as added by SB 347) is described below. RWPG members may wish to consult with attorneys for their organizations to analyze the legislation themselves, rather than solely relying on the TWDB's interpretation. Members who would like a more in-depth understanding of the Open Meetings Act or Public Information Act will find the Attorney General's (AG's) handbooks on the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act helpful resources:

- Open Meetings Act Handbook:
https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/divisions/open-government/openmeetings_hb.pdf
- Public Information Act Handbook:
https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/divisions/open-government/publicinfo_hb.pdf

4.1 Training requirements

It is the TWDB's interpretation of TWC §16.053(h)(12) (as added by SB 347) that RWPG members must complete the Open Meetings Act training required by Texas Government Code (Gov't Code) §551.005 and the Public Information Act training required by Gov't Code §552.012. TWC §16.053(h)(12) states that the RWPGs themselves, not just their meetings, are "subject to" the Open Meetings Act. Gov't Code §551.005 applies to all elected or appointed officials who are members of a governmental body "subject to" the Open Meetings Act. Furthermore, TWC §16.053(h)(12) states that the RWPGs are subject to the Public Information Act. The Public Information Act applies to all elected or appointed officials who are members of a multimember governmental body. The AG's Public Information Act Handbook further explains that Public Information Act requirements apply to all governmental bodies "subject to" the Public Information Act.

The Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act both state that completing the training in one capacity satisfies the requirement in all capacities, so RWPG members who have completed these trainings as part of their outside employment with cities, water supply corporations receiving TWDB funds, groundwater conservation districts, etc., would not need to complete them again as RWPG members.

Additionally, for the Public Information Act training, the members of a governmental body may appoint a "public information coordinator" to attend training in their place so long as the designee is the person primarily responsible for the processing of open records requests for the governmental body.

It is the TWDB's interpretation that these training requirements only apply to voting members of the RWPGs and their alternates. However, the RWPGs may wish to require all members of the RWPGs and their alternates to attend or watch the training. The RWPGs may wish to consult with the attorneys for their organizations to discuss this question further. Each RWPG may have different rules and customs regarding non-voting members. Any individual who wishes to take the training may do so.

Because SB 347 becomes effective on September 1, 2017, it is the TWDB's interpretation that RWPG members have 90 days from that date to complete the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act

trainings. Individuals may comply with the requirements by watching training videos on the AG’s website and printing completion certificates:

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/governmental-bodies/pia-and-oma-training-resources/open-meetings-act-training>

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/governmental-bodies/pia-and-oma-training-resources/public-information-act-training>

RWPGs shall maintain and make available for public inspection the record of its members’ completion of training.

4.2 Meeting minutes and committee quorums

It is the TWDB’s interpretation of TWC §16.053(h)(12) (as added by SB 347) that the RWPGs are required to either keep minutes or make a recording of each open meeting of the RWPG or its committees and subcommittees, in accordance with Gov’t Code §551.021. According to Gov’t Code §551.022, the minutes or recordings are public records, and the RWPGs would be required to keep these minutes or recordings available for public inspection. It does not appear that the Open Meetings Act requires the RWPGs to post these minutes or recordings anywhere; they are simply required to keep them and make them available for inspection if requested. The Open Meetings Act does not require minutes or recordings of closed (executive) sessions, but rather requires a certified agenda of those meetings. Please keep in mind that the regional water planning contracts also require contractors to “develop, provide, and archive minutes.”

With regards to whether committees and subcommittees must keep minutes, note that meetings of less than a quorum of a governmental body are not subject to the Open Meetings Act. However, when a governmental body appoints a committee that includes less than a quorum of the parent body and grants it authority to supervise or control public business or public policy, the committee may itself be a governmental body subject to the Open Meetings Act. In other words, if a committee or subcommittee meets and this group constitutes less than a quorum of the RWPG as a whole, the meeting could still be subject to the Open Meetings Act if the committee or subcommittee has authority to supervise or control public business or public policy. If that is the case, a quorum is determined based on a quorum of the committee or subcommittee, not a quorum of the RWPG as a whole.

Furthermore, TWC §16.053(h)(12) (as added by SB 347) states that each RWPG and any committee or subcommittee of a RWPG are subject to the Open Meetings Act. Therefore, quorums should be calculated based on the membership of the committee or subcommittee, **not the RWPG as a whole**.

For example, an RWPG has 30 members and a committee has 5 members. The committee has control over the public business or public policy of the RWPG. For a deliberation of committee to constitute a “meeting” under the Open Meetings Act, a quorum of 3 people must be present (not the RWPG quorum of 16).

Please see Section V(D) of the AG’s Open Meetings Act Handbook for more information on this subject.

4.3 Additional guidance

The following information is based on questions TWDB staff has received.

1. Would a conference call (generally to discuss agenda setting) with Executive Committee members be subject to the Open Meetings Act?

- According to Gov't Code §551.125, an RWPG may not conduct meetings subject to the Open Meetings Act by telephone conference unless a statute expressly authorizes it to do so. The TWDB knows of no statute that would expressly authorize a RWPG to meet by telephone or conference. The RWPGs may wish to consult with attorneys for their organizations on this question. If the call constitutes a "meeting" subject to the Open Meetings Act, it can only be held by telephone conference call in limited circumstances (such as an emergency) and subject to procedures that may include special requirements for notice, record-keeping, and two-way communication between meeting locations. Video conference calls are addressed in a different section of the Open Meetings Act than telephone conference calls. These requirements are included in §551.127 and allow video conference calls in certain situations. Please see Section VI(G) of the AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook for more information on the issue of both telephone and video conference calls, including references to cases and AG Opinions that may be helpful.
 - A call would be a meeting subject to the Open Meetings Act if it meets the definition of "meeting" in Gov't Code §551.001(4). This analysis also requires an analysis of the definition of "deliberation" in Gov't Code §551.001(2). Please see Section VI of the AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook and the cases and AG Opinions cited in that section for more information on this issue. Section VI(E) provides important information on "walking quorums," which are serial meetings of less than a quorum.
2. Is having a pre-meeting "huddle" with Executive Committee members to discuss how the meeting will be run subject to the Open Meetings Act?
- A pre-meeting "huddle" with Executive Committee members to discuss how the meeting will be run is subject to the Open Meetings Act if it meets the definition of "meeting" in Gov't Code §551.001(4). This analysis also requires an analysis of the definition of "deliberation" in Gov't Code §551.001(2). Please see Section VI of the AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook and the cases and AG Opinions cited in that section for more information in this issue. Section VI(E) provides important information on "walking quorums," which are serial meetings of less than a quorum.
3. Are email discussions subject to the Open Meetings Act, if all member emails are visible in the "to" or "cc" fields?
- An email discussion is subject to the Open Meetings Act if it meets the definition of "meeting" in Gov't Code §551.001(4). This analysis also requires an analysis of the definition of "deliberation" in Gov't Code §551.001(2). The Open Meetings Act does not provide that the words exchanged must be spoken in person; members of a governmental body need not be in each other's physical presence to constitute a quorum. A deliberation may include an exchange of written materials or electronic mail. The definition of meeting reaches gatherings of a quorum of a governmental body even when the members of the quorum do not participate in deliberations among themselves or third parties; the governmental body may be subject to the Open Meetings Act when it merely listens to a third party speak at a gathering the governmental body conducts or for which the governmental body is responsible. An email discussion could be a meeting subject to the Open Meetings Act if a quorum of the RWPG (or committee/subcommittee) were in the to, cc, or bcc fields. Please see Section VI of the AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook and the cases and AG Opinions cited in that section for more information in this issue. Section VI(E) provides important information on "walking quorums," which are serial meetings of less than a quorum.

- Note: Attorney General Opinion GA-0896 specifically discusses questions regarding email exchanges.
4. What are record-keeping expectations for RWPGs now that they are fully subject to the Public Information Act?
 - The Public Information Act states that “a governmental body... may determine a time for which information that is not currently in use will be preserved, subject to any applicable rule or law governing the destruction and other disposition of state and local government records or public information” (Gov’t Code §552.004). The Public Information Act goes on to state that except for social security numbers, “the confidentiality provisions of [the PIA], or other law, information that is not confidential but is excepted from required disclosure under Subchapter C is public information and is available to the public on or after the 75th anniversary of the date the information was originally created or received by the governmental body” (Gov’t Code §552.0215). The RWPGs should consult with the attorneys for their organizations to determine whether any other laws or rules governing the preservation of records would apply to the RWPG. Please see Section IX of the AG’s Public Information Act Handbook and the cases and AG Opinions cited in that section for more information on this issue.
 5. Can staff from the RWPG’s designated political subdivision be appointed as the Public Information Act public information coordinator?
 - The Public Information Act states that “A public official may designate a public information coordinator to satisfy the training requirements of this section for the public official if the public information coordinator is primarily responsible for administering the responsibilities of the public official or governmental body under this chapter...” (Gov’t Code §552.012). It is the discretion of the RWPG who they choose to be the designated coordinator, if one is designated. It is also up to the RWPGs if they desire additional individuals to complete the training than required by the Public Information Act.
 6. Can older training certificates be accepted for maintaining the record of members’ completion of training?
 - The Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act both state that completing the training in one capacity satisfies the requirement in all capacities, so RWPG members who have completed these trainings as part of their outside employment with cities, water supply corporations receiving TWDB funds, groundwater conservation districts, etc., would not need to complete them again as RWPG members. The Acts simply require public officials to complete the training within 90 days of taking office/assuming responsibilities as a member of the governmental body; it does not specify repeat training requirements.
 7. Would a notarized statement affirming training completion be acceptable if a member has taken the training but cannot locate the completion certificate?
 - It will be up to the RWPGs to prove compliance with the Act if they’re questioned on it. It is up to the RWPG to prove compliance however they see fit.
 8. May RWPGs meet via telephone conference calls?

- A governmental body may only hold a meeting by telephone conference call if (1) an emergency or public necessity exists within the meaning of Gov't Code §551.045; and (2) the convening at one location of a quorum of the governmental body is difficult or impossible; or (3) the meeting is held by an advisory board (Gov't Code §551.125(b)). If an entity holds an emergency meeting pursuant to §551.125, and a quorum is physically present at the meeting place, other members may not telephone in (Tex. Att'y Gen. Op. No. JC-0352 (2001)). "Difficult or impossible" contemplates meetings by telephone conference call in extraordinary circumstances and not merely when attending a meeting at short notice would inconvenience members of the governmental body.
- <https://www2.texasattorneygeneral.gov/opinions/opinions/49cornyn/op/2001/pdf/jc0352.pdf>

9. Are "workgroups" formed by the RWPG subject to the Open Meetings Act?

- The AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook states that when a governmental body appoints a committee that includes less than a quorum of the parent body and grants it authority to supervise or control public business or public policy, the committee may itself be a governmental body subject to the Act (see Section V(D) and (E) of the AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook). It further states that the fact that a committee is called an advisory committee does not necessarily mean it is considered an advisory committee under the Act. Based on the language in the AG's Open Meetings Act Handbook, the TWDB believes the more conservative interpretation would be to treat a workgroup in the same way as a committee.

Below are informational resources for the AG and links to the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act.

- [Texas Open Meetings Act](#)
- [Texas Public Information Act](#)
- [Public Information Act and Open Meetings Act Training Resources](#)

5 Contacts

Below is a list of RWPG political subdivision administrator contacts and the associated TWDB project managers.

Region	Political Subdivision Point of Contact	TWDB Project Manager
A	Dustin Meyer (PRPC) dmeyer@theprpc.org	William Alfaro william.alfaro@twdb.texas.gov
B	Randy Whiteman (RRA) randy.whiteman@rra.texas.gov	Kevin Smith kevin.smith@twdb.texas.gov
C	Howard Slobodin (TRA) slobodinh@trainityra.org	Kevin Smith kevin.smith@twdb.texas.gov
D	Walt Sears (NETMWD) netmwd@aol.com	Ron Ellis (Team Lead) ron.ellis@twdb.texas.gov
E	Annette Gutierrez (RGCOG) annetteg@riocog.org	Elizabeth McCoy elizabeth.mccoy@twdb.texas.gov
F	Kevin Krueger (CRMWD) kwkrueger@crmwd.org	Elizabeth McCoy elizabeth.mccoy@twdb.texas.gov
G	Steve Hamlin (BRA) stephen.hamlin@brazos.org	Jean Devlin Jean.devlin@twdb.texas.gov
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I	Stacey Corley (Nacogdoches) corleys@ci.nacogdoches.tx.us	Lann Bookout lann.bookout@twdb.texas.gov
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M	Debby Morales (LRGVDC) dmorales@lrgvdc.org	William Alfaro william.alfaro@twdb.texas.gov
N	John Byrum (NRA) jbyrum@nueces-ra.org	Kevin Smith kevin.smith@twdb.texas.gov
O	Kelly Davila (SPAG) Kdavila@spag.org	Jean Devlin Jean.devlin@twdb.texas.gov
P	Karen Gregory (LNRA) kgregory@lnra.org	Jean Devlin Jean.devlin@twdb.texas.gov

6 Useful TWDB webpage and document links

Rules and contract related links

- [31 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §355, Subchapter C](#)
- [31 Texas Administrative Code §357](#)
- [Water Planning Rules and Texas Statute Reference Pamphlet](#)
- [Regional Water Planning Public Notification Quick-Reference Document](#)
- [TWDB Subcontracting Guidelines](#)
- [Certification of Procurement Form](#)
- [Regional Water Planning Advance Request Checklist](#)
- [TWDB Regional Water Planning Contracts Webinar](#)

State and regional water planning related links

- [Fifth Cycle of Regional Water Planning homepage](#)
- [Fifth Cycle Working Documents Page](#)
- [2016 Approved Regional Water Plans](#)
- [2017 State Water Plan](#)
- [Interactive State Water Plan](#)
- [Water Planning Data](#)
- [Water Supply & Infrastructure Staff Contact List](#)
- [Regional Water Planning Groups](#)
- [New RWPG Member page](#)

9. Communication Process to Region M Board Members

**Tomas M. Rodriguez Jr., P.E.
310 Chetumal Drive
Laredo, Texas 78045**

Date: July 19, 2020

To: Steve Walthour, Inter Regional Best Management Practices Committee Chair

From: Tomas M. Rodriguez Jr., P.E.

Subject: Communication Process to Region M Board Members

Steve,

Region M is fortunate to have an “Inter Local” agreement with the “Lower Rio Grande River Valley Development Council” (LRGVDC) to help us with their staff to organize the meetings, prepare agenda items and pass information to Region M Board Members.

One month before a scheduled meeting we have a conference call with LRGVDC staff, Engineer for the project, TWDB Staff Member, Asst. Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Board to discuss the agenda of the next meeting.

Please note that only two members of the Board are participating in the conference call. This eliminates having to publish the meeting.

The agenda is prepared and then is published by the LRGVDC Staff in a timely manner before the meeting is held. During normal times we had the meetings in their “Board Room” at 301 Railroad St., Weslaco, Texas. Weslaco is approximately 165 miles from Laredo and 295 miles from Eagle Pass.

When I receive information from TWDB, Bureau of Reclamation, TCEQ or any other State Agency, that is relative to Region M, I forward the e-mail to the Executive Administrator and ask her to send it to Region M Board Members. This keeps the Board informed.

Tomas M. Rodriguez Jr., P.E.