

*** Meeting minutes should be considered DRAFT until approved at the next council meeting. ***

Summary of Minutes

Water Conservation Advisory Council Meeting

Date: May 4, 2022

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location: 3700 Lake Austin Blvd. Austin, TX 78703

Meeting chaired by: Karen Guz, Presiding Officer

Meeting Facilitators: Josh Sendejar, Council Staff Support

<i>Texas Commission on Environmental Quality</i>	Jennifer Allis*	<i>Institutional Water Users</i>	Bill Hoffman*
<i>Texas Department of Agriculture</i>	David Villarreal	<i>Professional Organizations Focused on Water Conservation</i>	Sarah Schlessinger*
<i>Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>	---	<i>Higher Education</i>	Robert Mace*
<i>Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board</i>	Alternate Mitch Conine	<i>Agricultural Groups</i>	John Bender*
<i>Texas Water Development Board</i>	Sam Hermitte	<i>Refining and Chemical Manufacturing</i>	---
<i>Regional Water Planning Groups</i>	Aubrey Spear*	<i>Electric Generation</i>	Greg Carter*
<i>Federal Agencies</i>	---	<i>Mining and Recovery of Minerals</i>	CJ Tredway*
<i>Municipalities</i>	Karen Guz*	<i>Landscape Irrigation and Horticulture</i>	---
<i>Groundwater Conservation Districts</i>	Leah Martinsson*	<i>Water Control and Improvement Districts</i>	Dustan Compton
<i>River Authorities</i>	Valerie Miller*	<i>Rural Water Users</i>	Kyle Eppler
<i>Environmental Groups</i>	Jennifer Walker*	<i>Municipal Utility Districts</i>	Donna Howe*
<i>Irrigation Districts</i>	Wayne Halbert		

* - denotes in person attendance

Also present: Alternates – Addie Stone, Helen Dulac, Leslie Patterson; Interested Parties – Chris Charles, Dawn W.H., Guy Fipps, Isabel Martinez, Jennifer Nations, Kevin Kluge, LaTrichia Spikes, Natalie Houston, Perry Fowler, Ryan Skrobarczyk; TWDB – Erika Mancha, Temple McKinnon, Nathan Leber, Mindy Conyers, John Sutton, Daniel Rice, Travis Brice.

** Documents can be found at: <https://savetexaswater.org/meeting/council-meetings.html> **

10:30 a.m. Call to Order

1. Introduction

The meeting began at 10:31 a.m.

2. Approval of minutes from the April 11, 2022 meeting

Robert Mace motioned to accept the minutes as written

Bill Hoffman seconded the motion.

There was no discussion, none opposed.

The minutes were accepted as written.

3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

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4. TWDB Update

- Water Loss Audits and Annual Conservation Reports were due May 1, 2022.
 - Water Loss Audits – 529 of 740 entities have submitted an audit as of 5/2/2022.
 - An additional 416 entities not required have submitted an audit as of 5/2/2022.
 - Annual Conservation Reports – 453 of 855 entities have submitted a report as of 5/2/2022.
- Water Loss Program – staff is preparing data and a presentation for testimony at the Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee meeting on May 10th.

5. Discussion and Potential Action on Draft Legislative Recommendations

Continue Funding for TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program:

John Bender began discussion by stating the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund will likely run out of funding in 2025 based on current usage. The Agricultural Water Conservation Grant program began 37 years ago and has been a valuable program for agricultural water conservation.

The recommendation seeks to replenish the Ag Fund to maintain current funding levels.

Sarah Schlessinger asked what the goal for today's discussion was.

Karen Guz noted her goal was to get consensus on the concept of the legislative recommendations with the council, with the understanding that some wording may change.

Discussion then turned to feedback on the recommendation.

Jennifer Walker noted leading with water savings and program operations may be a good approach.

Greg Carter asked if data on water saved by region could be incorporated, considering the concerns with the Ogallala aquifer.

Karen Guz noted regional data could also show the benefit the program has had across the state.

Leah Martinsson asked why the loan program was left out of the recommendation.

Sarah Schlessinger asked if 'Increase or Maintain' could be used instead of solely maintain funding, given the impact of the program.

Sam Hermitte noted that the Ag Water Conservation Grant and Loan programs both draw from the same funding source. While they are slightly different, they are tied to one another. Also, any increase in funding would require additional staff to manage the associated contracts.

Leah M. & Sarah S. both voiced support for including an increase in funding and additional staff into the recommendation.

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Jennifer Allis asked if something concerning the Ag Fund will be included in TWDB's LAR.

Sam Hermitte noted that it is unclear at this time what will be included in the agencies LAR. A board work session has been scheduled for May 17th. The agenda for that meeting will be released a week beforehand.

Wayne Halbert noted that none of the council's recommendations have been included previously in TWDB's LAR.

C.J. Tredway noted that was part of the reason the timing of the report's generation was changed, to allow for collaboration and support from the state agencies.

Leah Martinsson made a motion for conceptual support of this recommendation

Vote:

Abstain: 2

Approve: 16

Disapprove: None

The motion passes.

Karen Guz encouraged any feedback be submitted to Josh.

John Bender noted he would also encourage feedback from TWDB staff.

Aubrey Spear noted that the grant program is beneficial but requiring a political sub-divisions involvement can be limiting. There is also still a struggle as to how best to assist certain areas.

John Bender noted that the Ag Grant Program is a small but important piece to the larger picture. Another piece is the the research being done through the university systems.

Creation of a Statewide Water Conservation Awareness Campaign:

Sarah Schlessinger began the discussion by noting that the council has continuously shown support of a statewide awareness campaign. This recommendation would serve to continue that show of support without an ask to fund a specific program or campaign.

Relating to the council's charge relating to 'Monitor the effectiveness of a statewide conservation campaign...' the inclusion of a historical context as well as local and regional efforts currently underway would highlight existing efforts and could also mention how new efforts, like the Texas Runs on Water campaign, have begun to be recognized in their specific markets.

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Discussion then turned to the feasibility of funding a statewide effort rather than voicing support. Sarah Schlessinger noted that there is an established need through statute relating to TWDB instituting an effort, however funding for that effort has not been provided.

Karen Guz noted that the Texas Runs on Water campaign has established brand awareness and resonates with the public.

C.J. Tredway noted there is likely to be a budget surplus and could be the right time to ask for funds for this specific effort.

Jennifer Walker noted that the language in the recommendation seems to skirt around the ask for funds and perhaps the council should be more intentional with a request to fund the effort.

Leah Martinsson made a motion for conceptual support of a recommendation that would institute a statewide conservation campaign built upon existing efforts.

Bill Hoffman seconded the motion.

Vote:

Abstain: 2

Approve: 16

Disapprove: None

The motion passes.

*Wayne Halbert left the meeting.

Incorporate a Statewide ET Network into the TexMesonet program:

Dustan Compton began discussion by giving a quick recap of the update given at the last WCAC meeting. Dustan noted that continued discussion and feedback from the ET Stakeholder Group led to the creation of the draft language submitted for the council's review and approval. While there is not a specific ask statement at this time, the goal of the recommendation would be to provide the necessary support and funding to incorporate ET data into the TexMesonet earth observation network.

Another aspect of the language submitted involves encouraging TWDB not to lose momentum by including some of the recommendation's measures immediately to their ability, including adjusting siting criteria to include ET data considerations.

Leah Martinsson asked if the \$900,000 figure would be sufficient for what was included in the recommendation.

Sam Hermitte noted that it should be adequate if that figure included FTEs for implementation.

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Karen Guz noted that whatever figure was included would need to ensure there would be enough funds for operations and maintenance for years to come.

Sam Hermitte noted that there would still be a need to work cooperatively with appropriate agencies. She also asked if the focus of the recommendation should be on ET data and related products rather than establishing a network itself.

Guy Fipps noted that it was logical to incorporate ET into TexMesonet.

Greg Carter asked if there were any additional costs currently covered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension that would need to be considered in this recommendation.

Guy Fipps noted that the Texas ET Network is self-supported through partner stations, which is one of the problems with statewide implementation for this business model. The sustainability of the network is dependent upon sponsor participation. Dr. Fipps also noted that there are details that would need to be worked out as implementation begins.

Leah Martinsson made a motion to approve conceptual support for this recommendation. Jennifer Walker seconded the motion.

Sarah Schlessinger noted that the recommendation should explicitly state the FTE's needed

Karen Guz noted that it should also include funding amount in the final statement.

Vote:

Abstain: 2

Approve: 16

Disapprove: None

The motion passes.

*John Bender left the meeting.

Resources for Conservation Coordinator Training & Water Auditor Training Program:

Bill Hoffman noted that the Basic Training for Water Conservation Coordinators is currently being developed, however they will also need specified training as it relates to ICI operations & customer interaction, Landscape Irrigation, and Water Loss & Efficiency on the customer side of the meter. In addition, another recommendation would be to create a water auditor program similar to the one found in the energy sector.

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Karen Guz noted that the programs referenced within the recommendation are not yet in existence and asked if perhaps it would be premature to make a recommendation based on a pre-existing program.

Leah Martinsson noted that perhaps there are other existing programs that could be utilized rather than building a program from scratch.

Karen Guz noted that perhaps this could be included in the body of the legislative report as a priority issue rather than a legislative recommendation.

Greg Carter noted that the large industrial facilities may not need municipal involvement and questioned if this is a state issue or a local issue as it relates to the recommendation.

Karen Guz noted that TWDB's Conservation Department has been very effective in their work and asked if the council would support a recommendation for additional staff to expand the training and outreach capacity of the department.

Aubrey Spear noted that more training is valuable, however, making mandatory may not be the best course of action.

Bill Hoffman asked for the council to table the Auditor Training program piece and allow him to rework the recommendation for the council's consideration at the next meeting.

6. Discussion: 2022 WCAC Legislative Report

Discussion focused on the workgroups getting feedback and updates on legislative recommendations in preparation for the next council meeting.

7. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

8. Announcement of Conferences and Events

May 10 – 11: [Emerging Water Technology Symposium](#), San Antonio, TX

June 12 – 15: [ACE 2022](#), San Antonio, TX

September 16th: Deadline for [Water, Texas Film Festival](#)

9. Future Meeting Dates and Locations

To Be Determined

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:43 p.m. due to an insufficient quorum.