

Minutes: Agricultural Workgroup Meeting

03/03/2014

Time Start: 10:15 am

Time Stop: 10:50 am

Members	Alternates	Interested Parties	TWDB Staff
C.E. Williams Jay Bragg Kevin Wagner David Villarreal John Mueller	Steve Bednarz	Steve Walthour	Cameron Turner Mindy Conyers Katherine Thigpen

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 am and roll call was taken.

Jay Bragg began the discussion with comments on current drafts and deadlines. The Council has an overall deadline of March 14th and a deadline for the workgroup of March 10th to turn in drafts for discussion among the group.

There was a question about including information on Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension programs within the University Research portion of the report. Both portions might be a lot of information and could probably be a stand-alone report. The workgroup decided that the best option would be to keep it general within the legislative report: probably utilize visuals such as tables or graphs while spotlighting one program rather than providing extensive details for every program.

TWDB staff stated that the report should be written in the format of a status update. Observations might potentially include identified funding needs, but avoid language that could be viewed as the WCAC making recommendations to the legislature.

The workgroup decided to go through each assignment to discuss briefly how they want to craft them.

The workgroup would like to make sure that any discussion on Best Management Practices includes the Agriculture Workgroup's BMPs from the summer.

Water Conservation Incentives

Texas Soil & Water Conservation Board discussion on programs: the draft is currently under review at the TSSWCB.

Wayne has sent in a detailed draft of the Texas Project for Ag Water Efficiency. Cameron has put together a draft section on the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation. There

was discussion on where to place the sections highlighting the two programs to be included in the report.

TWDB Agricultural Water Conservation staff drafted a write-up on the Senate Bill 1, Rider 25 metering grant funding for groundwater conservation districts. TWDB is currently seeking applications for the first round of this funding. TWDB staff will update the write-up as applications come in and funding commitments are made at future Board meetings.

Regarding state and federal agricultural financial assistance programs: the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service draft has been sent in with focus on observations, status updates and historical numbers. Still awaiting input from other programs and some data and information not yet available. The workgroup is gathering more information on the various agricultural water conservation financial assistance and research programs at each relevant state and federal agency. There was some discussion on gathering the information in general terms as opposed to being too specific on those programs. The group may be able to give an annual summary in a table or through a brief summary over the last 4-5 years.

The Ag Workgroup will work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service to include a brief summary of conservation practices they have funded in recent years through their Environmental Qualities Incentive Program and the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program. In addition there is an opportunity to include some of the other federal agencies activities in the report as they relate to funding of irrigation improvements or irrigation conservation related research (such as the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART grant projects). There might be an opportunity to include information on the BMPs within an agency highlight summary (for example: potentially include a brief summary of research on variable rate irrigation being done by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service in Bushland, TX). There are several sections where the research might fit within the report (agriculture conservation or the research section).

Agricultural Water Conservation Research

A separate write-up for TWDB Report 347, Surveys of Irrigation is being considered for inclusion to summarize the importance and need for an update to this report (last produced in 2001). There may be an opportunity for the Council to contribute to this effort in the future if the Agriculture Workgroup chooses to do so. This could be appropriate under Charge 1 – monitoring trends in water conservation.

The Workgroup is comfortable receiving drafts through email to edit prior to the initial March 14th deadline for the draft report.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.