

2020 WCAC Recommendation Summaries

1. Groundwater Conservation: Continue funding for the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation

The Texas Alliance for Water Conservation is a state-supported agricultural producer demonstration and education project based out of Texas Tech University. The project uses a peer-to-peer model to demonstrate how best management practices and available technologies can improve sustainability while maintaining profitability in the Texas High Plains region. The project was initiated in 2004 with funding from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund and has received additional disbursements from the fund in 2014. Renewed funding for the TAWC will allow the project to continue promoting groundwater conservation and launch new initiatives including: field scale demonstrations of minimum tillage and multi-species cover crops to enhance soil water retention; and options and guidelines for conversion from irrigated to rainfed cropping systems. TAWC estimates \$475,000 per year would support the core operations of the project including personnel to carry on administration, producer relations, education, event programming, and demonstrations. Supplemental funding will also be utilized to support specific outreach objectives.

2. Surface Water Conservation: Restore funding for the Texas Ag Water Efficiency Education and Demonstration Project facility.

From 2004 to 2015 TWDB funded the Texas Ag Water Efficiency Project through the Agricultural Water Conservation Grants Program to demonstrate and assist farmers in implementing surface-water irrigation conservation practices on farms in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Part of the project was the construction of a meter calibration and education center named the Texas Center for Ag Water Efficiency for the demonstration, education, and research of agricultural water conservation measures, tools, and technologies. The demonstration center, the only one of its kind in Texas, has produced multiple developments including: efficient low-cost canal gates for controlling water delivery; new telemetry hardware and software to meet unique monitoring needs; and education and demonstration programs to encourage the use of improved irrigation practices in partnership with Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service and other stakeholders. Restored funding will enable the continued maintenance, improvement, and expansion of the mechanical and technological components of the facility and expansion of educational and research opportunities. This recommendation includes funding for the Texas Project for Ag Water Efficiency for the education, research, and development of agricultural water conservation initiatives at \$200,000 per year, subject to available state revenue.

3. Maintain level of funding for TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Grant program.

The TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Program supports the implementation of the conservation water management strategies identified in the state and regional water plans by funding projects and programs throughout the state. The TWDB grant program offers funding through a competitive process at least once a year to state agencies and political subdivisions for agricultural water conservation programs and projects. The program has collectively saved 496,000 acre-feet of water reported through

74 grant projects over the last 10 years and 79,000 acre-feet of water through 10 loan projects over the last 10 years. The recommendation is to maintain the current level of \$1,200,000 per year for the Texas Water Development Board's Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program, in addition any funds appropriated for the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation and the Texas Project for Ag Water Efficiency.

4. Advancing Use of Data to Understand Trends in Water Use.

The TWDB currently collects a large array of data reported by retail water providers. Improved understanding of commercial, institutional and industrial water use patterns would assist in development of future water efficiency metrics and programs. As the Council is charged with *monitoring trends in water conservation implementation*, this type of analysis would provide a better understanding of seasonal variations in water use, as well as provide better input to regional planning groups to make long term projections of water use. This recommendation seeks to provide \$200,000 in funding to be made available through TWDB to advance the understating of water use trends using available annual reporting data. This would fund a research project to be contracted, which will explore how available TWDB water use data from public data bases can be used to develop a framework for continued analysis within TWDB.

5. Establish Level 1 Validation program for Water Loss Audits.

Level 1 validation of water loss audits is a process by which the data used in a water loss audit is reviewed by a third party working with the submitting utility, which works to provide confidence to submitted assessment scores. Validation ensures that best practices are being followed per industry guidance, increasing efficacy of spending on reducing water loss and helping ensure that cost effective water loss measures are targeted. Funding for this recommendation would include all costs required to have a third party, hired by the TWDB, perform all validations, building upon completed water loss audits from participating utilities. This initiative is intended to build upon a study currently underway by the TWDB to perform Level 1 validations on at least six utilities of varying sizes. The recommendation asks for \$605,000 of funding for the biennium to the TWDB to establish a program building on the current TWDB validation study.