

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

## Summary of Minutes

### Water Conservation Advisory Council Meeting

Date: February 11, 2020

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location: Texas Parks & Wildlife – Airport Commerce Office  
(1340 Airport Commerce Dr. Austin, TX 78741)

Meeting chaired by: Karen Guz, Presiding Officer

Meeting Facilitators: Josh Sendejar, Council Staff Support

<i>Texas Commission on Environmental Quality</i>	Alternate Jason Godeaux	<i>Institutional Water Users</i>	Bill Hoffman
<i>Texas Department of Agriculture</i>	Alternate David Villareal	<i>Professional Organizations Focused on Water Conservation</i>	Sarah Schlessinger
<i>Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</i>	Cindy Loeffler	<i>Higher Education</i>	Tim Loftus
<i>Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board</i>	--	<i>Agricultural Groups</i>	Alternate John Bender
<i>Texas Water Development Board</i>	Kevin Kluge	<i>Refining and Chemical Manufacturing</i>	Craig Elam
<i>Regional Water Planning Groups</i>	Aubrey Spear	<i>Electric Generation</i>	Greg Carter
<i>Federal Agencies</i>	Alternate Paul Kaspar	<i>Mining and Recovery of Minerals</i>	CJ Tredway
<i>Municipalities</i>	Karen Guz	<i>Landscape Irrigation and Horticulture</i>	Anai Padilla
<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>	Celia Eaves
<i>Environmental Groups</i>	Alternate Jennifer Walker	<i>Municipal Utility Districts</i>	Donna Howe
<i>Irrigation Districts</i>	Wayne Halbert		

Also present: Alternates – Eddy Trevino, Jessica Woods, Denise Hickey; Interested Parties – Doug Christensen, Emily Morales, Isabel Martinez, Chris Charles, Al Fuentes, Chelsea Atkinson, Dan Strub, Sarah Gorton, Scott Swanson, Lucas Gregory, Ryan Skrobarczyk, Heather Rose; TWDB Staff – Bryan McMath, Cameron Turner, Shae Luther, Daniel Rice.

\*\* Documents can be found at: <http://www.savetexaswater.org/meeting/council-meetings.asp>\*\*

#### 1. Introduction

The meeting began at 10:31 a.m.

#### 2. Approval of minutes from the January 14, 2020 meeting

The minutes were approved as written.

#### 3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

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4. Update from Texas Water Development Board

TWDB Staff participated in interim Senate Committee Hearings to discuss water supply and groundwater issues. Questions regarding water loss and validation were asked by the committee members.

TWDB staff are beginning their internal legislative request deliberation process for the next legislative session.

TWDB's Validation Pilot Study is going forward. The Request For Qualifications for the contracted study is being developed.

The Municipal BMPs submitted last year are going through their final review. Staff are looking at ways to expedite the process internally.

5. Reports from Workgroups

There have been no workgroup meetings since the January 14<sup>th</sup> WCAC meeting.

6. Discussion and Potential Action on Potential Legislative Recommendations for the 2020 Legislative Report.

K. Guz began discussion by stating there are several drafted recommendations that the Council has not seen/discussed in prior meetings. She recommended focusing on the recommendations the Council has had prior discussion on, as there is still time to vote on the new recommendations at a March meeting, if needed.

It was also brought up that the voting for today's meeting will be to approve the concepts for the recommendations, with the understanding that background information and/or recommendation language can change as collaboration with state agencies occur. A final vote to accept the report will be held at a later date.

Recommendation: Restore funding for the Texas Ag Water Efficiency Education and Demonstration facility.

Built in 2004, this project was funded by the TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Grants Program which serves as a demonstration project for various types of irrigation practices and other technologies. This facility is the only one of its kind in Texas and serves to provide research and education to producers and district staff. Developments from this project include gate development and automation, meter calibration, and irrigation practices which are now being implemented by producers and irrigation districts.

K. Guz asked what how the funding amount was derived and what it would be used for.

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W. Halbert noted that the Harlingen Irrigation District can devote staff to the project, the funding amount was derived from collaboration with area stakeholders and would be used for the maintenance and upkeep of the facility.

K. Guz asked about the research applications of the site.

W. Halbert noted that demonstration and research through the facility is much easier than individual producers installing their own equipment and experimenting in the field. Also noted was the fact that because this facility was funded by public dollars, any research done can be used by the public.

John Bender made a motion to accept the recommendation.  
Greg Carter seconded the motion.

Vote: 18 in favor

3 abstain (Kevin Kluge – TWDB; Paul Kaspar – EPA; Jason Godeaux – TCEQ)

The recommendation passed.

Recommendation: Advancing Use of Data to Understand Trends in Water Use.

It was discussed that TWDB collects a plethora of data, this recommendation would aim to analyze that data to better understand indoor and outdoor water use trends over time. There could also be potential to automate the analysis of this data to allow for annual updates without intensive staff requirements.

S. Schlessinger Noted the funding request of \$25,000 seemed low for this type of project. Also asked was the potential connection to other TWDB data.

It was also noted that using available data would aid in the Council's charge regarding monitoring trends in water conservation and additional technologies.

It was then asked if this is something TWDB is already doing or has the capacity to do it? TWDB staff noted that there are efforts to increase the usability of data collected by TWDB, while there is historical conservation data available online, additional efforts in initial stages.

K. Kluge stated this topic may be good for a one-time, contracted study to see what is possible. If this is to be an ongoing effort, additional staff resources would be needed.

K. Guz added that establishing a methodology for future analysis should also be a priority.

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CJ Tredway stated that the recommendation needs to be clear that it is seeking a specific appropriation other than normal appropriations.

S. Schlessinger stated that her thought was with the creation of the Texas Data Initiative, which aims to establish a data hub, this project could potentially fit as part of the initiative.

T. Loftus suggested making a recommendation to fund Municipal/Commercial/Institutional/Industrial data analysis. TWDB could then put out an RFP with focus on replication.

C. Loeffler commented: with a focus on trends (the Council's charge).

S. Schlessinger made a motion to revise the language of recommendation and refine the funding amount.

C. Loeffler seconded the motion.

A. Spear noted that the recommendation needs to fully define its purpose. Regional Water Planning would be a good place to start.

Vote: Table recommendation and update with suggested revisions

In-Favor: 19

Abstain: 3

Recommendation: Establish Level 1 Validation program for Water Loss Audits.

Dan Stub led the discussion for this recommendation. He noted that a few changes have been made from the last meeting. The voluntary option was taken from discussion with Council at the last meeting. The scope of the effort was scaled down for budget concerns, taking the funding amount from \$700,000 to about \$600,000.

J. Walker noted that a paragraph regarding TWDB's pilot study should be included in the recommendation.

S. Schlessinger commented that perhaps a sentence regarding what a Level 1 Validation is would be helpful for any legislative staffers reading the report.

K. Guz reminded the Council that voting would be regarding the concept of the recommendation, the working can be adjusted.

A. Padilla asked how will utilities be selected?

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J. Walker stated that it is a voluntary effort with priority given to those with a financial obligation to TWDB.

C. Eaves stated that this effort will serve to build off of TWDB's initial pilot study.

G. Carter noted it should be clearly stated that this will be a state funded effort.

K. Kluge noted it would also be beneficial to have notated which items would be completed by TWDB and which would be the responsibility of the contractor.

S. Schlessinger made a motion to approve the concept of the recommendation;

D. Howe seconded the motion.

Vote: Approve recommendation concept

In-Favor: 19

Abstain: 3

The recommendation passed.

J. Walker will update the background of the recommendation.

Recommendation: Supporting a statewide water conservation awareness campaign.

S. Schlessinger began discussion by stating the effort of a statewide water conservation awareness campaign has shifted from a joint effort of TWDB and the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment to an effort of the Texas Water Foundation. Without a partner state agency, there is no state-funded entity to receive any recommended appropriations. Despite this, it is generally agreed upon by the Council that a statewide water conservation awareness campaign is necessary, a recommendation was drafted to further voice the Council's support of the effort.

Discussion then focused on if a legislative recommendation was needed if there was no request for funding.

Josh commented that one of the Council's charges is to "Monitor the effectiveness of the statewide water conservation public awareness program developed under Section 16.401 and associated local involvement in the implementation of the program." Josh included the language used from the last WCAC report for the background information used for the recommendation and while circumstances have changed, the Council could use this section of the report to express the support for further development of the statewide public awareness campaign.

K. Guz noted that a vote could be taken to include within the body of the report expressing the Council's support of a statewide public awareness campaign.

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L. Martinsson noted that there is benefit in having a documented track record of support.

K. Guz made the following motion: Not use as a legislative recommendation but vote of record in the report. The Council agrees.

Vote:

In-Favor: 19

Abstain: 3

Recommendation: Continue funding for the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation.

J. Bender led discussion on this recommendation, stating that this project began in 2004, around the same time as the Texas Ag Water Efficiency and Demonstration project. The project is a demonstration and education project that provides peer-to-peer implementation of best management practices and technologies to improve sustainability and profitability in the Texas Southern High Plains area.

The project initially received \$6.2 million in grant funding for an 8-year period (2005 – 2012, and extended to 2013). The Texas Legislature appropriated an additional \$3.6 million out of the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund for a 5-year period (2014-2019). Current funding has been extended to December 31, 2020 with a contract expiration date of August 31, 2021.

A. Spear noted that over 90% of usage within the Ogallala Aquifer is agricultural use. These [agricultural water conservation] projects and programs are invaluable to conserve water in the region.

K. Guz stated that the background information should help discern the difference between this project and the Texas Ag Water Efficiency Project.

W. Halbert stated that the Texas Ag Water Efficiency Project focuses on surface water resources while the TAWC project focuses on groundwater.

L. Martinsson motioned to approve the recommendation

B. Hoffman seconded the motion

Vote:

In-Favor: 19

Abstain: 3

The recommendation passed.

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J. Walker noted that any metrics on water saved would be helpful to strengthen the case for support.

Recommendation: Maintain funding for TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Grant program.

John Bender led discussion on this recommendation.

The Agricultural Water Conservation Program promotes water conservation programs and projects throughout the state by supporting the implementation of water conservation water management strategies identified in the state and regional water plans.

During the last legislative session, the appropriations act increased authorized dispersals through the Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program from \$600,000 to \$1,200,000 per fiscal year. However, there is no replenishment mechanism for the fund.

C. Tredway stated that perhaps the recommendation should state 'Maintain level of funding for TWDB's...' to make it clearer.

S. Schlessinger made a motion to accept the recommendation with revisions  
J. Walker seconded the motion

Vote:

In-Favor: 19

Abstain: 3

The recommendation passes.

Recommendation: Reinstate TSSWCB's Water Supply Enhancement Program.

John Bender led discussion on this recommendation.

TSSWCB's Water Supply Enhancement Program incentivizes landowner participation in brush control efforts and can, in certain situations, also enhance water availability during times of average rainfall.

The program was refocused to water supply enhancement in 2013, following a sunset review, to require the TSSWCB to align projects with regional water plans and water user groups with identified conservation needs.

K. Guz stated that it is not immediately clear how this recommendation fits in with the Council's charges.

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A. Spear noted that brush control is used as a conservation strategy in several of the Regional Water Plans.

It was also noted that while it is used as a strategy, water savings is difficult to quantify.

J. Bender noted that there have been some research projects from USGS and others that have noted effects in increased water flow and reduced sedimentation through brush control activities.

B. Hoffman made a motion to send the recommendation back to the workgroup for revision.

S. Schlessinger seconded the motion

Vote:

In-Favor: 19

Abstain: 3

The recommendation will go back to the workgroup for revision.

Updated background documents and drafted recommendations should be sent to Josh by March 5, 2020 and should be sent out to Council on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

7. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

8. Announcement of Conferences and Events

TWDB's Total Water Loss Control Program Workshops currently go on throughout the state, full schedule available at:

[http://www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/municipal/waterloss/auditor\\_training.asp](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/municipal/waterloss/auditor_training.asp)

March 31st – April 3: Texas Water; Houston, TX

<https://www.txwater.org/>

9. Future Meeting Dates and Locations

Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> – LCRA (Room TBD)

Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> – LCRA Dalchau Service Center  
(3505 Montopolis Dr. Austin, TX 78744)

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:44 p.m.