

LEGEISLATIVE TASKS

With the passage of Senate Bill 3 (SB 3) and House Bill 4 (HB 4), the Water Conservation Advisory Council (Council) was directed to focus their attention on a series of tasks and duties. Included in the duties of the Council, are the following two charges:

- *Monitor the effectiveness of the statewide water conservation public awareness program developed under Section 16.401 and associated local involvement in implementation of the program;*
- *Develop and implement a public recognition program for water conservation;*

The Council interpreted their duties as being charged with monitoring the success of public awareness programs at the state and local levels and recommending ways to improve conservation awareness efforts. Additionally the Council understood that they are to develop a public recognition program. Within their span of limitations the Council desires to recommend ways to improve public awareness, public recognition, and public policy as related to water conservation awareness, outreach, and education.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Beginning in the Fall of 2007 the Council decided on an organization of work to help focus their efforts. The council grouped their tasks into five workgroups, each with a central focus to guide the Council as a whole in addressing their charges. This workgroup became know as the Public Awareness and Recognition workgroup. The workgroup and Council as a whole determined that the best approach to addressing these charges was to establish a program proposal for Water IQ, begin efforts to gather preliminary information, and identify some long term targets and goals in water conservation awareness.

As the Council began to identify the need for more data and the future need for more comprehensive awareness programs they recognized that there will also be needs to evaluate the effectiveness of educational awareness programs as well as a need to identify measurements of how water conservation is evident.

The council is actively working on an online voluntary survey to canvas the efforts going on around the state involving local public awareness and recognition programs (Appendix __). At this time the survey is only voluntary however, there is a need for retrieval of this type of data and a need for consistent response rates on this type of data request. A survey like this may provide some preliminary baseline research.

Because the Council strongly supports the continued development of a statewide campaign for water conservation, they are actively pursuing ways to enhance and maintain a statewide public awareness program for water conservation. Through many discussion that Council is confident that the development of an ongoing statewide, water conservation awareness program has the potential to strengthen existing local water conservation programs and boost public awareness in areas of the state that do not have local water conservation programs.

Concluding text to come

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In its preliminary evaluation of public awareness programs and public recognition programs in the state, the Council has formulated its recommendations regarding the state's role in promoting and developing the Water IQ Campaign, establishing standards in reporting, and elevating a profile of water conservation efforts by establishing a high-level recognition award. The following key findings and recommendations are to be used as a resource for policy considerations pertaining to water conservation efforts.

~~~

***Key Finding: Public awareness and education are often cited in the state water plan as a strategy. In an effort to evaluate or measure the progress of public awareness as a strategy, there needs to be data available and methods for measuring, tracking, or monitoring the progress of public awareness or other educational outreach strategies.***

In the state water plan, citing education and awareness as a strategy can vary in level and technique from one region to another and from one water user group (WUG) to another. Current water conservation plan requirements and annual reporting requirements call for program overviews as opposed to comprehensive tracking of progress.

***Recommendation: The Council recommends funding from the legislature to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for the development of a reporting tool that will allow all RWPGs to report uniform and consistent data to the TWDB. These reports will be used to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the public awareness, educational, and outreach strategies in their regions.***

***Recommendation: The Council recommends funding from the legislature to enhance reporting tools used by WUGs. Funding will assist RWPGs in using this collected data to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the public awareness, educational, and outreach strategies in their regions.***

{{Further or revised text to come }}

~~~

Key Finding: Water conservation messaging and awareness in the state is currently fragmented and being conducted in isolated areas of the state. In areas of the state where funding is not available for water conservation messaging or extensive awareness programs, there is an immediate need for conservation and heightened messaging.

Levels of conservation differ from one region to another because of differences in audiences, differences in water supply sources, differences in demand on supply,

differences in levels of drought conditions, and differences in geographic location. In areas that have awareness programs, local funding is used to develop programs that reach a local or limited regional audience. In areas of the state where local funding is limited the need exists for resources and support in the form of media spots, materials, and other resources for messaging.

Recommendation: The Texas Legislature should consider expanding the state's role in promoting water conservation awareness by establishing a statewide water conservation campaign. Funding from the legislature to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) will support the development and maintenance of the Water IQ Campaign tools. Water IQ is a state produced water conservation campaign.

Recommendation: The Council supports the Texas Water Development Board's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) Exceptional item request to provide funding for Water IQ.

The Water IQ campaign provides strength in uniform and consistent messaging. The campaign is intended to work with programs established at the local level and will utilize print, audio, and TV media. Outreach material would be developed in English and Spanish. For some areas of the state, limited funding is a barrier to the development of water conservation messaging. Currently there are entities that are using the Water IQ brand. As the need for water conservation awareness and messaging increases, so does the support for Water IQ. Rural entities and groundwater conservation districts would benefit greatly from this type of support.

{{Ans question: What is the reason there are no existing funds?
Ans question: Why have local WUGs not committed funds to this effort?
Ans question: Are there more direct ways to reach their audience?
Incorp supporting statement for the rise in support for water IQ}}

{{Further or revised text to come}}

~~~

***Key Finding: Leadership exists across the state where progressive efforts in water conservation are the standard. Successful water conservation efforts remain unrecognized, and therefore conservation efforts are not profiled or visible in the eyes of the public. A measure of success in water conservation depends on the level of stakeholder involvement, commitment, and awareness.***

{{Further or revised text to come }}

*Recommendation: The Council recommends that a Statewide Recognition Award Program be established through the governor's office to expand the state's role in promoting water conservation awareness. A visible and prestigious public recognition award would elevate the importance of Water conservation related issues. Texas Water Day would be an opportune time*

*and place to present awards. It would promote and raise the visibility of water conservation and related issues*

The Statewide Recognition Award Program could be established through the governor's office, with nominations coming from the WCAC. Texas Water Day would be a good day to give awards. It would promote and raise the visibility of water conservation and related issues and place a profile right in front of the decision makers. The program could also be tied to the Texas Environmental Excellence Awards. Water Conservation could be a new category within in the Excellence Awards. For the short term, the Advisory Council could consider giving out recognition awards throughout the year.

{{Further or revised text to come }}

~~~

ACTIVITIES REPORT

The Council has kept an open record of their activities and any related documents produced. From the period beginning August 2007 through the October 2008, the Council has conducted the following activity.

Meetings

There have been five (5) meetings of the Public Awareness & Recognition workgroup by telephone conference call.

Documents Developed

The following documents have been developed during the activity of the Public Awareness & Recognition workgroup:

- ❖ Workgroup Agendas
- ❖ Workgroup Minutes
- ❖ Awareness & Recognition Online Survey
- ❖ Website entitled: www.savetexaswater.org
- ❖ A Brief Synopsis of Active Water Conservation Awareness Programs

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

{{Further or revised text to come }}

- ❖ Development of a method for ongoing research to collect information on monitoring and measuring the progress of awareness efforts and public outreach campaigns.
- ❖ Evaluation and management of educational components tied into the annual progress reports.

- ❖ Development of a Guide for Conducting Water Conservation Outreach Campaigns.
- ❖ Development and support of statewide workshops to address water providers need to promote water conservation approaches while maintaining financial stability.