

Texas Water Conservation Online Resource Library
Draft #3 – May 7, 2008

The greatest level of success in water conservation can only be achieved when information is put in the hands of the largest number of stakeholders. Having a resource library that contains information about water conservation that all can access and use is seen as a key element to a successful water conservation program in Texas. This task is aimed at defining the parameters for organizing water conservation information resources that all stakeholders can access **and** developing a process for distributing new information to relevant stakeholders. Obviously, this resource library must capture any new technologies so they can be shared quickly. Therefore, the resource library cannot be simply a database for collecting and storing information, it must also contain a comprehensive search engine and a forum for getting the information in the hands of those who can use it.

The key elements of an online resource library for water conservation are:

1. Easy Search Capability – the utility of the system will depend heavily on having a search function that is easy to use and will enable the user to quickly drill down to find the information he is seeking.
2. Single gateway to all water conservation resources – Water conservation is not only a Texas issue, good information about water conservation is universal. Therefore, it is imperative that the online resource library provide access to all available resources in Texas state government, other states, colleges and universities, associations and interest groups, and the public. The more comprehensive the available resources, the greater the utility of the resource library.
3. Documentation of information source – Peer review of all information is virtually impossible so it will be necessary to provide specific documentation of all resources so that the user can make an informed decision on the validity of the information, the application to his interests, and who to contact about the information.
4. Process to capture new technologies – Successes and new water conservation techniques need to be quickly identified and incorporated into the resource library. Water conservation, like so many processes, is an evolving process that can be refined and improved over time. The quicker that we are able to share successes **and failures**, the shorter the time it takes to achieve the greatest measure of success. The resource library needs to be able to document these successes and failures and quickly alert all interested persons when new information is available.
5. An alert system to enable anyone to identify subjects of interest – Persons with specific information needs for water conservation need to be able to register those needs so that they can be notified when existing information is revised or new information becomes available.

6. Discussion forums to enable information exchange – The ability to seek knowledgeable input and help on specific needs will greatly enhance the utility of the online resource library. When a user is unable to find exactly what he is seeking or needs clarification of information that he has found, a discussion forum provides a way of getting help from willing experts and from those with water conservation experience. A discussion forum also provides a means by which a user can provide feedback on information he finds in the systems that will enable the person who published it to correct or update it.
7. Marketing effort to generate awareness of the online resource library – Once the online resource library is activated, information about it needs to be advertised in all public awareness programs within state governments, colleges and universities, associations and the public media.

What information should be flagged:

- Source of the information and contact if possible
- Author(s)
- Title
- Type of information (journal article, research report, handbook, BMP guide, etc)
- Topics (key words) and abstract
- Target user groups
- Water Conservation categories (a list of categories needs to be developed for the resource library and posted on the website probably as the first cut at refining a search).

Source of Information:

The TWDB staff has begun to develop a comprehensive listing of websites of water related studies. This effort is initially focused on Texas information but can be expanded to include other states, federal agencies, colleges and universities and various associations and interest groups.

Cost to Develop and Maintain:

Once we have a good description of the online resource library, some estimates of the cost to develop and implement the library need to be made. Also, annual maintenance of the system will need to be estimated. All this needs to be part of any funding proposal the Council decides to recommend.