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AGENDA ITEM MEMO

BOARD MEETING DATE: August 6, 2026

TO: Board Members

THROUGH: Bryan McMath, Executive Administrator
Ashley Harden, General Counsel
Georgia Sanchez, Chief Financial Officer
John T. Dupnik, P.G., Deputy Executive Administrator, Water Science and Conservation

FROM: Mark W. Wentzel, Ph.D., Hydrologist, River Science and Hydrosurvey
Mindy Conyers, Ph.D., Manager, River Science and Hydrosurvey

SUBJECT: Water Resources Investigations with the U.S. Geological Survey

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider authorizing the Executive Administrator to execute a contract in an amount not to exceed \$2,298,580, including \$1,774,000 from the Texas Water Development Board, for continuation of the Water Resources Investigations data collection program with the U.S. Geological Survey in fiscal year 2027.

BACKGROUND

Water data is the foundation upon which Texas builds its water plans, protects against flood risk, and manages water resources. The first U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) stream gage in Texas was installed 137 years ago on the Rio Grande near El Paso. The USGS and funding partners currently maintain a network of 780 stream, 154 lake, and 397 collocated precipitation gages providing near real-time data across the state. Access to the data is provided to the public via websites maintained by the USGS. Each year, the TWDB enters into a contractual agreement with the USGS to cover the cost of a portion of the statewide network. The USGS also contributes funding toward the agreement. Gages included in the agreement collect data for one of two primary purposes: (1) water resources monitoring and planning or (2) flood forecasting and warning.

In fiscal year 2026, the TWDB partnered with the USGS to operate and maintain 50 stream and 34 lake level gages for water resources monitoring and planning and 62 stream, 6 lake level, and 45 rain gages for flood forecasting and warning. The cost to make one-time infrastructure improvements to 10 stream gages to increase their operational reliability during flood events was also included in the fiscal year 2026 contract. The total cost of the

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agreement in fiscal year 2026 was \$2,251,680, with the USGS contributing \$479,735 and the TWDB contributing \$1,771,945.

KEY ISSUES

Over the last 20 years, gage operation and maintenance costs have increased, on average, 1.5 percent per year. However, in fiscal year 2027, the USGS is not increasing costs; therefore, TWDB funding amounts currently budgeted for gaging efforts with the USGS are adequate. The total cost of the fiscal year 2027 gaging contract will not exceed \$2,298,580, with up to \$524,580 provided by the USGS and up to \$1,774,000 provided by the TWDB from general revenue and the Texas Infrastructure Resiliency Fund.

The fiscal year 2027 contract will continue to support the same level of gaging as in fiscal year 2026, including gaging for water resources monitoring and planning, through the operation and maintenance of 50 streamflow and 34 lake level gages, and flood warning and forecasting, through the operation and maintenance of 62 flood-hardened streamflow, 6 lake level, and 45 rain gages. Additionally, the contract will allocate TWDB funding combined with up to \$150,000 in 2027 Cooperator Matching Funds from the USGS to make one-time infrastructure improvements to select gages across the state. One-time improvements will include repairing and elevating gage enclosures at locations that have recently experienced flooding.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Administrator concludes that the Water Resources Investigations gaging and data collection program furthers the objectives of statewide water resources data collection and dissemination and of collection of flood-related information and recommends approval of this request.