

**August 20, 2020 Meeting Materials for the  
General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the  
Interregional Planning Council**

1. Agenda
2. Meeting presentation
3. Draft August 6, 2020 meeting minutes
4. Council feedback on Committee Report – Walthour edits
5. Revised Recommendation on Engagement – August 17, 2020
6. Draft Committee Section of Council Report
7. Draft Action Plan

## 1. Agenda

# General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the Interregional Planning Council

August 20, 1:30PM

Meeting will be conducted via GoToWebinar and can be accessed with the link below.

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8314618387888227598>

Webinar ID: 609-880-827

PLEASE SEE: <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/ipc/committees.asp>

*\*The Chairman of this Committee may choose to address the items identified in this agenda in an order outside of the pre-arranged numbering.*

1. Call to order and welcome
2. Public comment
3. Consider minutes from August 6, 2020 Committee meeting
4. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – General Best Practices for Future Planning
5. Consideration and Action, as appropriate – Committee reports and recommendations to the Interregional Planning Council regarding General Best Practices for Future Planning
6. Discuss next steps: methods to move forward including scheduling of Committee meetings, background materials needed for future meetings or discussion and steps that can be accomplished before future meetings
7. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – Action Plan for Committee Work and status of assignments
8. Discussion of agenda for future meetings
9. Public comment
10. Adjourn

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large print or Braille, are requested to contact Melinda Smith at [melinda.smith@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:melinda.smith@twdb.texas.gov) or at (512) 463-6478 two (2) work days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Direct links to this information can be found on our website at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/ipc/committees.asp>

**To view/listen to the General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee Meeting on Thursday, August 20, 2020, please use GoToWebinar. If you are a visitor for this meeting and wish to address the Committee, you will have an opportunity to do so under agenda items number 2 and 9 through the GoToWebinar application.**

Additional Information may be obtained from: Elizabeth McCoy, Regional Water Planner, Texas Water Development Board, 512/475-1852 [elizabeth.mccoy@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:elizabeth.mccoy@twdb.texas.gov)

Emergency Mtg: No

## 2. Meeting presentation

# Interregional Planning Council

## General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee

August 20, 2020

# I. CALL TO ORDER

Call to order and welcome

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Limit comments to 3 minutes each.
- Please state your name prior to commenting.
- Those on video Go To Webinar – Click “raise hand” on your screen.
- Those with telephone access – The organizer will unmute phone attendees to provide public comment.

3. CONSIDER  
APPROVAL  
OF MINUTES

Consider approval of minutes from the  
August 6, 2020 Committee meeting

## 4. DISCUSSION OF GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

Topics selected for recommendations:

- Simplified Planning
- RWPG Membership Engagement
- Communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and Members
- TCEQ as an Ex-Officio Member
- Reimbursement of Labor Costs for RWPG Administrative Agents
- Open Meetings Act Modification for Video-Conferencing
- Improving the Regional Water Planning Process

5. CONSIDERATION  
OF  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
TO THE COUNCIL

- Review Council feedback on recommendations
- Review draft Committee section of Council report

## 6. NEXT STEPS

- Next meeting: August 27, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.
- Background materials needed
- Assignments/accomplishments for next meeting

7.  
CONSIDERATION  
OF AN ACTION  
PLAN

Status of action plan assignments

## 8. AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- Public comment
- Approve committee minutes
- Status of assignments
- Consider committee reports and recommendations
- Discuss next steps

## 9. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Limit comments to 3 minutes each.
- Please state your name prior to commenting.
- Those on video Go To Webinar – Click “raise hand” on your screen.
- Those with telephone access – The organizer will unmute phone attendees to provide public comment.

ADJOURN

### 3. Draft August 6, 2020 meeting minutes

## **General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee of the Interregional Planning Council Meeting Minutes**

**August 6, 2020, 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

**held via GoToWebinar Videoconference**

***Committee decisions bolded and italicized in document***

**Participation: Committee Members present 4 of 5:** Steve Walthour (Region A), Russell Schreiber (Region B), Kelley Holcomb (Region I), and Tomas Rodriguez (Region M). Allison Strube (Region F) was absent.

**Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance:** None

**Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Board Members and Staff:** Sarah Backhouse, Elizabeth McCoy, and Bryan McMath.

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

#### **1. Call to Order and Welcome**

Committee Chair Steve Walthour (Region A) called the meeting to order and determined that a quorum was present.

#### **2. Public Comment** – No public comments were offered.

#### **3. Consider Minutes from the July 28, 2020 Committee Meeting**

The committee considered the minutes of the July 28, 2020 meeting. Russell Schreiber (Region B) made a motion to approve the minutes. Kelley Holcomb (Region I) seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

#### **5. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – General Best Practices for Future Planning**

Mr. Walthour proposed moving consideration of agenda item 4 later in the meeting. Members agreed. Members reviewed the draft committee report for August 12 Interregional Planning Council meeting. The draft report summarizes committee recommendations on several topics related to best practices.

Members reviewed Recommendation 1 on the simplified planning process, which included recommendations for the Legislature to amend the language in Texas Water Code (TWC) Section 16.053(i) to either:

1. Discontinue the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if those availability numbers have not changed significantly,
2. Allow regional water planning groups (RWPG) to petition the TWDB to implement simplified planning and authorize the TWDB to determine if simplified planning would be most effective,
3. Require development of the state water plan every 10 years instead of every five years, with sponsorship of special studies between planning cycles, or
4. Strike simplified planning from the statute.

Mr. Holcomb asked if the third recommendation is related to simplified planning or changing the state water plan to a 10-year process. Mr. Walthour indicated the recommendation was for simplified

planning. Mr. Holcomb suggested that recommendations 2 and 3 could possibly be combined. Mr. Schreiber agreed and asked for confirmation that simplified planning is optional for RWPGs. Mr. Walthour confirmed that the simplified planning is optional. He added that the problem with the simplified planning process is that the process still requires RWPGs to gather and analyze most of the data required for a full plan. Mr. Schreiber noted that if the intent of the recommendations is to make simplified planning a more usable option for the RWPGs, the recommendations should include the option for RWPGs to still choose to pursue simplified planning. Mr. Walthour indicated he was open to combining recommendations 2 and 3.

Tomas Rodriguez (Region M) added that he supports a 5-year planning cycle. Mr. Schreiber asked if recommendations 3 and 4 would address the problems noted with the simplified planning process and make the process more useful. Mr. Holcomb noted that the original intent of the simplified planning process was different than the outcome. The goal was to reduce the work effort, but the process remains complex and robust. Mr. Holcomb suggested that he did not know if the current simplified planning process could be reduced further and acknowledged that this is a big knowledge gap for the committee. He added that it is possible if the simplified planning process was reduced further it could potentially create gaps in the State Water Plan data, which could be a problem.

Mr. Walthour reviewed that the first recommendation asks the legislature to modify the statute to discontinue the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability numbers if they have not significantly changed. He added that if RWPGs have to collect and review this data in simplified planning, then the process is not simplified. Mr. Holcomb and Mr. Schreiber agreed.

Mr. Holcomb noted that none of the regions have chosen to pursue simplified planning. Mr. Schreiber asked if the requirements to update availabilities are the only reasons regions are not pursuing simplified planning. It was noted that these additional requirements are why Regions A and B have not pursued simplified planning. Regions I and M only briefly considered simplified planning. Mr. Schreiber suggested bringing only recommendations 1 and 4 forward to the Council. Members agreed, and simplified planning recommendations 2 and 3 were removed.

The committee considered additional recommendations for TWDB, RWPGs, and future Interregional Planning Councils. Mr. Holcomb suggested adding a recommendation for TWDB to evaluate alternatives to the current simplified planning process to see if there is a better way to conduct simplified planning than what currently exists. Members agreed, and the recommendation for TWDB was added. No recommendations were made for RWPGs or future Interregional Planning Councils on simplified planning.

The committee discussed Recommendation 2: Enhancing membership engagement and general public engagement. The following recommendations were reviewed:

The Legislature should:

1. Provide funding for better methods of disseminating of information for the regional water planning process.
2. Authorize the use of one-way conferencing or webinars.

The TWDB should:

1. Provide policy recommendations developed by the Interregional Planning Council to all RWPGs to inform their planning process.

2. Provide a distilled policy recommendations report from all adopted regional water plans, sorted by topic, to the RWPGs and the Council.
3. Provide an update to the above report, at an appropriate time in the planning cycle, of the implementation status of recommendations to the RWPGs and the Council.
4. Consider engaging a media consultant to develop better methods of coordination among the RWPGs.
5. Develop standardized, easy to adopt practices and protocols that apply to all regions.

The RWPGs should:

1. Provide more focus on new member orientations.
2. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers in each RWPG.
3. Develop better methods to encourage public participation:
  - Surveys
  - Targeted emails blasts
  - Website updates for all RWPGs

Future Interregional Planning Councils should:

1. Hold work sessions to “deep dive” into more complicated topics.
2. Require RWPG Chairs to meet on an annual basis at minimum.

Mr. Holcomb shared that, as he understands it, RWPGs have the potential of using one-way webinars to disseminate information, but legislative action is needed to make this clear. Mr. Walthour agreed and suggested the second legislative recommendation should remain.

Mr. Walthour asked if the TWDB recommendation to engage a media consultant should be removed since it is considered under recommendations on communication. Mr. Holcomb agreed this could be removed if it is included elsewhere. Members agreed. The fourth TWDB recommendation to engage a media consultant to develop better methods of coordination among the RWPGs was removed.

Mr. Holcomb noted that the first three recommendations for TWDB came from a discussion with Council Chair Suzanne Scott. There currently isn't a report on recommendations from the regional water plans, and there is no documentation of the implementation status of these recommendations. The proposed TWDB recommendations would provide a mechanism for TWDB to report back to the RWPGs on progress that has been made. Members agreed with the recommendation.

Members agreed with proposed RWPG recommendations on engagement as presented. Mr. Holcomb noted that the recommendation for future Interregional Planning Councils to hold work session to “deep dive” into more complicated topics formed from his experience with the first meeting of the RWPG chairs to develop the uniform standards used for project prioritization. The work session brought people together and was a valuable experience. Mr. Holcomb proposed that this should be done more often in order to deal with tougher issues that will only get more complicated with time. Mr. Rodriguez agreed.

Mr. Walthour asked what kind of surveys the RWPGs should conduct under the third RWPG recommendation. Mr. Holcomb proposed a poll of RWPG members at the end of the planning cycle to see what is working and what could be done differently to improve engagement. Sarah Backhouse (TWDB) asked if the intent of the recommendation for RWPG Chair meetings was for an in person meeting. Mr. Holcomb confirmed that was his intent, but he did not want to specify that in the recommendation.

Members reviewed Recommendation 3: Communication between TWDB, RWPG, and Members. This included the following recommendations:

The TWDB should:

1. Require RWPGs to receive orientation services provided by the TWDB at the beginning of each cycle,
2. Require RWPG Chairs and Administrative Agents to follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide document, and
3. Invest in professional media consultants to assist TWDB in effectively delivering digital messages to RWPG members.

The RWPGs should:

1. Follow recommendations regarding communication with RWPG members as outlined in the Best Management Practices Guide.
2. RWPG members should read the Best Management Practices Guide and New Member Guide.

Mr. Walthour proposed the third recommendation to TWDB be revised to: invest in inter-agency, intra-agency, or professional media consultants to assist TWDB in effectively delivering digital messages to RWPG members. He suggested that TWDB may internally have professionals to assist in messaging to RWPG members. Members agreed with the proposed change.

The committee considered recommendations for future Interregional Planning Councils. Mr. Walthour recommended future Councils revisit this issue every cycle. Mr. Holcomb proposed future Councils review existing technology and recommend appropriate changes. Members agreed.

The committee reviewed Recommendation 4: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) as an Ex-Officio Member. This included recommendations that: The Legislature should amend TWC Sec. 16.053(c) to add TCEQ as an ex-officio member of each RWPG. The TWDB should, in coordination with TCEQ, amend Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 357.11(e) to require RWPGs to add a staff member from TCEQ as a non-voting member. RWPGs should consider adding TCEQ as an ex-officio member if changes to the TWC or TAC are not implemented.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that Region M has a TCEQ representative that serves as a non-voting member. Mr. Walthour added that TCEQ has a representative serve as a non-voting member on 5 out of 16 regions (Regions B, E, L, M, and O). Mr. Holcomb noted this recommendation would make TCEQ participation permanent and consistent across all regions. Mr. Walthour asked the committee if they should add a recommendation for TWDB to review and make a recommendation to the Legislature regarding additional non-voting members that affect statewide regional water planning stakeholders. Members agreed.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) was a required RWPG member. Mr. Walthour confirmed the TSSWCB is required by statute to serve as a non-voting RWPG member.

Members revised the RWPG recommendation to: In the event that TWC 16.053(c) or TAC 357.11(e) are not amended, RWPGs should consider adding TCEQ as an ex-officio member. No recommendations were made to future Interregional Planning Councils on this topic.

Members reviewed Recommendation 5: Reimbursement of Labor costs for Regional Water Planning Administrative Agents. This included the following recommendations: The Legislature should provide additional funding for the regional water planning process to accommodate labor costs for administering RWPGs so that grant resources are not taken from required planning tasks. The TWDB should consider allowing for the reimbursement of labor costs for the RWPG's designated administrative agency. The TWDB should revise TAC Chapter 355 and regional water planning grant contract expense budget limitations to accommodate these expenses.

Ms. Backhouse (TWDB) outlined proposed revisions to Mr. Schreiber's write up on the topic and provided additional context on RWPG funding and reimbursement. A legislative recommendation to provide additional funding to cover administrative labor costs was added. TWDB is considering a rule revision next cycle to allow reimbursement of administrative labor costs, but reimbursement will be made out of existing funds unless additional funds are appropriated by the legislature. Mr. Schreiber offered that RWPGs could use voting member travel expense funds to cover administrative labor costs. Ms. Backhouse clarified that expense budgets are determined by the RWPG political subdivisions and is not something TWDB weighs in on.

Mr. Holcomb asked if RWPG member travel expenses are reimbursed out of local funds. Ms. Backhouse clarified that RWPGs can allocate TWDB funds to reimburse voting member travel to RWPG meetings if a member cannot be reimbursed by another entity, such as an employer. Ms. Backhouse added that the key to this recommendation is a request that administrative labor costs become an eligible expense for reimbursement. Mr. Holcomb noted that this is a complicated topic and asked members if they should include a recommendation for TWDB to further evaluate this topic. Ms. Backhouse noted that TWDB is looking into allowing reimbursement of administrative labor costs. The new regional flood planning program allows for reimbursement of limited administrative labor costs. It was noted that TWDB has received feedback that some RWPGs spend \$70,000 a year out of pocket to cover administrative labor costs. This is a large amount of money to shift from other RWPG tasks out of existing funding. It may be appropriate to consider a recommendation that the legislature provide additional funding for RWPG administrative costs.

Ms. Backhouse noted that making administrative costs eligible for reimbursement would require a TWDB rule change since it is currently prohibited in Chapter 355 Regional Planning Grant rules. TWDB would also need to revise limitations in regional water planning expense budgets. Mr. Holcomb recommended breaking the TWDB recommendations into two separate recommendations. Members agreed. Mr. Schreiber asked if the committee should consider recommending a cap for administrative expenses or if that language should be removed for the recommendation. Members agreed to remove the language for establishing a cap for administrative expenses. This would allow TWDB flexibility to evaluate and determine what costs should be eligible for reimbursement.

Mr. Schreiber noted that many RWPGs included this recommendation in Chapter 8 of the regional water plans. He proposed adding a recommendation for RWPGs to include requests for funding in Chapter 8 policy recommendations. Members agreed.

Members discussed recommendations for future Interregional Planning Councils. A recommendation for future Councils to revisit a potential cap to labor reimbursement was considered, but members decided to make no recommendations for future Interregional Planning Councils at this time.

The committee reviewed Recommendation 6: Open Meetings Act Modification of Video-Conference Restrictions. This included a recommendation that the Legislature amend the Open Meetings Act to allow state and local governments to use electronic media such as video conferencing as an alternative to requiring the public and governmental officials to be physically present to make public comment or consider actions during an open meeting.

Mr. Walthour noted this would require legislative action. Mr. Holcomb suggested that if the legislature amends the Open Meetings Act to make these allowances, the TWDB should fund the technology to allow RWPGs to use video conferencing. Mr. Walthour offered that maybe the TWDB should investigate the cost to implement these chances. Mr. Holcomb agreed, noting that this will have a fiscal impact. A recommendation was added for TWDB to evaluate the fiscal impacts associated with technology used for virtual meetings.

Members reviewed Recommendation 7: Improving the Regional Water Planning Process. This included a recommendation that the TWDB incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the regional water planning process. This includes reducing or eliminating non value-added activities and engaging the RWPG membership to map out all critical steps in planning.

Mr. Walthour noted that this topic goes back to TWDB reviewing its processes and evaluating the regional water planning program. Mr. Holcomb asked if this was related to the protocols for developing the plan or how RWPGs meet. Mr. Walthour noted it covers all of the above. He added that a lot of money is spent on regional water planning, which is important, and yet members are not engaged. Mr. Walthour recommended that every once in a while, it is beneficial for an agency to step back and review its processes to see if there is a more efficient way to do business. Mr. Holcomb agreed and suggested the committee request TWDB evaluate the cost of administering the regional water planning process, specifically looking at the fiscal impacts not included in the planning grants, such as travel time and labor hours of RWPG members. A recommendation was added for TWDB to evaluate the RWPG voting and non-voting membership costs of time and funding.

Mr. Schreiber noted he is ok with the recommendation and added that it is an important number to understand. He added that the regional water planning process was a top down process. Now that the process is bottom up, he suggested it is more realistic that it requires members to commit time and funds to participate. He added that this should be considered holistically for the regional water planning process. Mr. Holcomb suggested it would be good to know the miles and labor hours dedicated to regional water planning.

Mr. Walthour noted that in his experience when the state government has to make cuts it relies on local government to pick up the costs. When the legislature looks at fiscal impact, costs to local governments and entities are often not considered or calculated. Mr. Rodriguez noted he was not against the recommendation but not in favor of asking for reimbursement these items. He suggested that locals should pay a share of the regional plans. Mr. Holcomb added it is hard to plan for what you don't know and suggested that even an approximate estimate of the costs would be valuable information. Mr. Schreiber asked if the recommendation should be directed to the RWPG since TWDB would likely have to ask the RWPGs for information. Mr. Holcomb suggested the recommendation was best suited for TWDB to prepare a standardized cost estimate. Members agreed.

Mr. Holcomb asked if TWDB ever meets to discuss best practices with RWPG consultants. Ms. Backhouse noted that at the end of the last planning cycle, TWDB held a technical meeting with all RWPG consultants and used feedback from the consultants to update and improve regional water planning guidance documents. TWDB plans to do this again at the end of the current cycle. Technical documents and guidance is also provided to consultants for feedback prior to being finalized.

Mr. Holcomb asked if the Interregional Planning Council also needs to be involved and suggested output from this work effort should be made available to future Councils. Mr. Schreiber agreed that making this information available to future Councils would be beneficial. A recommendation was added for future Interregional Planning Councils to review materials and meeting notes from TWDB's lessons learned technical meetings with RWPG consultants. Mr. Rodriguez asked if this information was provided to the regions previously. Ms. Backhouse noted she will confirm what information was provided to the RWPGs and follow up with the committee. Mr. Holcomb noted that the Interregional Planning Council brings a new level of coordination that didn't exist before and having this information in front of the Council is a new opportunity. No recommendations were made to the legislature or RWPGs on this topic.

No additional recommendations are under consideration by the committee.

**6. Consideration and Action, as appropriate – Committee reports and recommendations to the Interregional Planning Council regarding General Best Practices for Future Planning**

Mr. Walthour will provide a report on behalf of the committee to the full Council at August 12, 2020 Council meeting. Members discussed the committee report. Mr. Walthour will briefly review observations and then present the committee's seven recommendations in his report to the Council.

**7. Discussion of Next Steps**

The next committee meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on August 20, 2020. At the August 20 meeting, the committee plans to review any amendments to recommendations received at the August 12 Council meeting. The committee will also review the existing practice write-ups for the committee report. Mr. Holcomb suggested members review the seven recommendation topics for current practices.

Ms. Backhouse (TWDB) noted TWDB staff will compile the committee's write ups into a report format and fact check information. Mr. Holcomb will prepare a write up on existing practices on engagement. Mr. Schreiber will prepare a write up on existing practices for reimbursement of RWPG administrative costs. Mr. Walthour asked members to provide write ups to TWDB as soon as possible after the August 12 Council meeting so staff can compile the information into a draft report.

Mr. Rodriguez informed the committee he will not be able to attend the August 20 meeting.

**8. Discussion of Agenda for Future Meetings**

The agenda for August 20, 2020 meeting will include consider approval of minutes, status of assignments, consider committee reports and recommendations, and discuss next steps. Mr. Walthour thanked members for their patience and participation in the committee meetings.

The committee then considered agenda item 4.

**4. Discussion and Action, as appropriate – Action Plan for Committee Work and Status of Assignments**

No discussion under this agenda item.

9. **Public Comment** – No public comments were offered.
10. **Adjourn** – Mr. Walthour adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:20 p.m.

#### 4. Council feedback on Committee Report – Walthour edits

**Best Practices Committee Report to the Interregional Planning Council – August 12, 2020**

1. **Proposed Changes to Committee Problem and Goal Statement:** No changes proposed at this time.
2. **Draft Recommendation Summaries**

**Recommendation 1:** Simplified Planning

**a. Brief Observation:** The simplified planning process under Texas Water Code (TWC) Section 16.053 is not functional. Requiring RWPGs to repeatedly update and consider groundwater and surface water availability values that have not significantly changed is a waste of regional water planning financial resources and creates lost opportunity costs to state, local governments and private stakeholders when those funds and efforts could be focused on other water resource issues in the planning process.

**a-b.** of volunteer regional water planning members' time of .

**b-c. Succinct Recommendations:**

- i. The Legislature should amend the language in TWC Sec. 16.053(i) to either:
  1. Discontinue the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if those availability numbers have not changed significantly, or
  2. Strike simplified planning from the statute.
- ii. The TWDB should evaluate alternatives to the current simplified planning process that address timing and data concerns.
- iii. The RWPGs should: None
- iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should: None

**c-d. Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation would allow full updates of the state water plan following updated census data, better align the regional water plans with the groundwater management area process, and potentially redirect State resources to solving water planning issues through funding special studies or other water resource challenges in the region.

**Recommendation 2:** Enhancing Membership Engagement and General Public Engagement

- a. **Brief Observation:** RWPGs are experiencing a variety of communication and engagement issues. Examples include information overload and not receiving valuable information and material prepared by the TWDB. Additionally, the public may not have the knowledge base to readily consume the technical and complex subject matter or have the time investment to attend public meetings.
- b. **Succinct Recommendations:**

- i. The Legislature should:
  1. Provide funding for better methods of disseminating of information for the regional water planning process.
  2. Authorize the use of one-way conferencing or webinars.
- ii. The TWDB should:
  1. Provide policy recommendations developed by the Interregional Planning Council to all RWPGs to inform their planning process.
  2. Provide a distilled policy recommendations report from all adopted regional water plans, sorted by topic, to the RWPGs and the Council.
  3. Provide an update to the above report, at an appropriate time in the planning cycle, of the implementation status of recommendations to the RWPGs and the Council.
  4. Develop standardized, easy to adopt practices and protocols that apply to all regions.
- iii. The RWPGs should:
  1. Provide more focus on new member orientations.
  2. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers in each RWPG.
  3. Develop better methods to encourage public participation, for example:
    - Surveys
    - Targeted emails blasts
    - Website updates for all RWPGs
  - ~~4. Provide feedback to members regarding the water infrastructure projects and water conservation project that were funded by the TWDB as a result of the planning group's efforts.~~
- iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should:
  1. Hold work sessions to "deep dive" into more complicated topics.
  2. Require RWPG Chairs to meet on an annual basis at minimum.
- c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation will enable RWPG membership and the public to be more engaged and increase their understanding of the process.

**Formatted:** Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: 1, 2, 3, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 1.75" + Indent at: 2"

**Recommendation 3:** Communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and Members

- a. **Brief Observation:** Members of multiple RWPGs are unaware of educational material, program resources, and assistance made available by the TWDB. TWDB correspondence is not always distributed to the membership or is simply not viewed because of email overload.
- b. **Succinct Recommendations:**
  - i. The Legislature should: None

- ii. The TWDB should:
    1. Require RWPGs to receive orientation services provided by the TWDB at the beginning of each cycle,
    2. Require RWPG Chairs and Administrative Agents to follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide document, and
    3. Invest in inter-agency, intra-agency, or professional media consultants to assist TWDB in effectively delivering digital messages to RWPG members.
  - iii. The RWPGs should:
    1. Follow recommendations regarding communication with RWPG members as outlined in the Best Management Practices Guide.
    2. RWPG members should read the Best Management Practices Guide and New Member Guide.
  - iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should review existing technology and recommend appropriate changes.
- c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation will enable RWPG membership to make informed decisions by increasing members' understanding of the process and resources available.

**Recommendation 4:** Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) as an Ex-Officio Member

- a. **Brief Observation:** RWPGs often have questions regarding public drinking water systems, surface water rights and availability, and permitting requirements that could best be answered or followed up on by representatives from the TCEQ. TCEQ is not required by statute to have representation on RWPGs and currently has a representative assigned as a non-voting member to 5 out of 16 RWPGs (B, E, L, M, O).
- b. **Succinct Recommendations:**
  - i. The Legislature should amend TWC Sec. 16.053(c) to add TCEQ has an ex-officio member of each RWPG.
  - ii. The TWDB should:
    1. ~~In the event that~~If TWC 16.053(c) isn't amended, coordinate with TCEQ and amend Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 357.11(e) to require RWPGs add a staff member from TCEQ as a non-voting member, and
    2. Review and make a recommendation to the Legislature regarding additional non-voting members that affect statewide regional water planning stakeholders.
  - iii. ~~In the event that~~If TWC 16.053(c) or TAC 357.11(e) are not amended, RWPGs should consider adding TCEQ has an ex-officio member.

- iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should: None
- c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation would consistently provide RWPGs a subject matter expert and resource for water issues addressed by the TCEQ or other state agencies. This recommendation could increase coordination between the TWDB and the TCEQ on planning vs. regulation issues and requirements.

**Recommendation 5:** Reimbursement of Labor Costs for Regional Water Planning Administrative Agents

- a. **Brief Observation:** The role of the RWPG’s administrative agency includes a significant amount of administrative work. The agencies spend exorbitant amounts of time performing this role in which reimbursement of labor costs are prohibited by the TWDB.
- b. **Succinct Recommendation:**
  - i. The Legislature should provide additional funding for the regional water planning process to accommodate labor costs for administering RWPGs so that grant resources are not taken from required planning tasks.
  - ii. The TWDB should:
    - 1. Consider allowing for the reimbursement of labor costs for the RWPG’s designated administrative agency.
    - 2. Revise TAC Chapter 355 and regional water planning grant contract expense budget limitations to accommodate these expenses.
  - iii. The RWPGs should include requests for funding in Chapter 8 recommendations of the regional water plans.
  - iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should: None
- c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation would encourage political subdivisions to take on the role of the administrative agency for regional water planning. The agencies would no longer be penalized for accepting the responsibility of administering the regional water planning process.

**Recommendation 6:** Open Meetings Act Modification of Video-Conference Restrictions

- a. **Brief Observation:** Governor Abbott temporarily suspended a limited number of open meeting laws to allow governmental bodies to conduct meetings by telephone or video conference during the COVID-19 pandemic in order for these entities to continue to function. Once the disaster is over options to conduct meetings by telephone or video conference will not be available. During this periodperiod, any person regardless of where they are in the world has been afforded the opportunity to participate in public meetings and provide public comment if they wish making the open meetings process more transparent.
- b. **Succinct Recommendations:**

- i. The Legislature should amend the Open Meetings Act to allow the state Regional Water Planning process and local governments to use electronic media such as video conferencing as an alternative to requiring the public to be physically present to make public comment and as an option for a governmental governmental-officials/official that cannot physically attend a meeting because of health related issues or travel distance to the meeting is over 200 miles to to be physically present to make public comment or consider actions during an open meeting. =
  - ii. The TWDB should evaluate the fiscal impacts associated with technology required for virtual meetings.
  - iii. The RWPGs should: None
  - iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should: None
- c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation would allow state and local government to use electronic media such as video conferencing as an alternative to holding in person only meetings. This would would decrease regional water planning and lost opportunity costs to state, local governments and private stakeholders as well as create a more efficient process by allowing greater governmental transparency during consideration of items on an agenda and provide the public an avenue for increased meeting participation-

**Commented [TM1]:** Council feedback: be specific to the RWP Process rather than broad as is to state and local gov.

**Commented [TM2]:** Council feedback: consider allowing virtual participation in addition to in person rather than an alternative to in person. Kelley mentioned perhaps replacement wasn't intent of wording; can reconsider.

**Recommendation 7: Improving the Regional Water Planning Process**

- a. **Brief Observation:** Modifications to regional water planning process does not adequately allow for all RWPG members to provide substantial input on how to make the process better because it is at the end of the cycle at a time when the RWPG is working on its final report. Chairs' conference calls are scheduled but cover so much information that Chairs don't have the opportunity to brainstorm new ideas, and prior work sessions held by TWDB are no longer held or results aren't formally documented. Additionally, over 300 RWPG members do not have direct input to improve the process. Only engaging a small subset of the RWPG leads to non-engagement by the rest of the membership.
- b. **Succinct Recommendations:**
  - i. The Legislature should: None
  - ii. The TWDB should:
    1. Incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the regional water planning process. This includes reducing or eliminating non-value-added activities and engaging the RWPG membership to map out all critical steps in planning.
    2. Evaluate the RWPG voting and non-voting membership costs of time and funding.
  - iii. RWPGs should: None

- iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should review materials and meeting notes from TWDB's lessons learned technical meetings with RWPG consultants.
  - c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation would improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the planning process as well as improve productivity of the RWPG membership.
3. **Draft Recommendations Under Further Consideration (yet to be fully developed):**  
None

## 5. Revised Recommendation on Engagement – August 17, 2020

**Recommendation 2: Enhancing Membership Engagement and General Public Engagement**

**a. Brief Observation:** RWPGs are experiencing a variety of communication and engagement issues. These include for example 1) information overload, 2) not receiving valuable information and material prepared by the TWDB, and 3) the public may not have the knowledge base to readily consume the technical and complex subject matter or have the time investment to attend public meetings.

In addition, some RWPG's continue to struggle with finding new voting members to fill vacancies and keeping the general public engaged in the planning process. There appears to be a growing sense of apathy on part of the general public with regard to interest in regional water planning. It is unknown if the apathy is rooted in their confidence in local water planners, the overall planning process or their lack of awareness of water planning activities.

**a.b. Succinct Recommendations:**

- i. The Legislature should:
  1. Provide funding for better methods of disseminating of information for the regional water planning process.
  2. Authorize the use of one-way conferencing or webinars.
- ii. The TWDB should:
  1. Provide policy recommendations developed by the Interregional Planning Council to all RWPGs to inform their planning process.
  2. Provide a distilled policy recommendations report from all adopted regional water plans, sorted by topic, to the RWPGs and the Council.
  3. Provide an update to the above report, at an appropriate time in the planning cycle, of the implementation status of recommendations to the RWPGs and the Council.
  4. Develop standardized, easy to adopt practices and protocols that apply to all regions.
- iii. The RWPGs should:
  1. Provide more focus on new member orientations.
  2. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers in each RWPG.
  3. Develop better methods to encourage public participation:
    - Surveys
    - Targeted emails blasts

Revised Recommendation on Engagement – August 17, 2020

- Website updates for all RWPGs
- iv. Future Interregional Planning Councils should:
  1. Hold work sessions to “deep dive” into more complicated topics.
  2. Require RWPG Chairs to meet on an annual basis at minimum.

b.c. **Brief Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation will enable RWPG membership and the public to be more engaged and increase their understanding of the process by both members and the public.

## 6. Draft Committee Section of Council Report

DRAFT AS OF 8-18-2020

**DRAFT**

## Interregional Planning Council Report to the Texas Water Development Board

---

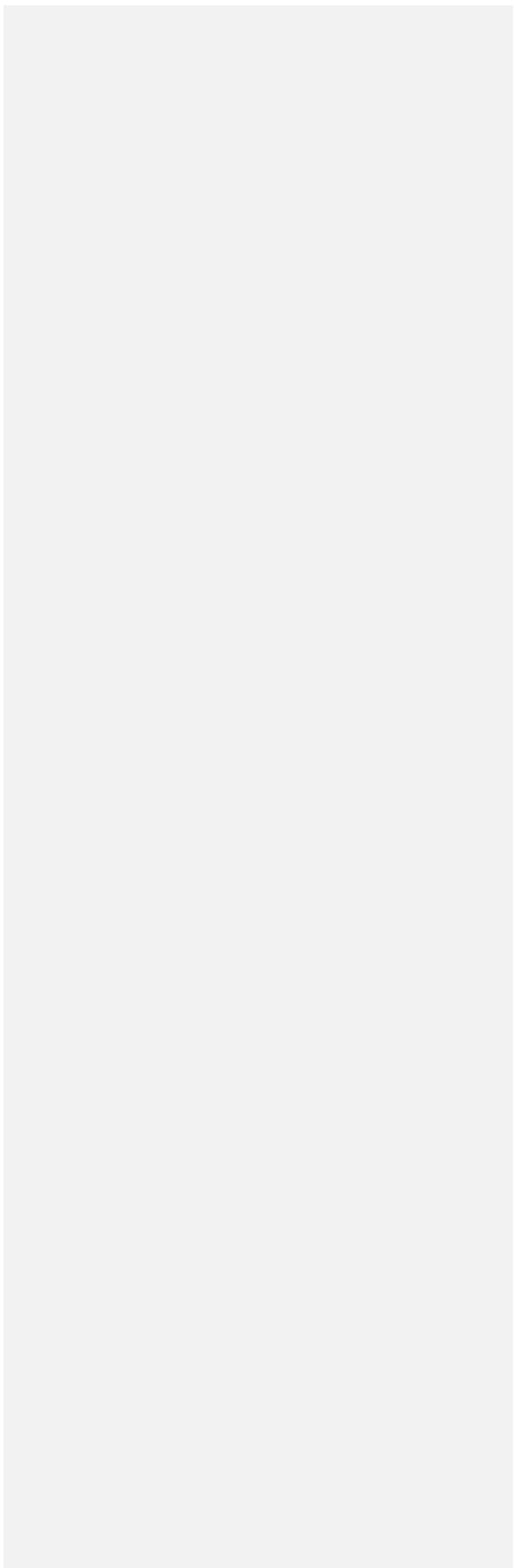
*This report was prepared on behalf of the Interregional Planning Council (Council), at their direction and based upon their meetings, decisions, and recommendations with guidance from their contracted facilitator. The full Council approved the final content and submission of this report to the TWDB on [2020].*

## Contents

I.	Executive Summary.....	4
A.	History and Background of Regional Coordination.....	4
B.	Summary of Council Charge and Legislative Guidance.....	4
C.	Council Meetings and Deliberations.....	4
D.	Summary of Recommendations.....	4
II.	Council Observations and Recommendations.....	4
A.	Improve Coordination Among and Between Regional Water Planning Groups and the Texas Water Development Board.....	4
1.	Review of Existing Practices/Conditions (Council member general observations from deliberations).....	4
2.	Problem Statement.....	4
3.	Goal Statement.....	4
4.	Recommendations (including benefits that could result).....	4
B.	Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole.....	4
1.	Review of Existing Practices/Conditions (Council member general observations from deliberations).....	4
2.	Problem Statement.....	5
3.	Goal Statement.....	5
4.	Recommendations (including benefits that could result).....	5
C.	General Best Practices for the Future of Planning.....	5
1.	Review of Existing Practices/Conditions (Council member general observations from deliberations).....	5
2.	Problem Statement.....	7
3.	Goal Statement.....	7
4.	Recommendations (including benefits that could result).....	7
D.	Addressing Interregional Conflict.....	12
1.	Outline of the coordination process within the Regional Planning Process to identify and address conflicts.....	12
2.	Acknowledgement of the limitations of Planning Regions to mitigate conflicts.....	12
3.	Recommendations regarding coordination protocols.....	12
III.	Conclusions.....	12
A.	Observations regarding the Council’s role.....	12
B.	Considerations for future Councils.....	12
C.	Other.....	12
IV.	Appendices.....	12

DRAFT AS OF 8-18-2020

- A. List of Council Members and Committees..... 12
- B. Minutes from Council and Committee Meetings ..... 12
- C. Interregional Conflict Facilitator’s Report and Supporting Material ..... 12
- Appendix A - List of Council Members and Committees ..... 13



**I. Executive Summary**

- A. History and Background of Regional Coordination**
- B. Summary of Council Charge and Legislative Guidance**
- C. Council Meetings and Deliberations**
- D. Summary of Recommendations**

**II. Council Observations and Recommendations**

**A. Improve Coordination Among and Between Regional Water Planning Groups and the Texas Water Development Board**

- 1. Review of Existing Practices/Conditions (Council member general observations from deliberations)**
- 2. Problem Statement**
- 3. Goal Statement**
- 4. Recommendations (including benefits that could result)**

**4.1 ABC**

- a) Texas Water Development Board*
- b) Legislature*
- c) Regional Water Planning Groups*
- d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

**4.2 XYZ**

- a) Texas Water Development Board*
- b) Legislature*
- c) Regional Water Planning Groups*
- d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

**B. Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole**

- 1. Review of Existing Practices/Conditions (Council member general observations from deliberations)**

- 2. **Problem Statement**
- 3. **Goal Statement**
- 4. **Recommendations (including benefits that could result)**

4.1 ABC

- a) *Texas Water Development Board*
- b) *Legislature*
- c) *Regional Water Planning Groups*
- d) *Future Interregional Planning Councils*

4.2 XYZ

- a) *Texas Water Development Board*
- b) *Legislature*
- c) *Regional Water Planning Groups*
- d) *Future Interregional Planning Councils*

C. **General Best Practices for the Future of Planning**

1. **Review of Existing Practices/Conditions (Council member general observations from deliberations)**

The General Best Practices for Future Planning committee held six committee meetings to accomplish their charge. The committee reviewed best practice issues identified at the April 29, June 22, and June 29 meetings of the Council, in addition to new issues identified by members of the committee. The committee narrowed their focus of best practices to the following items: simplified planning, enhancing engagement, communication, non-voting membership, labor costs for political subdivisions, video conferencing, and improvements to the planning process. The committee identified the following existing practices and observations associated with these topics.

**Simplified Planning:** The simplified planning process under Texas Water Code (TWC) Section 16.053 is not functional. Requiring RWPGs to repeatedly update and consider groundwater and surface water availability values that have not significantly changed is a waste of regional water planning financial resources and creates lost opportunity costs to state and local governments and private stakeholders when those funds and efforts could be focused on other water resource issues in the planning process.

**Enhancing Engagement of the RWPG Membership and the General Public:** RWPGs are experiencing a variety of communication and engagement issues. Examples include information overload and not receiving valuable information and material prepared by the TWDB. Additionally,

**Commented [SB1]:** Committee members should not make edits to report format. This will be updated by TWDB when complied.

**Commented [SB2]:** New text/revisions by TWDB to existing language are provided below in track changes for committee review.

**Commented [SB3]:** Steve's 8/13 edits incorporated

the public may not have the knowledge base to readily consume the technical and complex subject matter or have the time investment to attend public meetings.

Some RWPGs continue to struggle with finding new voting members to fill vacancies and keeping the general public engaged in the planning process. There appears to be a growing sense of apathy on part of the general public with regard to interest in regional water planning. It is unknown if the apathy is rooted in their confidence in local water planners, the overall planning process, or their lack of awareness of water planning activities.

Commented [SB4]: New paragraph from Kelley 8/17

**Communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and Members:** Members of multiple RWPGs are unaware of educational material, program resources, and assistance made available by the TWDB. The TWDB's current practice to distribute program information is to send email communications to the RWPG Chairs, political subdivision contacts, and prime technical consultants. The political subdivisions are then expected to pass the communication to the RWPG membership. TWDB correspondence is not always distributed to the membership or is simply not viewed because of email overload. Additionally, TWDB's orientations or informational presentations are sometimes declined by RWPGs.

Commented [SB5]: Information added from Steve's original write up

**Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) as an Ex-Officio Member:** RWPGs often have questions regarding public drinking water systems, surface water rights and availability, and permitting requirements that could best be answered or followed up on by representatives from the TCEQ. TCEQ is not required by statute to have representation on RWPGs and currently has a representative assigned as a non-voting member to 5 out of 16 RWPGs (B, E, L, M, O), however RWPGs have the discretion to add membership interest categories as appropriate to their region in accordance with their bylaws. As of July 2020, TCEQ has a representative assigned as a non-voting member to 5 out of 16 RWPGs.

**Reimbursement of Labor Costs for Regional Water Planning Administrative Agents:** The role of the RWPG's administrative agency includes a significant amount of administrative work. The agencies spend exorbitant amounts of time performing this role. in which reimbursement of labor costs are prohibited by the TWDB. TWDB's administrative rules and contracts currently prohibit the reimbursement of labor costs for the RWPG's administrative agencies. Multiple RWPGs rely on the collection of local funds to support the administrative work.

**Open Meetings Act Modification of Video-Conference Restrictions:** RWPGs, their committees, and subcommittees became subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA) in 2017<sup>1</sup>. The Council is also subject to the TOMA. Governor Abbott temporarily suspended a limited number of open meeting laws to allow governmental bodies to conduct meetings by telephone or video conference during the COVID-19 pandemic in order for these entities to continue to function. Once the disaster is over, options to conduct meetings by telephone or video conference will not be available. During this period, any person regardless of where they are in the world has been afforded the opportunity to participate in public meetings and provide public comment if they wish making the open meetings process more transparent.

<sup>1</sup> [S.B. 347, 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, Regular Session \(2017\)](#)

**Improving the Regional Water Planning Process:** Modifications to the regional water planning process does not adequately allow for all RWPG members to provide substantial input on how to make the process better because it is at the end of the cycle at a time when the RWPG is working on its final report. The most significant amendments to the planning process is based on recommendations from the 16 RWPG Chairs, TWDB staff, recommendations from the RWPG at the end of the cycle, and public comment periods on revisions to applicable statues and rules. Chairs' conference calls are scheduled throughout the planning cycle but cover so much information that Chairs don't have the opportunity to brainstorm new ideas, and prior work sessions held by the TWDB are no longer held or results aren't formally documented. Additionally, over 300 RWPG members do not have direct input to improve the process. Only engaging a small subset of the RWPG leads to non-engagement by the rest of the membership.

**Commented [SB6]:** Steve, was this referring to the TWDB's stakeholder survey? The last two cycles that has been issued after the cycle finishes. Delete this language? Or were you referring to something else?

**Commented [SB7]:** This is incorporated from previous write up from Steve.

## 2. **Problem Statement**

Formal requirements may stymie the use of best practices. Formalized sharing of information between RWPGs is not always facilitated timely in the planning cycle by TWDB, including group processing of Chapter 8 recommendations. Funding may be inadequate to devote time and effort for reviewing best practices.

**Commented [SB8]:** No changes are proposed to the Problem Statement

## 3. **Goal Statement**

The regions will review processes for improvement in sharing and solving best practices among and between regions. A formalized process will occur early in the planning process so that best practices are shared between regional water planning groups.

**Commented [SB9]:** No changes are proposed to the Goal Statement

## 4. **Recommendations (including benefits that could result)**

### 4.1 *Simplified Planning*

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on simplified planning. Implementing these recommendations would allow full updates of the state water plan following updated census data, better align the regional water plans with the groundwater management area process, and potentially redirect State resources to solving water planning issues through funding special studies or other water resource challenges in the region.

#### a) *Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB evaluate alternatives to the current simplified planning process that address timing and data concerns.

#### b) *Legislature*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the Legislature amend the language in TWC Sec. 16.053(i) to either:

1. Discontinue the requirement to update groundwater and surface water availability values in the regional water plan if those availability numbers have not changed significantly, or
2. Strike simplified planning from the statute.

#### c) *Regional Water Planning Groups*

No recommendations are made to RWPGs on simplified planning.

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

No recommendations are made to future Interregional Planning Councils on simplified planning.

*4.2 Enhancing Engagement of the RWPG Membership and the General Public*

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on enhancing engagement. Implementing these recommendations will enable RWPG membership and the public to be more engaged and increase their understanding of the process.

*a) Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB:

1. Provide policy recommendations developed by the Interregional Planning Council to all RWPGs to inform their planning process.
2. Provide a distilled policy recommendations report from all adopted regional water plans, sorted by topic, to the RWPGs and the Council.
3. Provide an update to the above report, at an appropriate time in the planning cycle, of the implementation status of recommendations to the RWPGs and the Council.
4. Develop standardized, easy to adopt practices and protocols that apply to all regions.

*b) Legislature*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the Legislature:

1. Provide funding for better methods of disseminating of information for the regional water planning process.
2. Authorize the use of one-way conferencing or webinars.

*c) Regional Water Planning Groups*

The **Committee/Council** recommends RWPGs:

1. Provide more focus on new member orientations.
2. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers in each RWPG.
3. Develop better methods to encourage public participation, for example:
  - i. Surveys
  - ii. Targeted emails blasts
  - iii. Website updates for all RWPGs
4. Provide feedback to members regarding the water infrastructure projects and water conservation projects that were funded by the TWDB as a result of the planning group's efforts.

Commented [SB10]: New item from Steve 8/13

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

The **Committee/Council** recommends future Interregional Planning Councils:

1. Hold work sessions to "deep dive" into more complicated topics.
2. Require RWPG Chairs to meet on an annual basis at minimum.

*4.3 Communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and Members*

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and members. Implementing these recommendations will enable RWPG membership to

DRAFT AS OF 8-18-2020

make informed decisions by increasing members' understanding of the process and resources available.

*a) Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB:

1. Require RWPGs to receive orientation services provided by the TWDB at the beginning of each cycle,
2. Require RWPG Chairs and Administrative Agents to follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide document, and
3. Invest in inter-agency, intra-agency, or professional media consultants to assist TWDB in effectively delivering digital messages to RWPG members.

**Commented [EM11]:** Consider additional information from Sarah's 8/17 email on TWDB Communications?

*b) Legislature*

No recommendations are made to the Legislature on communication between TWDB, RWPGs, and members.

*c) Regional Water Planning Groups*

The **Committee/Council** recommends RWPGs:

1. Follow recommendations regarding communication with RWPG members as outlined in the Best Management Practices Guide.
2. RWPG members should read the Best Management Practices Guide and New Member Guide.

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

The **Committee/Council** recommends future Interregional Planning Councils review existing technology and recommend appropriate changes.

*4.4 TCEQ as an Ex-Officio Member*

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on TCEQ membership on the RWPGs. Implementing these recommendations would consistently provide RWPGs a subject matter expert and resource for water issues addressed by the TCEQ or other state agencies. In addition, this recommendation could increase coordination between the TWDB and the TCEQ on planning vs. regulation issues and requirements.

*a) Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB:

1. If TWC 16.053(c) isn't amended, coordinate with TCEQ and amend Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 357.11(e) to require RWPGs add a staff member from TCEQ as a non-voting member, and
2. Review and make a recommendation to the Legislature regarding additional non-voting members that affect statewide regional water planning stakeholders.

*b) Legislature*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the Legislature amend TWC Sec. 16.053(c) to add TCEQ has an ex-officio member of each RWPG.

*c) Regional Water Planning Groups*

The **Committee/Council** recommends RWPGs consider adding TCEQ as an ex-officio member if TWC 16.053(c) or TAC 357.11(e) are not amended.

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

No recommendations are made to future Interregional Planning Councils regarding TCEQ membership.

**4.5 Reimbursement of Labor Costs for Regional Water Planning Administrative Agents**

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on reimbursement of administrative labor costs. Implementing these recommendations would encourage political subdivisions to take on the role of the administrative agency for regional water planning. The agencies would no longer be penalized for accepting the responsibility of administering the regional water planning process.

*a) Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB:

1. Consider allowing for the reimbursement of labor costs for the RWPG's designated administrative agency.
2. Revise TAC Chapter 355 and regional water planning grant contract expense budget limitations to accommodate these expenses.

*b) Legislature*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the Legislature provide additional funding for the regional water planning process to accommodate labor costs for administering RWPGs so that grant resources are not taken from required planning tasks.

*c) Regional Water Planning Groups*

The **Committee/Council** recommends RWPGs include requests for funding in Chapter 8 recommendations of the regional water plans.

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

No recommendations are made to future Interregional Planning Councils regarding reimbursement of administrative labor costs.

**4.6 Open Meetings Act Modification of Video-Conference Restrictions**

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on modification of the Texas Open Meetings Act video-conferencing restrictions [related to regional water planning](#). Implementing these recommendations would decrease regional water planning and lost opportunity costs to state and local governments and private stakeholders as well as create a more efficient process by allowing greater governmental transparency during consideration of items on an agenda and provide the public an avenue for increased meeting participation.

*a) Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB evaluate the fiscal impacts associated with technology required for virtual meetings.

**Commented [SB12]:** Council feedback from 8/12:  
•Be specific to the RWP Process rather than broad as is to state and local gov.  
•Consider allowing virtual participation in addition to in person rather than an alternative to in person. Kelley mentioned perhaps replacement wasn't intent of wording; can reconsider.

*b) Legislature*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the Legislature amend the Texas Open Meetings Act to allow the regional water planning process to use electronic media such as video conferencing as an alternative to requiring the public to be physically present to make public comment and as an option for a governmental official that cannot physically attend a meeting because of health related issues or travel distances over 200 miles ~~to the meeting is over 200 miles~~ to consider actions during an open meeting.

**Commented [SB13]:** Incorporates Steve's 8/13 revisions based on Council feedback.

**Commented [EM14]:** Consider member feedback: Would the alternative (electronic/phone) attendance only be in support of public or voting members and non-voting members as well? I thought we had discussed members being able to attend meetings in an alternative method so that hybrid meetings could be offered and to promote engagement by those members that may not be willing to serve to due physical attendance of the meetings.

**Commented [EM15]:** One-way? Round-trip?

*c) Regional Water Planning Groups*

No recommendations are made to RWPGs on Texas Open Meetings Act modification.

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

No recommendations are made to future Interregional Planning Councils on Texas Open Meetings Act modification.

*4.7 Improving the Regional Water Planning Process*

The **Committee/Council** makes the following recommendations on improving the regional water planning process. Implementing these recommendations would improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the planning process as well as improve productivity of the RWPG membership.

*a) Texas Water Development Board*

The **Committee/Council** recommends the TWDB:

1. Incorporate a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste in the regional water planning process. This includes reducing or eliminating non-value-added activities and engaging the RWPG membership to map out all critical steps in planning.
2. Evaluate the RWPG voting and non-voting membership costs of time and funding.

*b) Legislature*

No recommendations are made to the Legislature on improving the regional water planning process.

*c) Regional Water Planning Groups*

No recommendations are made to RWPGs on improving the regional water planning process.

*d) Future Interregional Planning Councils*

The **Committee/Council** recommends future Interregional Planning Councils review materials and meeting notes from TWDB's lessons learned technical meetings with RWPG consultants.

**D. Addressing Interregional Conflict**

1. **Outline of the coordination process within the Regional Planning Process to identify and address conflicts**
2. **Acknowledgement of the limitations of Planning Regions to mitigate conflicts**
3. **Recommendations regarding coordination protocols**

**III. Conclusions**

- A. **Observations regarding the Council's role**
- B. **Considerations for future Councils**
- C. **Other**

**IV. Appendices**

- A. **List of Council Members and Committees**
- B. **Minutes from Council and Committee Meetings**
- C. **Interregional Conflict Facilitator's Report and Supporting Material**

**Appendix A - List of Council Members and Committees**

In July 2019, the TWDB’s Executive Administrator requested each of the state’s 16 RWPGs to submit at least one nominee to serve on the Council. At its January 16, 2020 meeting, the TWDB appointed the Council’s members, and preapproved use of Regional Water Planning Contract voting member travel funds for Council members to attend meetings. Although alternates were not appointed and therefore cannot be utilized during this inaugural Council, provisions for alternates were included for the appointment of future Councils in the revisions to TWDB’s administrative rules 31 Texas Administrative Code Section 357.11(k). The members appointed to the Council are:

<b>Region</b>	<b>Council Member</b>	<b>Council or Committee Role</b>	<b>Council Member Affiliation</b>	<b>Supporting Background Provided from RWPGs During Nomination</b>
A	Steve Walthour	Chair, General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee	General Manager, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District	Mr. Walthour has served on the Region A RWPG since 2007. He is a member of the agricultural and modeling subcommittees and has been an integral part of the Region A water planning process for the last 12 years. Mr. Walthour has over 25 years of experience in groundwater conservation programs.
B	Russell Schreiber	Member of General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee	Chair Region B; Director of Public Works , City of Wichita Falls	Mr. Schreiber has been a member of the Region B RWPG for 11 years and has served as Chair since 2017. He is a member of the Executive Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and Groundwater Technical Committee.
C	Kevin Ward	Member of Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee	Chair Region C; General Manager, Trinity River Authority	Mr. Ward has been a member of the Region C RWPG for 7 years and has served as Chair since 2018. He also serves on the Region H RWPG. Prior to joining the Trinity River Authority, Mr. Ward was the Executive Administrator of the TWDB.
D	Jim Thompson	Member of Enhancing Interregional Coordination Committee	Chair Region D; Chief Financial Officer, Ward Timber	Mr. Thompson is currently the Chair of the Region D RWPG and previously served for six years on the Region D RWPG.
E	Scott Reinert	Member of Enhancing Interregional Coordination Committee	Vice-Chair Region E; Water Resources Manager, El Paso Water Utilities	Mr. Reinert has been a member of the Region E planning group for 10 years and currently serves as Vice-Chair.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Council Member</b>	<b>Council or Committee Role</b>	<b>Council Member Affiliation</b>	<b>Supporting Background Provided from RWPGs During Nomination</b>
F	Allison Strube	Member of General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee	Director of Water Utilities, City of San Angelo	Ms. Strube joined the Region F RWPG in 2018 and represents large municipalities. Ms. Strube also serves as a board member of the West Texas Weather Modification Association and a committee member for the Concho River Watermaster program.
G	Gail Peek	Chair, Enhancing Interregional Coordination Committee	Vice-Chair Region G; Of Counsel, Beard, Kultgen, Brophy, Bostwick & Dickson	Ms. Peek has been a member of the Region G RWPG for 12 years and currently serves as Vice-Chair. She also participates on the Executive and Groundwater Committees.
H	Mark Evans	Chair, Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee	Chair Region H; North Harris County Regional Water Authority	Mark Evans has been a member of the Region H RWPG since its creation (21 years) and has served as the Region H Chair since 2009. Mr. Evans previously served four terms as County Judge for Trinity County.
I	Kelley Holcomb	Council Vice-Chair; Member of General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee	Chair Region I; General Manager Angelina & Neches River Authority	Mr. Holcomb has been a member of the Region I RWPG since 1998 and currently serves as Chair. He also participates on the Nominations Committees.
J	Ray Buck	Member of Enhancing Interregional Coordination Committee	General Manager, Upper Guadalupe River Authority	Mr. Buck has represented the River Authorities interest category on the Region J RWPG for 14 years. Mr. Buck also oversees the Political Subdivision responsibilities for Region J.
K	David Wheelock	Member of Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee	Vice-Chair Region K; Water Supply Planning Manager, Lower Colorado River Authority	Mr. Wheelock has been a member of the Region K RWPG for over 5 years and currently serves as Vice-Chair of the planning group. He also participates on five Region K Committees and is the Administrative Agent for Region K. Mr. Wheelock has been involved with regional water planning since 1997.
L	Suzanne Scott	Council Chair	Chair Region L; General Manager San Antonio River Authority	Ms. Scott has been a member of the Region L RWPG for 11 years and has served as Chair since 2016. She also participates on the Policy Recommendations Committee and serves as Chair of the Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas

<b>Region</b>	<b>Council Member</b>	<b>Council or Committee Role</b>	<b>Council Member Affiliation</b>	<b>Supporting Background Provided from RWPGs During Nomination</b>
				Rivers and Mission, Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee.
M	Tomas Rodriguez, Jr.	Member of General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee	Chair Region M; Retired Director of Utilities, City of Laredo	Mr. Rodriguez has been a member of the Region M RWPG for 11 years and currently serves as Chair. Before retiring, Mr. Rodriguez was the Director of the Utilities Department for the City of Laredo.
N	Carl Crull	Member of Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee	Owner, Crull Engineering, LLC	Mr. Crull has been involved with regional water supply issues since 1984. He previously served as Assistant City Manager for the City of Corpus Christi and worked for HDR Engineering Inc. before retiring to private practice. He joined the Region N RWPG in January 2017.
O	Melanie Barnes	Member of Planning Water Resources for the State as a Whole Committee	Retired Research Scientist, Texas Tech University	Dr. Barnes has been a member of the Region O RWPG since 2005. She serves as the Region O liaison to the Region F planning group. Dr. Barnes has also served on other Boards and Commissions involving local water issues.
P	Patrick Brzozowski	Member of Enhancing Interregional Coordination Committee	Secretary Region P; General Manager, Lavaca-Navidad River Authority	Mr. Brzozowski has served as Secretary of the Region P RWPG since 2003. He is also the Administrative Agent for Region P.

## 7. Draft Action Plan

## Draft Action Plan – General Best Practices for Future Planning Committee

**Expected Outcome:** *Identify General Best Practices recommendations for the full Council to consider and compile the committee’s report section.*

Action Steps	Responsible	Deadline	Resources	Potential Barriers	Result
<b><i>What Will Be Done?</i></b>	<b><i>Who Will Do It?</i></b>	<b><i>By When?</i></b>	<b><i>What do you need to complete this step? (e.g., documents or data)</i></b>	<b><i>What could get in the way of task completion?</i></b>	<b><i>What is the outcome of the task?</i></b>
Research topics of simplified planning and membership engagement	Steve (simplified planning), Kelley (engagement)	7/28/2020			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Review Chapter 8 policy recommendations	Full Committee	7/28/2020-completed			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Provide steps for information dissemination to membership	Tomas	7/28/2020-completed			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Research TCEQ drinking water rule in relationship to planning	Russell	7/28/2020 - dropping			Inform discussion at committee meetings
Draft recommendation on video conferencing	Steve	8/6/2020			
Draft recommendation on admin funding	Russell	8/6/2020			

Provide list of non-voting member agencies by region	TWDB	8/6/2020			
Complete initial draft of committee report section	TWDB	8/20/2020			Draft document for committee to review and discuss
Review and edit draft committee report section	Full Committee	8/27/2020			Finalize committee report
Submit committee report to IPC	Full Committee	9/10/2020			Deliver document to full IPC
Present committee report to IPC	Committee Chair	9/15/2020			Approval of committee report by full IPC