

AGENDA ITEM MEMO

BOARD MEETING DATE: May 11, 2022

TO: Board Members

THROUGH: Jeff Walker, Executive Administrator
Ashley Harden, General Counsel
Rebecca Trevino, Chief Financial Officer
John T. Dupnik, P.G., Deputy Executive Administrator, Water Science and Conservation

FROM: Alysa Suydam, P.G., Manager, Brackish Resource Aquifer Characterization System (BRACS)
Larry French, P.G., Director, Groundwater

SUBJECT: Technical studies to support zone designations in brackish aquifers

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider authorizing the Executive Administrator to award, negotiate, and execute contracts in a total amount not to exceed \$1,681,446 million in General Revenue funds for technical studies to support zone designations in brackish aquifers.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, the 87th Texas Legislature appropriated \$1,681,446 million from General Revenue to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for contract grants for technical studies to support designating zones in Texas aquifers, except the Dockum Aquifer. Of these funds, \$840,723 may be transferred to the Water Assistance Fund No. 480 each fiscal year (Senate Bill 1, General Appropriations Act, 2021 Legislature, Regular Session, page VI-58, Rider 4).

These appropriations are related to funding initially provided in Rider 26 by the 84th Texas Legislature in 2015 to implement House Bill 30 (House Bill 1, General Appropriations Act, 2015 Legislature, Regular Session, page IX-87, Sec. 18.30). House Bill 30 directed the TWDB to identify and designate local and regional brackish groundwater production zones in areas of the state with moderate to high availability and productivity of brackish groundwater that met certain criteria.

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Brooke T. Paup, Chairwoman | Kathleen Jackson, Board Member

Jeff Walker, Executive Administrator

KEY ISSUES

To implement the directive, the \$1,681,446 appropriations will be used for contracting technical tasks to qualified contractors. The TWDB will publish a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and may additionally execute one or more interagency contracts with state and/or federal agencies. The RFQ is to engage a selective pool of qualified contractors that can conduct technical tasks for brackish aquifers eligible for zone designation. The scope of technical tasks will include: data collection, data entry, stratigraphy, lithology, seismic data evaluation, water quality sampling and analysis, core analysis, and other tasks. We will then issue specific work orders with task and deliverable requirements to the pool of contractors, who can then bid on the work order. The TWDB will score responses to work orders based on technical and budgetary criteria. This approach was utilized in the previous biennium and has proven to be an effective method of soliciting contract technical support.

The TWDB may execute one or more interagency contracts with state agencies, federal agencies and/or academic research groups as needed for specialized services such as replicating key well logs, running geophysical well log tools, obtaining water samples from higher salinity sources, evaluating brackish groundwater in selected transboundary aquifers, and conducting water quality testing.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to conduct technical studies to support designating zones in brackish aquifers as required by House Bill 30, the Executive Administrator recommends approval of awarding, negotiating, and executing contracts as proposed.