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AGENDA ITEM MEMO

BOARD MEETING DATE: June 25, 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 & Conservation

FROM: Marla Heger, Manager, Agricultural Water Conservation
Erika Mancha, Director, Conservation and Innovative Water Technologies

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2026 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider authorizing the Executive Administrator to execute contracts for Fiscal Year 2026 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants.

BACKGROUND

The Texas Water Development Board's (TWDB) Agricultural Water Conservation Grants Program annually offers grant funding to state agencies and political subdivisions for activities promoting water conservation in the state. Grant topics vary from year to year to address current issues in agricultural water conservation and to support water management strategies in the 2022 State Water Plan.

On December 16, 2025, the Board authorized the Executive Administrator to publish a request for applications for Fiscal Year 2026 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants, with up to $1.5 million in funding available. Projects eligible to apply must have met the definition of a conservation program or project (31 Texas Administrative Code §367.2 and §367.3), and achieve one or more of the following goals:

A. Improve irrigation efficiency through irrigation system improvements, such as the adoption of irrigation scheduling practices and irrigation district interconnections
B. Enhance resilience to weather extremes and climate variability
C. Promote innovation in agriculture by incorporating the latest water conservation technological advancements

KEY ISSUES

The request for applications was published in the *Texas Register*, the Electronic State Business Daily (ESBD), and on the TWDB website. Twenty-eight eligible applications were received in response to the solicitation, with applicants requesting a total of $8,686,534.60 in grant funding assistance. Attachment 1 provides a list of all eligible applications in alphabetical order including applicant name, brief project titles, grant funding request amounts, and total project costs.

A technical review panel reviewed and scored the applications according to the rules contained in 31 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 367. Scoring considered administrative requirements, project details including scope and deliverables, budget and funding information, emphasis on a commitment to water conservation and its associated benefits, and how the application addresses the goals of the grant program.

Table 1 displays the top scoring eligible applications being recommended for funding, amounts requested, and grant funding recommendations. Summaries of the recommended projects can be found in Attachment 2. If a contract cannot be executed with a recommended entity during contract negotiations, the next highest-scoring applicants will be selected until the funding for this fiscal year is exhausted.

Table 1. Top-scoring eligible applications and funding recommendations.

	Entity	Amount requested	Funding recommendation
1	Bayview Irrigation District No. 11	$500,000.00	$500,000.00
2	Donna Irrigation District	$166,125.00	$166,125.00
3	Edwards Aquifer Authority	$300,000.00	$300,000.00
4	Edwards Aquifer Authority	$55,000.00	$55,000.00
5	Evergreen Underground Water Conversation District	$50,000.00	$50,000.00
6	Maverick County Water Control and Improvement District No. 1	$91,006.25	$91,006.00
7	Engelman Irrigation District	$50,000.00	$50,000.00
8	Delta County Soil & Water Conversation District # 443	$155,000.00	$155,000.00
9	Chambers-Liberty Counties Navigation District	$29,003.00	$29,003.00
10	Sandy Land Underground Water Conversation District	$198,300.00	$103,866.00
	Total	**$1,594,434.25**	**$1,500,000.00**

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Administrator recommends approval of this item, as the projects will further water conservation in the state by supporting the implementation of agricultural conservation water management strategies in the 2022 State Water Plan.

Attachments:

1. List of eligible applications
2. Summaries of recommended projects

Attachment 1: List of eligible applications

Entity	Project	Local match	Grant request	Total cost
Bayview Irrigation District #11	Main Canal Pipe Conversion, Phase 2	$250,000	$500,000	$750,000
Bexar Medina Atascosa Water Control & Improvement District #1	Medina Lake System Agricultural Conveyance Loss Reduction & Conservation Piping Program	$500,000	$1,500,000	$2,000,000
Chambers-Liberty Counties Navigation District	Lateral Sonar Beam Flow Devices	$29,100	$29,003	$58,103
Delta County Soil & Water Conservation District #443	Reducing Tillage to Increase In-Soil Water Retention on Farm and Ranch Land (No-Till Drill Purchase)	$10,000	$155,000	$165,000
Donna Irrigation District	Portable Farm Outlet SCADA	$33,875	$166,125	$200,000
Edwards Aquifer Authority	Irrigation Efficiency Improvement Grant Program	$130,000	$300,000	$430,000
Edwards Aquifer Authority	Water Efficiency with Cover Crops Project	$82,000	$55,000	$137,000
Engelman Irrigation District	Main Canal to Pipeline	$260,028.12	$50,000	$310,028.12
Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District	Cost Share Reimbursement of Irrigation Meters	$50,000	$50,000	$100,000
Grimes County	Stormwater Capture & Storage System	$0	$678,000	$678,000
Hildalgo & Cameron Counties Irrigation District #9	Rehabilitation Of Existing Elevated Main Canal: 22 Automated Rubicon Control Structures/SCADA	$1,052,106.25	$1,500,000	$2,552,106.25
Maverick County WCID #1	Canal Control Gate Seal Replacement	$0	$91,006.25	$91,006.25
North Plains GCD	Master Irrigator Program Equipment Cost Share	$540,000	$265,000	$805,000
Sandy Land UWCD	Feasibility And Economic Evaluation of Supplemental Irrigation Supply from Treated Produced Water	$70,350	$198,300	$268,650

Attachment 1: List of eligible applications

Entity	Project	Local match	Grant request	Total cost
Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension	Building A User Friendly and No Cost AI Driven Irrigation Toolkit - Grape Growing	$0	$227,088	$227,088
Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension	Upgrade of the IT Framework of the TexasET Network, Website and Application	$0	$122,400	$122,400
Texas A&M AgriLife Research/ Midwestern State University	Assessment Of Data Center Wastewater Reuse for Turfgrass Irrigation and Sod Production	$0	$316,673	$316,673
Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center At El Paso	Atmospheric Water Harvesting Technology for Improved Water-Use Efficiency and Drought Resilience in Far West Texas Agriculture	$0	$264,381	$264,381
Texas A&M AgriLife Research College Station	Assessing The Water Conservation Potential of Protected Agriculture: High Tunnel Tomatoes	$0	$250,000	$250,000
Texas A&M AgriLife Research	Irrigation Strategies for Water Conservation in Citrus Orchards	$0	$193,065	$193,065
Texas A&M AgriLife Water & Natural Resources	Improving Water Use Efficiency and Enhancing Water Conservation Through Education and Adoption and Application of Technology	$0	$311,760	$311,760
Texas A&M AgriLife Rangeland, Wildlife, And Fisheries Management	Enhancing Water Efficiency and Conservation with Coupled Prescribed Fire and Rotational Grazing	$70,000	$232,827	$302,827
Texas A&M Hood Family Center for Greenhouse Gas Management	Integrating Irrigation Systems and Regenerative Practices to Develop a Water-Smart Sustainability Index for Texas Cropping Systems	$1,400,000	$230,680	$1,630,680

Attachment 1: List of eligible applications

Entity	Project	Local match	Grant request	Total cost
Texas A&M University – Kingsville	Fostering Sustainable Crop Management Practices to Mitigate Salinity Stress and Improve Soil Water Dynamics	$126,000	$295,586	$421,586
Texas A&M University Biological and Agricultural Engineering	TEXAS IRRIGATE – Agricultural Water Conservation Assessment Tool for Center Pivot and Linear Move Irrigation Systems	$0	$149,974	$149,974
Texas A&M University Kingsville Citrus Center	Exploring Alternative Planting Systems to Enhance Water Use Efficiency and Productivity of Dragon Fruit in South Texas	$0	$120,000	$120,000
Texas A&M University – Kingsville	Enhanced Soil Moisture Retention: An Approach for Agricultural Water Conservation	$16,500	$246,170.35	$262,670.35
Texas Tech University	Integrated Satellite and Sensor-Based Decision Support for Irrigation Optimization and Groundwater Conservation in Texas High Plains	$0	$188,496.00	$188,496.00
	Total	**$4,619,959.37**	**$8,686,535**	**$13,306,493.97**

Notes: awards are made in whole dollars.
GCD – groundwater conservation district; ID – irrigation district; WID – water improvement district; UWCD – underground water conservation district.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Bayview Irrigation District #11

Main Canal Pipe Conversion, Phase 2

TWDB amount requested	$500,000
Local cash or in-kind	$250,000
Total project cost	$750,000
Estimated annual water savings	62.42 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $500,000. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants: Bayview Irrigation District #11(BVID11), Cameron County Water Improvement District #10, the City of Los Fresnos, Cameron County Agricultural Extension Service, and area agricultural producers.

Project area: This project will be located in eastern Cameron County within the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Project summary: This project is Phase 2 of the 6.88-mile main canal pipe conversion project. Phase 1 was the completion of 2,580 linear feet of pipe conversion in September 2022 and accounts for 120.85 acre-feet of water savings annually. Phase 2 adds 1,325 linear feet of pipe conversion for an additional water savings of 62.42 acre-feet annually. BVID11 and partners are committed to the 1,673.5 acre-feet of annual water savings that will be realized by the total 6.88-mile project. It will conserve 83,675 acre-feet over a 50-year lifespan and promote innovative on-farm conservation.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies in the 2026 Rio Grande (Region M) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded): The project would involve an estimated four-year construction period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Donna Irrigation District
Portable Farm Outlet SCADA

TWDB amount requested	$166,125
Local cash or in-kind	$33,875
Total project cost	$200,000
Estimated annual water savings	180 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $166,125. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Donna Irrigation District and participating producers.

Project area:
This project will be located within the Donna Irrigation District boundaries.

Project summary:
The project will design, procure, and implement two portable Farm Outlet SCADA meters to enable irrigators to accurately measure flow at any field location using flexible irrigation pipe. These meters provide remote controls, monitoring, and precise metering. Irrigators will be able to rent and relocate the meters as fields are irrigated, while the district accurately monitors consumption and farmers can control flow rates. A consumption-based pricing model will encourage more efficient water use compared to fixed per-acre costs.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies in the 2026 Rio Grande (Region M) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated three-year implementation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Edwards Aquifer Authority

Irrigation Efficiency Improvement Grant Program

TWDB amount requested	$300,000
Local cash or in-kind	$130,000
Total project cost	$430,000
Estimated annual water savings	200 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $300,000. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) and the irrigation permit holders within the EAA jurisdictional area.

Project area:
This program will be located within the EAA jurisdiction.

Project summary:
This project would continue the EAA Irrigation Efficiency Improvement Grant Program. The program improves water efficiency by implementing water conservation strategies among permitted Edwards Aquifer users. The program solicits applications from irrigation permit holders for the purchase and installation of more efficient irrigation systems and technologies such as overhead sprinkler systems and subsurface drip irrigation systems.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies in the 2026 South Central Texas (Region L) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated one-year implementation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Edwards Aquifer Authority

Water Efficiency Improvement Grant Program

TWDB amount requested	$55,000
Local cash or in-kind	$82,000
Total project cost	$137,000
Estimated annual water savings	1 million gallons

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $55,000. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) and agricultural producers within the EAA jurisdictional area.

Project area:
This program will be conducted in Hondo.

Project summary:
The EAA's Water Efficiency with Cover Crops project will assess long-term effects of cover crop strategies on soil water dynamics, water use efficiency, soil health, and crop yield in row crop systems. A 50-acre demonstration field will compare three to four cover crop mixtures with a small no-cover control area. Data on soil carbon, soil moisture, and yield will generate locally relevant results to help producers improve irrigation efficiency and productivity.

This project supports implementation of the crop residue management and conservation tillage strategies in the 2026 South Central Texas (Region L) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated five-year study period to include at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District

Cost Share Reimbursement of Irrigation Meters

TWDB amount requested	$50,000
Local cash or in-kind	$50,000
Total project cost	$100,000
Estimated annual water savings	925 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $50,000. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District (EUWCD) and agricultural producers within the district.

Project area:
This project will be located in Atascosa, Frio, Wilson, and Karnes counties.

Project summary:
The EUWCD will provide cost-share assistance to install flow meters on producers' irrigation wells and track annual pumpage across the district. This effort will support wider adoption of metering, enable accurate measurement of water use, and provide data to help producers improve water management and conservation. With the requested funds, the district's goal is to assist with the installation of 41 meters.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies (improved real-time use metering and monitoring of groundwater production) in the 2026 South Central Texas (Region L) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated two- and one-half-year installation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Maverick County Water Control and Improvement District No.1

Canal Control Gate Seal Replacement

TWDB amount requested	$91,006.25
Local cash or in-kind	$0
Total project cost	$91,006.25
Estimated annual water savings	1,037 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $91,006. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Maverick County Water Control and Improvement District No.1 (MCWCID1).

Project area:
The project area is within the service boundaries of the MCWCID1 located in Maverick County, adjacent to the Rio Grande and the United States–Mexico border, near Eagle Pass.

Project summary:
The Gate Seal Replacement Project will reduce water losses, improve hydraulic control, and generate measurable water savings within the district's irrigation system. Deteriorated gate seals currently allow continuous leakage, reducing conveyance efficiency, and wasting limited surface water supplies. The district will measure leakage before and after installation of modern watertight seals to quantify water savings. Serving 38,000 acres and 862 agricultural accounts through a 33-mile canal system, the project will restore operational control, improve irrigation scheduling, prevent over delivery and spill losses, and strengthen long-term system sustainability and agricultural productivity.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies in the 2026 Rio Grande (Region M) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated one-year installation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Engelman Irrigation District

Main Canal to Pipeline Conversion

TWDB amount requested	$50,000
Local cash or in-kind	$260,028.12
Total project cost	$310,028.12
Estimated annual water savings	34.25 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $50,000. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Engelman Irrigation District and area agricultural producers.

Project area:
The project is located within Hidalgo County, approximately 3.25 miles north of FM 107 and 1.75 miles west of FM 88 near the City of Elsa.

Project summary:
The project aims to enhance water conservation by converting a 1,320 linear foot segment of the main canal to a 30-inch PVC pipeline. This improvement will eliminate seepage and evaporation losses. These enhancements will enable the district to meter the turnouts, and irrigation users will be able to implement more efficient on-farm conservation practices such as the use of poly pipe.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies in the 2026 Rio Grande (Region M) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated two-year construction period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Delta County Soil and Water Conservation District #443

Reducing Tillage to Increase In-soil Water Retention on Farm and Ranch Land

TWDB amount requested	$155,000
Local cash or in-kind	$10,000
Total project cost	$165,000
Estimated annual water savings	100 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $155,000. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Delta County Soil and Water Conservation District #443, and county agricultural producers.

Project area:
This project would be implemented across Delta County, located in northeast Texas.

Project summary:
This project, through the purchase of no-till equipment, will enable local farmers and ranchers to adopt proven water conservation practices by providing access to the equipment through a structured loan program. By reducing producer financial barriers, the project will accelerate implementation of no-till farming, which improves soil structure, increases water-holding capacity, and enhances infiltration. These benefits reduce evaporative losses and improve the efficiency of rainfall use, resulting in measurable water savings and reduced reliance on supplemental irrigation.

This project supports implementation of water conservation strategies in the 2022 State Water Plan to include residue and tillage management best management practices

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated two-year implementation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Chambers-Liberty Counties Navigation District

Lateral Sonar Beam Flow Devices

TWDB amount requested	$29,003
Local cash or in-kind	$29,100
Total project cost	$58,103
Estimated annual water savings	To be determined

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $29,003. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Chambers-Liberty Navigation District and district producers.

Project area:
This project will be implemented in the district's agricultural irrigation service area located east of the Trinity River in Chambers County.

Project summary:
This project will procure and install three sonar-beam flow measurement devices within the lateral canal system to crawfish operations. The devices will quantify actual water use in crawfish production by measuring volume applied per acre, replacing the current flat-rate estimation method. By establishing a baseline of true water use in acre-feet, the project will enable identification and reduction of excess application, with the goal of achieving measurable water savings (e.g., a percentage reduction in water use per acre compared to pre-project estimates) while maintaining production levels.

This project supports implementation of irrigation water conservation strategies in the 2026 Region H Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated one-year implementation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.

Attachment 2: Summaries of recommended projects

Sandy Land Underground Water Conservation District
Feasibility and Economic Evaluation of Supplemental Irrigation Supply from Treated Produced Water

TWDB amount requested	$198,300
Local cash or in-kind	$70,350
Total project cost	$268,650
Estimated annual water savings	700 acre-feet

This project is recommended for TWDB grant funding in an amount not to exceed $103,866. The actual local match and total project amount will be determined during contract negotiations.

Participants:
Sandy Land Underground Water Conservation District

Project area:
The project will be conducted within the jurisdictional boundaries of the district within Yoakum County.

Project summary:
This project will analyze whether treated produced water from nearby oil and gas development, potentially exceeding 150,000 barrels per day, could serve as a supplemental irrigation supply. The evaluation will assess treatment feasibility, recoverable volumes, delivery options, and producer economics to determine whether produced water reuse could support future groundwater conservation strategies.

This project supports implementation of agricultural irrigation efficiency, groundwater sustainability, and drought preparedness strategies identified in the 2026 Llano Estacado (Region O) Regional Water Plan.

Project duration (to be determined during contract negotiations, if funded):
The project would involve an estimated one-year implementation period followed by at least three years of water savings reporting.