

Regional Water Planning Group Member Overview

Sixth Cycle of Regional Water Planning

Water Supply Planning Division
Regional Water Planning

Table of Contents

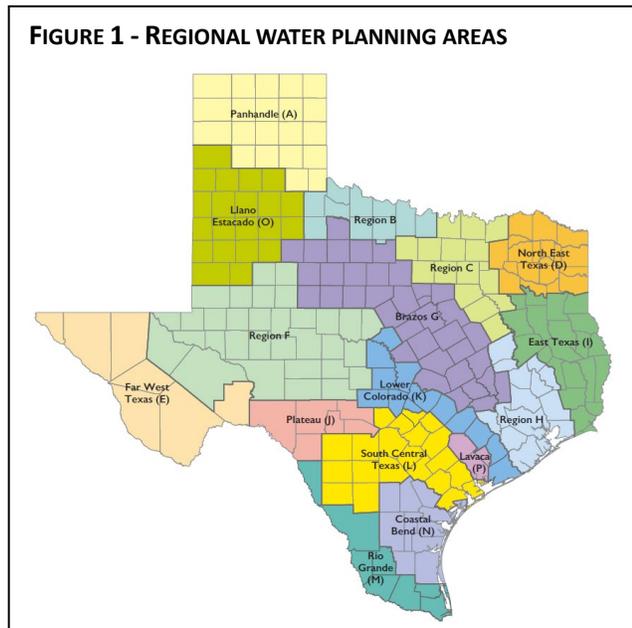
1	Background on the regional water planning process	3
2	Key roles and responsibilities	4
2.1	RWPG member roles and responsibilities	4
2.1.1	Voting member role and responsibilities	4
2.1.2	Non-voting member role and responsibilities	5
2.1.3	Liaison role and responsibilities	5
2.2	RWPG sponsor role and responsibilities	5
2.3	Technical consultant roles and responsibilities	6
2.4	Texas Water Development Board role and responsibilities.....	6
2.5	Stakeholder role and responsibilities	7
3	How the planning process is funded.....	7
4	Regional water planning considerations and plan contents	8
4.1	Guidance principles and general considerations	9
4.2	Regional water plan content and deliverables	9
4.3	Public notice and participation.....	11
5	TWDB regional water planning resources.....	11
6	Terminology primer.....	12

1 Background on the regional water planning process

The goal of Texas' water planning process is to ensure that we have adequate water supplies in times of drought. Water is Texas' most precious natural resource and is routinely impacted during recurring periods of drought. Texas has a long history of drought, and there is no sign of that pattern changing; in fact, recent droughts remind us that more severe drought conditions could occur in the future.

In response a severe statewide drought (1950-1957), the Texas Legislature initiated the state's water planning efforts with the passage of the Water Planning Act of 1957, which assigned the responsibility of water planning on a statewide level to the Board of Water Engineers. Statewide water planning was assigned to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) in 1965. Between 1961-1997, six state-level water plans were developed.

Following intense drought conditions in the mid-1990s, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1 in 1997 to improve the development and management of the state's water resources. Senate Bill 1 established the regional water planning process based on a bottom-up approach to encourage involvement by those directly responsible for providing water and affected by water supply.



With extensive stakeholder input, the TWDB established the 16 regional water planning areas (RWPAs) (**Figure 1**). Each RWPA has its' own regional water planning group (RWPG) which coordinates the water planning process. Each RWPG is made up of an average of about 20 voting members that represent the following statutorily required interest group categories:

- public
- counties
- municipalities
- industry
- agriculture
- environment
- small business
- electric-generating utilities
- river authorities
- water districts
- water utilities
- groundwater management areas

Every five years, each RWPG develops and adopts a 50-year water supply plan. The TWDB considers the 16 regional water plans (RWPs) for approval and incorporates information from those plans and other sources to produce the corresponding state water plan (SWP). From 1997 to the present, five sets of regional and state water plans have been developed.

All planning group work must be performed, and all deadlines must be met in accordance with statute, agency rules, and the grant contracts with the TWDB. RWPGs conduct all business during open meetings in a transparent and participatory manner. Public involvement helps direct planning efforts.

2 Key roles and responsibilities

The overarching goal of each RWPG is to produce an RWP covering a 50-year planning horizon every five years. There are several entities that are involved in the regional water planning process, and each has a role to play and responsibilities to carry out. These entities include RWPG voting members, RWPG non-voting members, RWPG liaisons, the RWPG’s sponsors, technical consultants, and the TWDB (**Figure 2**). Stakeholders, including the public and project sponsors (water providers responsible for implementing the projects recommended in the plans), also play a crucial, participatory role along the way.

FIGURE 2 - REGIONAL WATER PLANNING PARTICIPANTS



2.1 RWPG member roles and responsibilities

2.1.1 Voting member role and responsibilities



The core functions of regional water planning process revolve around the RWPG voting members—the variety of expertise they bring to the planning group, and the decisions that they make in developing their plans. Each voting member is appointed to represent one of the 12 statutorily required interest group categories identified in Section 1. RWPGs may add additional interest categories as they see fit; examples include real estate, travel and tourism, economic development, higher education, and recreation.

Key responsibilities of voting members include the following:

- Attend meetings and represent their interest category in the planning process
- Become familiar with and follow the bylaws of their respective RWPG
- Become informed on regional water planning rules and guidelines as well as topics on which RWPG voting members are asked to make decisions
- Review meeting materials in advance of meetings
- Actively participate in, and contribute supporting information to, the development of the RWP and take into consideration the water needs of all interests in the region
- Engage or solicit information relevant for the interest category they represent in the region
- Consider local plans developed by local entities when developing the RWP
- Participate in directing work the technical consultants perform on the RWPG’s behalf to develop the RWP
- Review and provide feedback on draft plan content developed by consultants
- Coordinate with other RWPGs for data consistency, opportunities for shared water management strategies and projects, and conflict avoidance where possible

- Ensure adoption of an RWP that meets all requirements by the statutory deadline
- Complete the Office of Attorney General’s [Open Meetings Act](#) and [Public Information Act](#) training

2.1.2 Non-voting member role and responsibilities



RWPGs include non-voting members from the TWDB; Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA); Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD); State Soil and Water Conservation Board; a liaison from each adjacent RWPG; and a representative of any entity that holds surface water rights of 1,000 acre-feet per year in the RWPA, whose headquarters are in another RWPA.

Key responsibilities of non-voting members include the following:

- Attend meetings to represent and act as a liaison for their affiliated entity in the regional water planning process
- Provide input on their areas of expertise and become familiar with planning issues
- Support the voting membership in the development of the RWP

2.1.3 Liaison role and responsibilities



Planning rules require RWPGs to assign liaisons to all adjacent RWPGs. RWPG liaisons serve as voting members in their primary region and as non-voting members of the adjacent region to which they are assigned as a liaison.

Responsibilities of RWPG liaisons can vary by region, but generally include the following:

- Attend neighboring RWPG meetings, as assigned, and act as a liaison for their primary RWPG
- Become informed on planning activities in their assigned region(s)
- Provide updates at meetings, as requested, on planning activities in their primary or assigned liaison regions
- Look for opportunities for interregional coordination and collaboration

2.2 RWPG Sponsor role and responsibilities



RWPGs must designate a political subdivision to act as the representative of the RWPG and oversee the administration of the regional water planning process on behalf of the RWPG, i.e the Sponsor of the RWPG. Examples of sponsors for RWPGs include river authorities, municipalities, and councils of government.

Key responsibilities of the RWPG sponsors include the following:

- Apply for and receive grant funds from the TWDB for the development of an RWP or a plan revision, pursuant to 31 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §355 and §357
- Execute the primary regional water planning grant contract with the TWDB
- Procure the technical consultant that will assist the RWPG with plan development in accordance with Texas Government Code Chapter 2254
- Execute a subcontract with the technical consultant(s)
- Administer regional water planning contracts with TWDB and subcontracts with consultants, including invoicing and payment for eligible activities
- Organize the RWPG meeting locations, public notices, agendas, meeting presentations, handouts, meeting minutes, and new member solicitations

- Ensure all regular, committee, and subcommittee meetings of the RWPG are posted and held in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Texas Public Information Act, and regional water planning statutes and rules
- Maintain the RWPG website and member contact information

2.3 Technical consultant roles and responsibilities



Technical consultants are procured at the beginning of each planning cycle to assist the planning group in the development of the RWP. The RWPG sponsor procures and enters into a contract with technical consultants on behalf of the RWPG.

Key responsibilities of technical consultants include the following:

- Enter into subcontracts with the sponsors on behalf of the RWPGs
- Perform the regional water planning contract scope of work tasks
- Receive direction from the RWPG and sponsors
- Present their work at RWPG meetings for consideration and approval
- Provide documentation of, and invoices for, their work to the sponsors
- Develop complete RWPs under direction of the RWPGs
- Populate data into the state water planning database
- Produce all final contract deliverables to be submitted to the TWDB, in accordance with statute, rule, and contract requirements
- Participate in RWPG meetings, committees, and sub-committees

2.4 Texas Water Development Board role and responsibilities



The TWDB is the agency designated by the Texas Legislature to provide technical and financial assistance to the regional water planning process. Each RWPG has an assigned regional water planner from the TWDB who serves as a non-voting member of the planning group and is the liaison between the agency and the planning groups, sponsors and indirectly, the consultants.

Key responsibilities of the TWDB regional water planners include the following:

- Serve as non-voting members of their assigned RWPGs
- Provide and clarify administrative and technical guidance and agency data to the RWPGs, sponsors, and consultants in the development of the RWPs
- Orient new members and facilitate communication
- Administer the TWDB contract with the RWPG sponsor
- Help to ensure that the final RWPs meet statute, rule, and contract requirements

The TWDB is also responsible for the following tasks related to regional water planning:

- Provide financial assistance to RWPGs in the development of the RWPs
- Adopt rules and guidance that govern the development and adoption of RWPs
- Consult with several state agencies prior to the adoption of final population and water demand projections, including the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the TDA, and the TPWD
- Review and update state water planning guidance principles at least every five years, in coordination with the TCEQ, the TDA, and the TPWD
- Review and update the designation of RWPA's at least every five years

- Review and approve RWPs that meet statute, rule, and contract requirements
- Maintain the state water planning databases
- Incorporate information from approved RWPs in the corresponding SWP
- Develop and adopt a comprehensive SWP every five years

2.5 Stakeholder role and responsibilities



Regional water planning stakeholders include water user groups, project sponsors (e.g., water providers), and the public. Stakeholders provide important information and direction throughout the planning process.

Key stakeholder responsibilities include the following:

- Provide local information and local water plans to the RWPG for consideration and incorporation into the RWP
- Water providers in the region are presented as ‘sponsors’ of projects in the regional water plans and are responsible for implementing the strategies and infrastructure projects recommended in the regional water plans
- Respond to RWPG surveys and requests for information
- Complete and submit required water use reports, water loss audits, conservation annual reports, water conservation plans, and drought contingency plans, as these reports and plans provide valuable data for the planning process
- Coordinate with the RWPG to ensure local information is accurately represented in the RWP
- Provide public comments throughout the planning cycle at RWPG meetings
- Review and provide comments on the draft RWP

3 How the planning process is funded

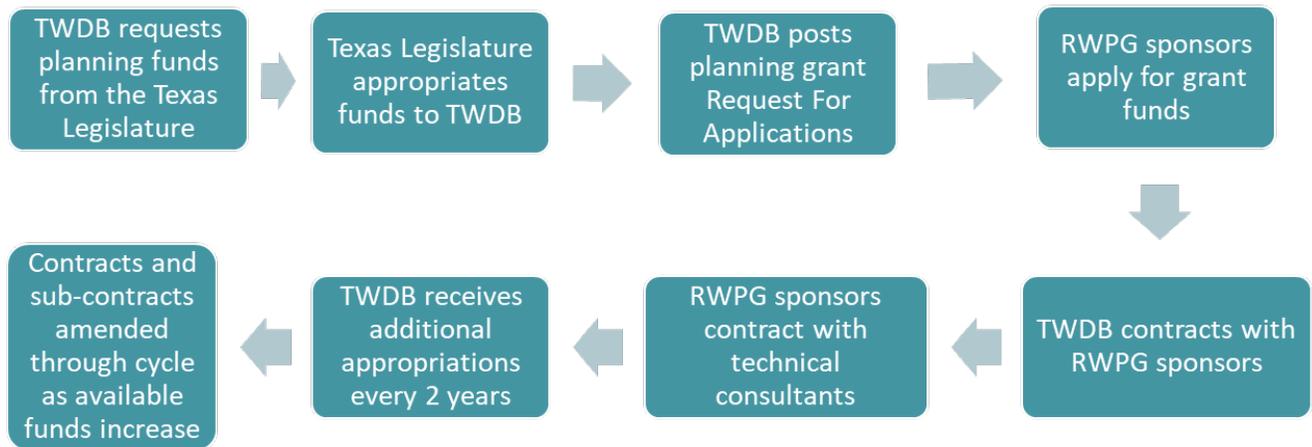
The five-year regional water planning process and development of the RWPs is funded through grants administered by the TWDB based on appropriations received from the Texas State Legislature. The overall process is illustrated in **Figure 3**. During each legislative session (every two years), the Texas Legislature appropriates funds that will be spent during the next biennium, and each session the TWDB requests funding for the regional and state water planning process.

Each regional water planning cycle, the sponsor must apply for grant funding through a Request for Applications issued by the TWDB. After regional water planning grant contract execution with the TWDB, the sponsor will be responsible for procuring and executing a subcontract with a technical consultant selected by the RWPG in accordance with the procurement requirements in Texas Government Code Chapter 2254.

Since regional water planning funds are appropriated every two years, the regional water planning contracts include an estimated total project cost that is the total anticipated funding amount for the entire five-year contract period. The contracts are then amended throughout the cycle to increase the amount of available (committed) funds per region, as the additional appropriated funds become available.

Regional water planning grant contracts and sub-contracts contain detailed information regarding eligible and ineligible expenses for the sponsors, consultants, and RWPG members.

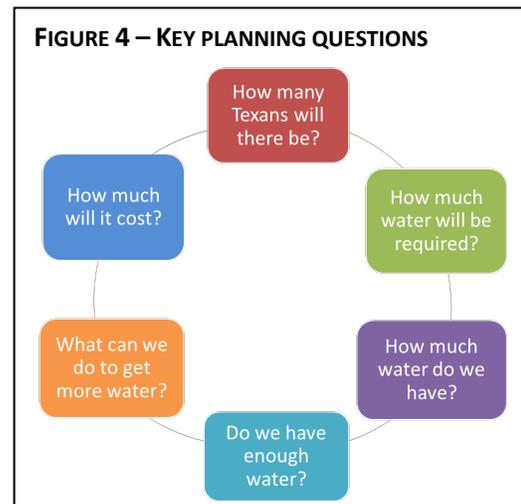
FIGURE 3 - REGIONAL WATER PLANNING FUNDING PROCESS



4 Regional water planning considerations and plan contents

To develop their RWP, RWPGs collect and evaluate information for their region and seek to answer the key planning questions outlined in **Figure 4**. RWPGs evaluate population projections, water demand projections, water availability, and existing water supplies. Each RWPG then identifies water needs (shortages) and recommends water management strategies and water management strategy projects to address those needs. RWPGs also consider the impacts and costs of their RWP.

The six categories of water use planned for include municipal, manufacturing, mining, irrigation, livestock, and steam-electric power generation. Data developed through the planning process for water user groups are broken-down geographically by region, county, and river basin.



The key documents that form the legal framework hierarchy of Texas’ state and regional water planning include statute, agency rules, and the contract and related guidance, in the following order:

1. Water Planning Statute - Texas Water Code [§16.051](#) and [§16.053](#)
2. TWDB Water Planning Rules - 31 Texas Administrative Code [Chapter 357](#) and [Chapter 358](#)
3. TWDB grant contract including [contract boilerplate, scope of work, and guidance documents](#)

It is recommended that RWPG members become familiar with these documents as they are the basis of the regional water planning effort.

It is also important to note that RWPGs are not regulatory entities and the information and policy recommendations presented in RWPs are not enforceable by the RWPGs. RWPs are high level, long-term water supply plans. Recommended water management strategies and projects included in an RWP may require additional detailed evaluations by the project sponsor prior to permitting and implementation.

4.1 Guidance principles and general considerations

TWDB rules include [28 guidance principles](#) that guide development of the regional and state water plans. RWPs are required to be consistent with these guidance principles. TWDB rules also specify certain [general considerations](#) that RWPGs must take into account when developing the RWP including existing local, regional, and state water planning efforts when developing the RWP.

4.2 Regional water plan content and deliverables¹

The sixth cycle of regional water planning consists of 10 tasks that are identified in the TWDB's regional water planning rules, guidelines, and contract scope of work. The RWPGs will be required to meet regularly to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Description of the regional water planning area
2. Projected population and water demands (quantification of projected population and water demand for all identified water user groups over a 50-year planning horizon)
3. Water supply analysis (evaluation of existing water supplies and source availability)
4. Identification of water needs (comparison existing water supplies and projected water demands to identify water supply needs—*a need is a potential shortage where a water demand cannot be met with existing supplies*), identification of infeasible water management strategies, and submittal of a technical memorandum
5. Identification and evaluation of potentially feasible water management strategies and recommendation of water management strategies and projects
6. Impacts of the RWP (evaluation of impacts of the RWP and description of how the plan is consistent with long-term protection of the state's water, agricultural, and natural resources).
7. Drought response information, activities, and recommendations
8. Recommendations regarding any regulatory, administrative, or legislative changes relevant to the regional water planning process; recommendations regarding unique stream segments and unique reservoir sites
9. Implementation and comparison to the previous RWP (status of implementation of the region's previously recommended water management strategies and projects and summary of how the RWP differs from the previously adopted RWP)
10. Public participation and plan adoption (adoption of the plan, ensuring the required level of public participation in this process, and submittal of the adopted plan to the TWDB for approval by the deadline disseminated by the TWDB)

TWDB's regional water planning grant contract scope of work and guidance documents provide further details for how to meet technical data and information requirements for each task. These requirements are important because they facilitate the TWDB incorporation of the 16 RWPs into the SWP. The regional water planning grant contract also includes several required deliverables described below.

Revision requests to modify the draft population and water demand projections

Revision requests to modify the draft population and water demand projections is the first deliverable of each planning cycle. Draft population and water demand projections are initially developed by the TWDB and then provided to the RWPGs for an opportunity to review and request revisions (with

¹ For full details, see 31 TAC §357-358 and the General Guidelines for Sixth Cycle of Regional Water Plan Development.

acceptable justification and documentation). Local input during the review process is important for improving the accuracy of the projections, which are the backbone of data in the planning process.

All requests to adjust draft projections must be submitted to the TWDB along with associated quantified data. If adequate justification is provided, draft projections may be adjusted by the TWDB in consultation with TDA, TCEQ, and TPWD. The TWDB will then incorporate approved adjustments to the projections prior to the Board's consideration of adoption of the population and water demand projections. The RWPGs must use the Board-adopted projections when preparing their RWPs.

Technical Memorandum

The technical memorandum is a midpoint deliverable which presents a preliminary analysis of population, water demand projections, water availability, existing water supply, and water needs. The technical memorandum also includes the following:

- The RWPG's process to identify potentially feasible water management strategies and a list of all potentially feasible water management strategies identified to date
- A summary of the RWPG's interregional coordination efforts to date
- A list of infeasible water management strategies and projects, or a statement that no infeasible water management strategies and projects were identified by the RWPG
- Declaration of intent to pursue simplified planning in off-census planning cycles

Initially Prepared Plan

Prior to adoption of the final RWP, the RWPGs must submit a draft plan, the Initially Prepared Plan (IPP), concurrently to the TWDB and the public for review. There is a significant public comment period associated with the IPP that allows time for the draft plan to be reviewed by the public. The RWPG must also present the IPP for comment at a public hearing.

The public comment period is 60 days for the public and state and federal agencies and 120 days for the TWDB. During the 120-day comment period, the TWDB thoroughly reviews the plans to ensure they meet statute, rule, and contract requirements. All comments received on the IPP are required to be addressed in the final RWP.

Within 60 days of submitting the IPP to the TWDB, RWPGs must also notify the TWDB and other affected RWPGs of potential interregional conflicts. Negotiated resolutions or TWDB resolutions regarding interregional conflicts will be incorporated into the final RWPs.

Final Regional Water Plan

The final, adopted RWP must meet requirements outlined in statute, administrative rules, and TWDB planning grant contract scope of work and guidance documents. The final RWP must include a copy of TWDB comments on the IPP and summaries of all other comments received with a response by the RWPG explaining how the plan was revised or why changes were not warranted. The final RWP must be submitted to the TWDB for approval. RWPs approved by the TWDB Board are then incorporated into the SWP.

State Water Planning Database

RWPGs are required to populate the state water planning database with data generated during development of the RWP. Planning groups rely on this database to produce portions of their regional water plans, including calculating water needs for each water user group, meeting certain data reporting requirements, and to help avoid over-allocating water sources. Data from the state water planning database is used to develop the state water plan and interactive state water plan.

4.3 Public notice and participation

The planning process is a transparent process that includes many opportunities for public input throughout the planning cycle. Each RWPG and any committee or subcommittee of the group are subject to the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act. In addition to meeting the public notice requirements of the Open Meetings Act, RWPGs must follow public notice requirements outlined in the TWDB's regional water planning rules. Public notice requirements vary depending on the activity or action to be taken at a RWPG meeting. A link to the TWDB's public notification quick reference guide is included in Section 5.

Notable public input opportunities with specific notice requirements that every RWPG must adhere to include the following:

- Pre-planning public meetings to obtain input on development of the RWP
- Approval of the process for identifying potentially feasible water management strategies and presenting the analysis of infeasible water management strategies
- Public hearing and written comment periods on the IPP
- Approval and submission of the IPP, final plan, and plan amendments

5 TWDB regional water planning resources

The TWDB provides a wide variety of online information relevant to the regional water planning process. Below are links to resources that RWPG voting and non-voting members should become familiar with:

General Regional Water Planning Resources

- [Regional Water Planning Main Page](#)
- [New RWPG Member Page](#)
- [Regional Water Planning Educational Documents](#)
- [Regional Water Planning FAQs](#)
- [Useful Water Planning Links and Resources](#)
- [Water Planning Rules and Texas Statute Reference Pamphlet](#)
- [Regional Water Planning Public Notification Quick-Reference Document](#)

Current Planning Cycle Documents

- [RWPG Meeting Schedule](#)
- [Sixth Cycle Working Documents Page](#)
- [2026 RWP Draft Demand Projections Data Dashboard](#)

Regional and State Water Plans

- [Approved 2021 Regional Water Plans](#)
- [2022 State Water Plan](#)
- [2021 Regional Water Plan Summaries](#)
- [Interactive State Water Plan](#)

TWDB Agency Information and Planning Staff Contacts

- [Agency Program Information Sheets](#)
- [Water Supply Planning Staff Contact List](#)

Please feel free to ask your region's TWDB [regional water planner](#) for assistance navigating any of the resources provided above.

6 Terminology primer

Below are a few key terms frequently used in the regional water planning process. A more extensive definitions list can be found at the beginning of the regional water planning rules ([31 TAC §357.10](#)).

- **Availability** – The maximum amount of raw water that could be produced by a source during a repeat of the drought of record, regardless of whether the supply is physically connected to, or legally accessible by, water user groups.
- **Drought of Record (DOR)** – The period of time when historical records indicate that natural hydrological conditions would have provided the least amount of water supply.
- **Existing Supply** – The maximum amount of water that is physically and legally accessible from existing sources for immediate use by a water user group under a repeat of drought of record conditions.
- **Major Water Provider (MWP)** – A water user group or a wholesale water provider of particular significance to the region's water supply as determined by the RWPG. This may include public or private entities that provide water for any water use category.
- **Unmet Need** – The portion of an identified water need that is not met by recommended WMSs.
- **Water Demand** – The volume of water required to carry out the anticipated domestic, public, and/or economic activities of a water user group during drought conditions.
- **Water Management Strategy (WMS)** – A plan to meet a need for additional water by a discrete water user group, which can mean increasing the total water supply or maximizing an existing supply, including through reducing demands. A WMS may or may not require an associated WMSP(s) to be implemented.
- **Water Management Strategy Project (WMSP)** – A water project that has a non-zero capital cost and that when implemented, would develop, deliver, and/or treat additional water supply volumes, or conserve water for water user groups or wholesale water providers. One WMSP may be associated with multiple WMSs.
- **Water Need** – A potential water supply shortage based on the difference between projected water demands and existing water supplies. Needs can often be met by recommended strategies in the plans.
- **Water User Group (WUG)** – Identified user or group of users for which water demands and existing water supplies have been identified and analyzed and plans developed to meet water needs.
- **Wholesale Water Provider (WWP)** – Any person or entity, including river authorities and irrigation districts, that delivers or sells water wholesale (treated or raw) to WUGs or other WWPs or that the RWPG expects or recommends to deliver or sell water wholesale to WUGs or other WWPs during the period covered by the plan. The RWPGs shall identify the WWPs within each region to be evaluated for plan development.