

# Designating Unique Stream Segments and Unique Reservoir Sites

## What do these designations mean?

Designation of a **unique river or stream segment** of unique ecological value means that a state agency or political subdivision of the state may not finance the actual construction of a reservoir in that specific river or stream segment.

Designation of a **unique reservoir site** means that a state agency or political subdivision of the state may not obtain a fee title or an easement that would significantly prevent the construction of a reservoir. Without such designations, actions by state or local government entities could compromise the viability of these sites for future reservoir development.

## What are the criteria for recommending the designation of a unique stream segment or a unique reservoir site?

A river or stream segment may be considered being of unique ecological value based upon the following criteria:<sup>1</sup>

- Biological function
- Hydrological function
- Riparian conservation areas
- High water quality
- Exceptional aquatic life
- High aesthetic value
- Threatened or endangered species/unique communities

A site may be considered as a unique site for reservoir construction based upon the following criteria:

- Site-specific reservoir development is recommended as a specific water management strategy or as a unique site in an adopted regional water plan (RWP).
- Or, the location or hydrologic, geologic, topographic, water availability, water

quality, environmental, cultural, and current development characteristics or other pertinent factors make the site uniquely suited for a) reservoir development to provide water supply for the current planning period or b) meeting needs beyond the 50-year planning horizon

## How are unique stream segments or unique reservoir sites designated?

Either type of site may be first identified as unique by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) or recommended in an approved RWP, based on the aforementioned criteria. Designations are ultimately made by the Texas Legislature.

If a regional water planning group (RWPG) includes a recommendation for a unique river or stream segment in its RWP, it must first coordinate with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). The RWPG must develop a recommendation package in accordance with [31 TAC § 357.43\(b\)](#) and forward the recommendation package to the TPWD. The TPWD will provide a written evaluation to the RWPG.

Recommendation packages must include physical descriptions of the river or stream segments, maps, and supporting literature and data to justify the recommendation. If the RWPG is recommending a river or stream segment that was recommended in a previous plan but not designated by the legislature, a recommendation package must be submitted to the TPWD for an updated written evaluation.

The TWDB will consider the RWPG's recommendations of unique river or stream segments and unique reservoir sites during development of the state water plan.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed criteria is described in [31 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) § 358.2\(6\)](#)

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The state water plan will include the TWDB's and/or the RWPG's recommendations of unique river or stream segments and unique reservoir sites to the Texas Legislature for potential designation.

**If an RWPG recommends designation of a unique stream segment, or if the legislature has designated a stream segment as unique, what associated content must be included in the regional water plan?**

For recommendations regarding unique river or stream segments, the RWP must be specific as to a) which unique river or stream segments have been previously designated by the legislature and b) which are being recommended for designation by the RWPG.

The adopted RWPs must include the TPWD's written evaluation of each river or stream segment and a copy of the recommendation packet.

If a river or stream segment has been recommended in a previous plan, the RWPG may incorporate references of supporting materials developed for the previous plan into the current plan. References must be precise and include a summary of the information presented in the previous plan.

If the Texas Legislature designates a river or stream segment as unique, or if an RWPG recommends that a river or stream segment be designated as unique, the RWPG must quantitatively assess the impact of recommended water management strategies on the flows deemed important (by the RWPG) to the river or stream segment in question. The assessment shall also describe the impact of the RWP on the unique features cited by the RWPG.

**If an RWPG recommends designation of a unique reservoir site, what associated content must be included in the regional water plan?**

For recommendations regarding unique reservoir sites, the RWP must be specific as to a) which unique reservoir sites have been previously designated by the legislature; b) which are being

recommended for designation by the RWPG; and c) whether the RWPG is recommending that the legislature re-designate a previously designated unique reservoir site.

The adopted RWPs must include a description of the site, reasons for the unique designation, and expected beneficiaries of water supplies developed at a given site.

**Where can I find a map of designated and recommended sites?**

Chapter 2 of the 2017 State Water Plan includes maps of previously designated and recommended unique stream segments and unique reservoir sites.

**Additional Resources**

*2017 State Water Plan, Chapter 2:*

<http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/swp/2017/doc/SWP17-Water-for-Texas.pdf>

*Regional and State Water Planning Rules (31 TAC) and Texas Statute Reference Pamphlet:*

[http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/planningdocu/2021/doc/current\\_docs/admin\\_docs/RWPrulespamphlet.pdf](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/planningdocu/2021/doc/current_docs/admin_docs/RWPrulespamphlet.pdf)

*Regional water planning contract document Second Amended General Guidelines for Fifth Cycle of Regional Water Plan Development, Section 8:*

[www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/planningdocu/2021/doc/current\\_docs/contract\\_docs/2ndAmendedExhibitC.pdf](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/planningdocu/2021/doc/current_docs/contract_docs/2ndAmendedExhibitC.pdf)

For additional information on the regional water planning process and current activities, please call 512-936-2387 or visit

[www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/index.asp](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/index.asp).