

RWPG Chairs Conference Call Meeting Notes

Type of Meeting: RWPG Chairs Conference Call (CCC)

Date of Meeting: September 10, 2020

Location of Meeting: Video-Conference

TWDB Staff in Attendance: Temple McKinnon, Sarah Backhouse, Matt Nelson, Ron Ellis, Lann Bookout, Kevin Smith, Elizabeth McCoy, and William Alfaro

Number of Planning Group Members in Attendance: 13 regions represented

Senators/Representatives/Other VIPs in Attendance: N/A

Report filed by: William Alfaro

Report filed on: September 18, 2020

Agenda Items Discussed:

1. Introductions, Opening Comments, and Agenda Order

Sarah Backhouse welcomed participants, took a roll call of representatives from each regional water planning group (RWPG) and introduced the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) staff present. She indicated that the meeting was being recorded and that written notes will be provided.

RWPG participants:

A – C.E. Williams (Chair), Dustin Meyers (Panhandle Regional Planning Commission)

B – Russell Schreiber (Chair), Stacey Green (Red River Authority)

C – Denis Qualls (Dallas Water Utilities)

D – Jim Thompson (Chair), Walt Sears (Northeast Texas Municipal Water District)

E – None

F – John Grant (Chair)

G – Wayne Wilson (Chair)

H – Mark Evans (Chair)

I – Kelly Holcomb (Chair)

J – None

K – John Burke (Chair), Rebecca Batchelder (Lower Colorado River Authority)

L – Suzanne Scott (Chair), Caitlin Heller (San Antonio River Authority)

M – Manuel Cruz, Derek Katznelson, (Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council)

N – Carola Serrato (Co-Chair), Scott Bledsoe, (Co-Chair), Travis Pruski (Nueces River Authority)

O – None

P – Phillip Spenrath (Chair)

Handout A: [Working Timeline for Initial Contracts and Request for Applications: Sixth Cycle of Regional Water Planning](#)

Handout B: [Regional Water Planning: Water Availability and Existing Supply](#)

2. 5th Cycle Remaining Timeline

Sarah Backhouse provided the following updates on the final plan adoption deadline and

submittal process:

- i. The TWDB extended the regional water plan submittal deadline to November 5th and removed the hard copies deliverable requirement. Unique electronic deliverables folders will be created, and access information will be provided to each RWPG soon.
- ii. Each RWPG should submit their proposed responses to TWDB's Level 1 IPP comments and revised plan chapters to their TWDB Project Managers for review. Some regions have not yet provided these. This review is critical for the TWDB to ensure that the Executive Administrator will be able to recommend Board approval of the final plans.
- iii. Comments received from the public or other agencies during the IPP public comment period must be summarized and the plan must document what changes were made or why changes were not warranted. The final plan must include a copy of TWDB's comments and the region's responses.
- iv. The TWDB's letter provided to each RWPG on the IPP provided a list of items to submit with the final plan, including electronic versions of the IFR survey, implementation survey, prioritization list, and a cover letter certifying the plan is complete and adopted. As well as electronic plan deliverables such as WAM and GIS files. The list of these deliverables will be provided again with the electronic folder links.
- v. Three RWPGs have adopted so far. Remaining RWPGs should consider realistic timelines for the adoption of the plans and finalizing data entry. Regional water plans are anticipated to be taken to the TWDB Board for approval in January.

Temple McKinnon provided an update on current data entry issues. Data entry is a significant part of the plan completion and constitutes a key element of our review to make sure plans are meeting fundamental requirements and that sources are not being overallocated. There are five RWPGs that have completed data entry. The plan submittal deadline had to be extended due to data entry completion issues including late plan development work and water management strategy revisions. TWDB is resource limited for data entry completion and there is an unprecedented amount of assistance required. RWPGs need to manage stakeholders' expectations and be aware that revisions may impact neighbor regions. TWDB is communicating directly with region's consultants on their remaining data issues.

3. Round 6 Initial Contract Timeline

Sarah Backhouse provided the following updates on the working timeline for initial contracts for the sixth cycle of planning:

- i. **Handout A** covers a tentative working timeline for execution of the initial contracts for the sixth cycle of regional water planning and the initial request for applications (RFA). The color-coded graphic shows actions for the TWDB, RWPGs, and Political Subdivisions.
- ii. The firm deadline for contracts to be executed by the TWDB and Political Subdivisions is August 31, 2021. There is approximately \$2.8 million appropriated that will be allocated among the 16 regions for initial tasks to start the next cycle. In order to meet the August deadline, TWDB intends to post a request for applications

for the initial contracts for the sixth cycle of regional water planning in March 2021, with a 30-day response deadline. TWDB Board approval to authorize the contracts is anticipated to occur in June 2021.

- iii. Prior to a RWPG's Political Subdivision applying for funds, the RWPG must take action to 1) designate their Political Subdivision for the sixth cycle of planning and 2) authorize the Political Subdivision to apply for funding, post the required public notice, and execute the subsequent contract with the TWDB. TWDB Project Managers should be working with RWPGs during agenda development to make sure these items are addressed.
- iv. The Political Subdivision will post a public notice of intent to apply for funds at least 30 days prior to the TWDB Board action. This is a large public notice and TWDB will provide additional information and guidance on the process in early 2021 to make sure related deadlines and notice requirements are met.
- v. Other RWPG items associated with this initial process include authorizing selection of technical consultants and holding a pre-planning public meeting. This meeting needs to occur before starting any technical work on the plan but not necessarily before contract execution.
- vi. Political Subdivisions will also be responsible for procuring technical consultants and executing subcontracts with technical consultants.

4. Interregional Planning Council

Temple McKinnon acknowledged Suzanne Scott, Interregional Planning Council (Council) Chair, and provided a current work overview of the Council. The first Council meeting was held on April 29 and since that time the Council had seven additional meetings. Three committees are working on the tasks charged by [House Bill 807](#) and additional charges by Representative Larson. The committees are Enhancing Interregional Coordination, Best Practices for Future Planning, and Planning Water Supplies for the State as a Whole. The Enhancing Interregional Coordination committee also addressed the topic of Interregional Conflicts. Committee recommendations have been provided to the Council and a draft report are posted on the [IPC webpage](#). Council members are currently reviewing the draft report and facilitator Suzanne Schwartz will assist in compiling the final report.

Suzanne Scott acknowledged Kelley Holcomb, Council Vice-Chair and pointed out recommendations that would potentially impact the work of RWPG Chairs. The Council is noting that interregional coordination should be addressed early and more deliberately in the planning process to assess projects that may share water sources and may impact other regions. The Council notes that the RWPG Chairs meetings could be instrumental in reviewing best practices, policies and procedures, and regional water plan policy recommendations that may impact multiple regions. There will be recommendations regarding the future agendas of the Chairs meetings to improve the process moving forward. Chair Scott pointed out that report intends to highlight that the role of the RWPGs is planning for water resources and that the project implementation phase relies on project sponsors at a local level. Chair Scott noted the deadline to submit the Council report to the TWDB is October 16.

Kelley Holcomb acknowledged Mark Evans, Jim Thompson, and Russell Schreiber who are

on the call today and are also on the Council. Kelley noted there will be some interesting items coming from the work effort to enhance the planning process. Chair Scott thanked the committee chairs and members of the Council for the efforts and also thanked TWDB staff that has been assisting the Council and committees' work. Temple McKinnon reminded the group that the Council dissolves upon adoption of the state water plan which is anticipated to occur summer of 2021. The TWDB will start the nomination process again next year for the Council.

Carola Serrato emphasized the importance of communicating the role of planning vs implementation. There needs to be emphasis that this is the beginning of the planning process and there are not funds for in-depth planning. This has been a difficult message to get across to some stakeholders who are upset over certain strategies in the plans.

Kelley Holcomb indicated that the Council is developing recommendations aimed to engage with the public and achieving better communication among stakeholders. Chair Scott acknowledged that funding for the process is limited and that timelines for the process move quickly. There are available TWDB educational materials including a new member orientation and best practices guides that planning group members can utilize to improve communication with the public regarding the role of RWPGs.

Matt Nelson encouraged RWPG Chairs to share any suggestions that would assist the TWDB in making educational materials and other resources more available to stakeholders.

5. Other Regional Water Planning Program Updates

Sarah Backhouse provided an update on the following items:

- a) Regional Water Planning Area (RWPA) boundary review process and timeline
 - i. The RWPA boundary review process is required to occur every five years. Last time the TWDB Board reviewed and reaffirmed the RWPA boundaries was in 2015.
 - ii. The anticipated timeline for this review includes sending communication out mid-October soliciting stakeholder input with a 45-day public input period.
 - iii. After the public comment period, TWDB staff will review public comments and the Executive Administrator will make a recommendation to the TWDB Board regarding the boundaries in early 2021.
- b) New program material [**Handout B**]
 - i. TWDB recently created a document on the regional water planning terms water availability and existing supply. These terms are often confusing for the public and new members that may not be familiar with water planning terms. The document provides an overview of TWDB requirements and covers the methodology to estimate availability and supply. This new document is available on the TWDB website under the [Regional Water Planning Educational Information webpage](#).
 - ii. A updated rules pamphlet is available on the TWDB website under the [Fifth Cycle Working Documents webpage](#). The updates include the revisions to regional water planning rules that occurred in June 2020.

c) 2021 rule revisions

- i. Statute requires the TWDB to review state water planning guidance principles every five years. This 5-year timeframe will occur in 2021. The guidance principles are in Chapter 358 of the Texas Administrative Code. This review process will begin in early 2021 with coordination with TCEQ, TDA, and TPWD. The tentative timeline is to publish a proposed revision in the summer and adopt revisions in the fall. We also plan on reopening Chapter 357 (regional water planning rules) to revise the regional water planning public notice requirements to be more similar to the notice requirements established in rule for the flood planning programs which are much more simplified. The revision will also potentially address other changes deemed necessary based on recommendations from the Interregional Planning Council or the 87th Legislative Session. TWDB is looking into allowing limited administrative costs for Political Subdivisions for reimbursement, similar to what has been established in the flood planning rules.

6. Chair's Discussion

Sarah Backhouse invited regional representatives to share updates with the group. None were provided.

7. Wrap-up and next call topics and date

Sarah Backhouse noted that the RWPG Chairs calls structure may change based on Council recommendations aimed to make meetings more meaningful and productive for the planning process.

Suzanne Scott suggested reviewing and discussing recommendations from the adopted Council report at the next meeting. Mark Evans acknowledged Suzanne Scott and Kelly Holcomb's successful effort in leading the Council. Matt Nelson recognized and thanked all RWPG Chairs. Temple McKinnon confirmed that the Council report will be distributed to all RWPGs. Matt Nelson clarified that the Council report is due to the TWDB and will be distributed as appropriate.

Suzanne Scott provided feedback related to the potential of the RWPG Chairs to address policy, goals and objectives, and strategic elements of the planning process, in contrast to administrative and technical elements, since their involvement may be limited on these areas of expertise.

The next RWPG Chairs Conference Call meeting will be scheduled for January 2021.