

**MINUTES
FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP MEETING**

**Thursday, October 1, 2009
1:00 P.M. (CST)**

at:

**Sul Ross State University, University Center Room A
East Highway 90, Gate 4, Alpine, TX 79832**

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS NOT PRESENT, Cont'd.
Tom Beard, Chairman, Agriculture	Juana Padilla, Legislative Representatives
Scott Reinert, E. Archuleta alt., Municipalities	Rick Tate, Agriculture
Paige Waggoner, Secretary, Economic Development	Teddy Trujillo, Public
Rebecca Brewster, ExCom alt, Municipalities	
Dave Hall, ExCom alt, Public	NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT
Chuy Reyes, ExCom member, Water Districts	Billy Finn, USIBWC
Teresa Todd, ExCom member, Legislative Rep.	Ann Ardis, H. Garza alt., USGS
Jesse Acosta, Counties	Connie Townsend, TWDB
Janet Adams, Groundwater Districts	William Wellman, Big Bend National Park
Jerry Agan, Counties	Jack Stallings, TX Dept. of Agriculture
Ann Allen, Industries	
Talley Davis, R. Barker alt., Groundwater Dist.	OTHERS PRESENT
Sterry Butcher, Public	Conrad Arriola, T. Beard alt.
Mike Davidson, Travel/Tourism	Roger Chacon, C. Zuazua alt.
Mike Livingston, Small Business	John Ashworth, LBG-Guyton
Albert Miller, Water Utilities	Barbara Kauffman, RGCOG
Jim Ed Miller, Water Districts	Korina Navarro, RGCOG
Charles Stegall, K. Norris alt., Counties	Girisha Ganjunte, TX AgriLife Research Ctr. El Paso
Carlos Zuazua, Electric Utilities	Gorden Bell, Guadalupe Mtns. National Park
	Cindy Perry, Alpine Avalanche
MEMBERS NOT PRESENT	James Beach, LBG-Guyton
Ed Archuleta, Vice Chairman, Municipalities	
Maj. Cedric Banks, Ft. Bliss	
Randy Barker, Groundwater Districts	
David Etzold, Building/Real Estate	
Sylvia Firth, Municipalities	
Carl Lieb, Environmental	
Kenn Norris, Counties	

I. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Mr. Beard called the meeting to order, established that a quorum was present, and that notice of the meeting had been properly posted. Members introduced themselves and noted which interest group they represented.

II. Recognition of Guests and Designated Alternates

Mr. Beard welcomed the designated alternates and members of the public who were in attendance, and asked them to introduce themselves.

Consent Agenda

III. Approval of the Minutes of the WPG Meeting of July 1, 2009

IV. Certification of Allowable Administrative Expenses

Mr. Reyes moved to approve the items on the consent agenda and Ms. Brewster seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Regular Agenda

V. WPG Member Updates on Local Projects & Issues of Importance to the Planning Process

Mr. Acosta updated the group on the roll-out activities associated with Census 2010, and noted that the federal government is requiring local governments to provide more resources to accomplish the count this census, and to download a lot of materials off the internet. He also announced that he will be retiring at the end of the year. He has asked the county to consider a replacement for him on the planning group. Mr. Reinert noted that the El Paso Water Utilities was now responsible for stormwater in El Paso, and discussed the amount of progress that has been made in cleaning, repairing, and constructing infrastructure. They are implementing programs and assessing needs throughout the city.

VI. Discussion & Action on Appointing a Representative for Electric Generating Utilities as a Voting Member of the Planning Group [Carlos Zuazua, nominated by El Paso Electric Co.]

Mr. Reyes moved to accept El Paso Electric Company's nomination of Mr. Zuazua to fill the vacant seat representing electric generating utilities on the planning group. Ms. Adams seconded the motion. Mr. Beard noted that the interest group was one of those originally required by the TWDB when the planning process started 11 years ago. While it no longer may be required, he recommended that the group accept Mr. Zuazua's nomination. He also asked Mr. Zuazua to provide a brief resume or biography. After a unanimous vote to seat Mr. Zuazua, he was welcomed and joined the group.

VII. Discussion & Action on a Proposed Two-Year Administrative Budget & Cost-Sharing Plan, by Barbara Kauffman

Ms. Kauffman briefly summarized the proposed budget and scope of work for administrative activities, noting that there was quite a bit of carry-over money from the previous biennium which would be used to discount the proposed administrative cost shares. She explained that the budget has been held in line for several years, and that Ms. Navarro would begin assisting with planning group administrative activities. Ms. Kauffman also asked the group for comments and suggestions on how the RGCOG could provide more effective service to the planning group and the public. After a very brief discussion, Mr. Davidson moved to approve the budget and cost-sharing plan, Ms. Butcher seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

VIII. Update on Groundwater Management Area 4, by Janet Adams

Mr. Beard referred the group to (TWDB Vice Chairman) Jack Hunt's speech, which Ms. Kauffman distributed to the group. Ms. Adams gave the group an update on Groundwater Management Area 4 (GMA 4), which encompasses all of the rural counties with a groundwater conservation district in the planning area with the exception of Terrell County. GMAs were tasked with determining desired future conditions (DFC) for all aquifers in the area for the next 50 years. The deadline is one year from now. She reported that the TWDB is taking a long time to get Groundwater Availability Model (GAM) runs back to GMA 4; the first one took 15 months. Each county groundwater district within the GMA has set different draw-downs as the maximum allowable over the 50 year time period. These varying draw-downs will be input to the GAM, resulting in a figure called Managed Available Groundwater (MAG) which is the amount of groundwater available for use. The big question the districts have is whether MAG is the minimum or maximum amount available.

Mr. Beard stated that there is a lot of controversy over MAG, since each GCD has different DFCs. If a landowner has property with wells in two or more districts with different DFCs, then it's hard to know what can be drawn down from each well. He spoke of the constitutional issues involved, and the fact that GCDs and RWPGs are working against each other, and the legislature will need to fix the process. Currently the groundwater district management plan DFCs take precedence over the regional water plans. It is not clear who has the final say if there is a conflict between a water planning group and a groundwater district or GMA. The TWDB is seeking that role.

IX. Discussion & Action on TWDB Water Loss Audit Report, by John Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth referred the group to a handout summarizing the water loss audit information reported for utilities in our planning region. Ms. Todd asked how entities were chosen to report their water loss data, as many regional utilities are missing from the list. Mr. Beard noted that in particular, the City of Alpine is not listed, and they reported significant water losses in the first plan. Ms. Adams thought that not every utility was mandated to report, that the process was voluntary. Ms. Brewster pointed out that the reported numbers are not accurate in all cases, that they are outdated, and many utilities have corrected the problem(s) that the water loss audit brought to light. Mr. Ashworth reiterated that the report notes that the data were collected in 2005 and are therefore outdated. Furthermore, there are inaccuracies in the data. He suggested that it may not be necessary to use the data during this planning cycle. The report is more useful as a planning tool for the utilities to target conservation measures. Mr. Beard asked Ms. Townsend to clarify why all entities in the region are not included in the report. Mr. Ashworth asked the group for their concurrence in not using the water loss audit numbers in the current plan, but putting a link to the report in the plan and discussing it in the chapter text. The group agreed.

X. Discussion & Action on Chapter 1 Revisions, by John Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth noted that the major changes to the chapter have been summarized on the handout. The draft chapters are posted on the WPG web page for the group to review. Mr. Beard asked each member to review the drafts and provide comments to Mr. Ashworth. The group took no action on the item.

XI. Discussion & Action on Chapter 2 Potential Population & Water Demand Revisions, by John Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth introduced this item by stating that the group will need to take action at the next meeting; today's discussion will focus on reviewing several sets of projections and how they differ from the projections in the 2006 plan. The TWDB memo dated 12/3/08 that was distributed to the group shows 2007 population estimates from the Texas State Data Center, for the region as a whole, falling significantly below projections approved for the 2006 plan. However, the Fort Bliss-associated population is known to be increasing significantly as a result of BRAC activities, and adjusting those population projections is a specific element in the region's scope of work. Therefore, TWDB may approve an adjustment to the regional population total based on known and projected growth at Fort Bliss.

Mr. Hall moved to direct Mr. Ashworth to compare alternative projections of Fort Bliss population increases and present those estimates to the group at the next meeting. Ms. Brewster seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Mr. Ashworth reported that he has been working with a Mr. Weatherly at the Fort Bliss Transformation Office. He noted that there is a big difference between the estimates accepted in the 2006 plan and the new projections prepared by Fort Bliss and the City of El Paso – the estimate has doubled. Mr. Acosta also presented a different set of estimates, and the group discussed the difficulty of counting on-base and off-base population and water demand. By rough estimate, the population of soldiers and their family members will increase by 70,000 by the end of 2012. This final build-out of Fort Bliss will occur after the completion of the 2010 census.

The group next discussed Presidio and Jeff Davis County irrigation water demand estimates. Although the documented increases are within 1% to 3% of the 2006 plan numbers, the group directed the consultants to account for every gallon and to prepare a request to change those estimates. In contrast, the discussion

on mining water demand noted that when the 2006 plan was prepared, oil and gas exploration in the region was increasing rapidly. With the downturn in the economy, that exploration has slowed and our 2006 plan estimates now appear to be overstating demand. The group reached consensus on using the 2006 plan estimates of mining water demand, with the exception of Terrell County, which will be updated to reflect changed conditions.

XII. Discussion & Action on Chapter 3 Hydrologic Assumptions Used in Developing Water Supply Availability Estimates, by John Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth reviewed the hydrologic assumptions used in the plan. Representatives of groundwater districts were reminded that they need to get firm water supply availability estimates to the consultants as soon as possible, if those estimates have changed from the 2006 plan. In particular, the Bone Spring-Victorio Peak aquifer water supply estimates were discussed, and Mr. Davis updated the group on the current and planned HCUWCD #1 public hearings that are being conducted concerning revisions to the district's transfer rules. In the West Texas Bolsons, the consultants are using the recharge numbers generated through the GAMs. Red Light Draw and Eagle Flat recharge rates are much higher than previously estimated. Mr. Ashworth reminded the group that they must use GAM estimates unless the groundwater districts can show that they have better data available. He noted that he would be examining the Diablo Plateau numbers again, but that he expected those estimates to remain the same. No action was taken on the Chapter 3 hydrologic assumptions.

XIII. Discussion & Action on Chapter 5 Revisions, by John Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth reported that no changes to Chapter 5 were suggested unless one of the strategies changed dramatically. The group agreed to review the chapter drafts, and no action was taken on Chapter 5.

XIV. Discussion & Action on Chapter 6 Revisions, by John Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth reported that the conservation and management plans referenced in Chapter 6 have been updated or added when necessary. Ms. Adams noted that the Presidio County GCD management plan might be ready before the regional water plan is due. It is currently being reviewed by the TWDB. Mr. Reyes asked if the new El Paso County WID #1 – El Paso Water Utilities operating agreement would impact the plan, and Mr. Ashworth replied that it would. A meeting will be set up between the consultants, the irrigation district and the water utility. The group took no action on draft Chapter 6 revisions.

XV. Discussion & Action on Setting a Meeting Schedule for 2009 – 2010

Ms. Kauffman and Mr. Ashworth suggested setting a monthly meeting schedule through at least January 2010 in order to stay on track with preparing the Initially Prepared Plan (IPP) by its TWDB submittal deadline of March 1, 2010. Ms. Kauffman suggested that the group meet the first Thursday of the month in order to avoid holiday conflicts, and the group agreed. WPG meetings were set for November 5 in El Paso, December 3 in Alpine and January 7 in El Paso.

XVI. Administrative & Procedural Matters

No administrative or procedural matters were brought before the planning group.

XVII. Adjourn

Mr. Beard adjourned the meeting at 2:45 PM.