

Minutes of the October 7, 2021, Meeting of
The Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group (Region N)
For the Senate Bill 1 Regional Water Planning Program

A meeting of the Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group was held at the Johnny Calderon County Building at 710 E. Main Street, Robstown, TX on October 7, 2021.

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order and Welcome:

Chairman Scott Bledsoe called the meeting to order at 1:30pm.

Agenda Item 2 – Roll Call: Mr. Travis Pruski, Director of Planning, Nueces River Authority conducted a roll call.

Voting Members in attendance included:

Mr. Lonnie Stewart (GMA 13)	Mr. Joe Almarez (Industry)
Ms. Teresa Carrillo (Environment)	Mr. Mark Scott (Municipal)
Mr. Carl Crull (Other)	Mr. John Burris (Other)
Mr. Andy Garza (GMA 16)	Ms. Donna Rosson (Public)
Mr. Chuck Burns (Agriculture)	Dr. Pancho Hubert (Small business)
Mr. Scott Bledsoe (Water Districts)	Mr. Bill Dove (Small business)
Mr. Robert Kunkel (Industries)	Mr. Thomas Redding (River Authorities)

Non-Voting Members in attendance included:

Mr. Kevin Smith, TWDB	Mr. John Byrum, Nueces River Authority
Mr. Travis Pruski, Nueces River Authority	Ms. Kristi Shaw, HDR
Ms. Susan Roth, Susan Roth Consulting	

Voting Members absent:

Mr. Lavoyger Durham (Counties)
Mr. Gary Eddins (Electrical Generating Utilities)
Mr. Charles Ring (Agriculture)
Mr. Bill Stockton (Counties)
Mr. Mark Sugarek (GMA 15)

A quorum of voting members was established.

Guest in attendance included:

The Honorable Gilbert Saenz, County Judge Duval County
Sylvia Ramos, Assistant to Senator Hinojosa
Steve Ramos, Water Resource Manager, City of Corpus Christi
Kevin Norton, Director of Water Utilities, City of Corpus Christi
Brian Williams, General Manager/District Engineer San Patricio Municipal Water District
Jason Cocklin, Associate, Freese & Nichols, Corpus Christi

Agenda Item 3 – Public Comments on Issues or Provisions to be included in the 6th Cycle of Water Planning for Region N. Public Comments will be limited to 3 minutes.

Kristi Shaw stated that prior to receiving comments, she wanted to present the framework for what is included in the regional water plan. The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) through guidance outlined in the Texas Administrative Code has requirements for information to include in the regional water plan. The first two tasks include a description of the planning group region and evaluation of population and water demand projections per county and user category. The categories include municipal, manufacturing, steam, electric, livestock and agriculture. These categories are evaluated through a planning cycle of 50 years. The current water supplies, including ground water, surface water and reuse are then evaluated. That data is assessed, and the existing supplies are compared to the demands and needs (or shortages) are determined. Then water supply projects are identified and evaluate to address the needs. These are listed as recommended water management strategies characterized by water user group. These strategies are then evaluated and assigned after confirming with project sponsor and voted on by the Regional Planning Group for inclusion in the state water plan.

The Coastal Bend contains eleven counties and is bounded by Region M to the south and the west, and Region L to the north and to the east. There will be an increase in the amount of interlocal communication this cycle to coordinate water management strategies that benefit the larger area where it makes sense.

Chairman Bledsoe then asked the guest in attendance if there were any public comments.

No comments from the public were provided.

Agenda Item 4 – Consider Approval of Minutes of the July 1st, 2021, meeting of the Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Andy Garza and a second was made by Mr. Robert Kunkel. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5 – Consider recommendation by the Executive Committee on vacancies of the three voting members representing Water Utilities, Environment and Municipal interest.

Dr. Hubert spoke on behalf of the Executive Committee. He told the group that the process of determining who to recommend to fill the three voting member vacancies of the planning group was very difficult for the executive committee. He stated that there were certainly big holes in our group with the vacancies that needed filled and he thanked everyone who applied. He asks that those who were not recommended by the Executive Committee not to take this as a rejection, and he encouraged those not selected to continue to remain involved in the group and to apply again in the future. There are a lot of multi-faceted people that applied, and these talents can be used in other areas.

Dr. Hubert then reported that the Executive Board recommended Steve Ramos for Municipalities, James Dodson for the Environmental position and John Marez, General Manager, South Texas Water Authority for the Water Utilities position.

Chairman Bledsoe ask if there were any other nominations. Being none, Mr. Mark Scott moved to approve the recommendations of the Executive Committee voting members Mr. Carl Crull seconded the motion and was passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 6 – Desalination Presentation by the City of Corpus Christi

Steve Ramos, Water Resource Manager, City of Corpus Christi made the presentation on behalf of the City of Corpus Christi. He stated that the City is very enthusiastic about bringing this new source of water into the region to meet our growing water needs. He explained that the City has four water sources, all of which are surface water. One of the big reasons why the City needs to look at alternative water supplies is the dependency on surface water and the need to develop a drought-proof water supply that that can help the City with future water needs. There are currently four major water sources: Choke Canyon Reservoir, Lake Corpus Christi in the Nueces River Basin, } imported water from the Colorado River near Bay City, and Lake Texana. The Colorado River near Bay City has a pump station that diverts water to the Mary Rhodes Phase II. It then goes through Phase II of the pipeline until it is joined with Lake Texana which is

part of the Lavaca Navidad River Basin. So, water from the Colorado River is pumped a total of 141 miles. Mr. Ramos told the group that the City of Corpus Christi has a very dynamic water system, however it is a system solely based on surface water. The City anticipates that by the end of 2022, with the expected growth on top of demands on existing, the City will hit or exceed the trigger point of 75% of our firm yield.

The City of Corpus Christi has been working with Freese and Nichols on a study to determine the best sites for a seawater desalination facility. The study determined that the two best sites are the Inner Harbor and the La Quinta channel. The City has been working with the TWDB for funding and the TCEQ for permitting both diversion and discharge at these specific sites.

Mr. Ramos explained that the City of Corpus Christi came to the idea of seawater desalination by using a balanced approach of evaluating both the environmental and social aspects. Due to electrical power being a critical factor, the City considered locations where power is readily available. Average water production capacity for the Inner Harbor site is 20 MGD, expandable to 30 MGD. The average production capacity at the La Quinta Channel is 20 MGD, expandable to 30 MGD and Ultimate Capacity is 40 MGD.

The City conducted studies on both our intake and outfall points for each source. The City is trying to be environmentally responsible by doing things that are friendly to the local environmental ecosystem; from marine friendly intake to using a diffuser system for outflow that is the current best available technology for the facility. To assure ourselves that we had a complete understanding of the existing ecosystem and to make sure it would be sustainable with respect to intake and outfall points, the City conducted water quality monitoring for a minimum of six months and up to a year at some points. We needed to know exactly what we were taking into our system. The City determined that the use of a very small mesh screen and a low intake velocity would be best. The City with respect to our discharge permit, the City just completed the modeling and have submitted our discharge permit application to TCEQ for review.

The City has two water right permit applications that are currently under review with TCEQ. The City held a public meeting on the Inner Harbor site, and are awaiting for TCEQ to respond to those comments. The City is excited to see TCEQ moving forward with the permit applications that, and the City expects to present the City's findings to the commission in the near future.

A public meeting for the La Quinta Channel water rights applications will be held soon. The City is working with the TCEQ to set that date.

A member of the group asked if the water quality would be suitable for industry or potable drinking water.

Mr. Ramos replied that the projects were intended for municipal water, so the water would enter the distribution system, and it would have to match the water quality in the distribution system. The water would be distributed to commercial, residential, industrial customers throughout the system.

Chairman Bledsoe asked about the next steps in permitting.

Mr. Ramos replied that there will be a public meeting for water rights. During the public meetings, TCEQ will receive comments. TCEQ will review and respond to the comments. After that, the staff will revise the permit if needed, and the Executive Director will take the permit to the three commissioners of the TCEQ for a vote. The TCEQ commissioners can, either grant the application, ask for more information, or send the application to the state office for administrative hearings for a judicial hearing and processing. If an administrative or a judicial hearing is needed, it will be conducted and the recommendation of the hearing examiner will go back to the TCEQ commissioners where they will either ask more questions, grant, or deny the permit.

From the very beginning the City has worked with Freese and Nichols on how to make this type of project economically feasible. The City reached out to our high-volume customers and through that communication we came up with a \$0.25 per 1000 drought surcharge exemption fee. The high-volume customers have voluntarily contributed money into this fund. Then The City visited with TWDB about the best opportunities from a finance point of view to build this project. It was determined that obtaining a low interest loan from the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) would enable the City to bring in a low-cost effective project.

There being no further questions, Mr. Ramos thanked the planning group for the opportunity to provide an update of the Desalination Project.

Agenda Item 7 – Discuss Public Input on Issues that should be addressed or Provisions that should be included in development of the 2026 Coastal Bend Regional Water Plan and 2027 State Water Plan.

Ms. Teresa Carrillo asked if there was a timeline for public comments and who do they submit them to?

Mr. Kevin Smith, Planner – TWDB stated that specific to the pre-planning meeting, there is a 30-day period from the day of the meeting for written comments to be submitted. Mr. Smith stated that with most planning groups, it is an on-going process, so 3 to 6 months in the future would be acceptable.

Agenda Item 8 – Discuss the potential process for conducting interregional coordination regarding water management strategies during development of the 2026 Regional Water Plans

Ms. Shaw mentioned that the 2020 Interregional Planning Council put together a report that had four main topics which included recommendations for the TWDB, Regional Water Planning Groups, as well as the Texas Legislature. The topics were:

1. How to enhance interregional coordination.
2. How to plan water resources for the state.
3. What are the best practices for future planning.
4. Recognizing interregional conflicts.

The 10 recommended actions that were assigned to the RWPG are as follows.

1. Enhance interregional coordination efforts, and include standing agenda items for reports from interregional liaisons. Each RWPG has an interregional liaison.
2. Receive early input from project consultants and sponsors, planning liaisons, and stakeholders to improve interregional coordination and mitigate future interregional conflict.
3. Involve the appropriate parties and timely coordinate on potentially feasible interregional water management strategy opportunities and issues.
4. Collaborate with other RWPGs early in the planning process for multi-regional project opportunities.
5. Provide new member orientation.
6. Utilize educational programs and subject matter speakers at RWPG meetings.
7. Develop better methods to encourage public participation.
8. Follow recommendations in the Best Management Practices Guide.
9. Read and disseminate the Best Management Practices Guide and New Member Guide
10. Consider adding TCEQ as an ex-officio member if not required by the Legislation.

Carl Crull, the Coastal Bend representative appointed to the Interregional Planning Council stated that a lot of the recommendations came about from the ongoing dispute between the two regions in north Texas. One of the things the group strongly recommended was the additional funding provided to the RWPG for interregional

cooperation. The committee, also, recommended that on mega projects that would affect multiple regions, TWDB needed to be given funding so that TWDB can study those projects in further detail.

Agenda Item 9 – Preliminary TWDB Schedule for the 2016 Regional Water Plan, including Status and Release of Water Demand/Population Projections (TWDB)

Kevin Smith, TWDB Planner, stated that the next deliverable for the planning group will be the Technical Memo and is due March 4, 2024. The technical memo is a summary document of demands, supply, needs and it will have potential strategies (not the final recommended), all of the database reports related to those tasks needs to be filled in. The planning group Scope of work (SOW) for Task #2 is related to population, and establishes demands for part of the initial scope. The TWDB contract with the NRA is a part of the final scope and has all of the items listed there. The TWDB will present draft projections to the planning groups. This being a census year along with Covid on top of that, is going to compress this cycle as compared to last cycle due to the draft projections being delayed and provided to the consultants. Mr. Smith stated that will be a technical meeting on October 12 for the TWDB to review technical issues from the last planning cycle. Any comments, concerns, or new ideas that the consultants or planning group members have to potentially revise the TWDB guidance or rules to make the process better, could happen then.

For draft population and municipal demand projections, the estimated date of delivery from TWDB is February 2023, but the variable is that it is a census year. The Census Bureau is going to re-evaluate new information, and there are delays due to Covid. Mr. Smith's understanding of the census process is that the census bureau goes over the information and provides it to the states, then the state demographer goes over the data processes it and filters down to the TWDB. The TWDB then evaluates the information and provides it to the consultants and the planning groups. The board is dependent on two other groups before they can release that information to the planning groups.

Mr. Smith told the group that the SOW will expand to include all the tasks sometime in 2022.

Ms. Shaw ask regarding the projections moving forward, is that going to be 2030 to 2080 as far as the years are concerned or are they resetting at 2020 as a baseline corrected for the census.

Mr. Smith stated that at this point, he was not sure.

Responding to an inquiry about when the planning group would meet in 2022,

Ms. Shaw stated that from a technical perspective, the RWPG can meet in January or February timeframe. But with the feedback for the preliminary municipal information pushed into January, the RWPG might consider meeting in the February timeframe. The RWPG, also, has meetings planned for April, and October, but will need to verify with Nueces River Authority before setting dates.

Chairman Bledsoe stated that at the last meeting the group decided to meet on January 20th. He reminded the group that a meeting in January would still be needed even if the municipal information is not ready due to our by-laws stating the need to elect officers in January.

Agenda Item 10 – Consider Nominations for the Interregional Planning Council Representative and Alternate.

Carl Crull graciously accepted another term as the interregional representative. A motion made by Andy Garza appointing Mr. Crull was seconded by Dr. Hubert. The motion passed unanimously.

Teresa Carrillo volunteered to be the alternate.

A motion made by Andy Garza with second by Dr. Hubert to appoint Teresa Carrillo as alternate passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 12 – Consider Approval of Meeting Schedule for 2022

Chairman Bledsoe stated that meetings are scheduled for April 15th and October 6th 2022.

Agenda Item 13 – Consider Authorizing the Nueces River Authority to solicit nominations for positions on the Coastal Bend RWPG for voting member whose terms expire January 31, 2022.

Lonny Stewart (GMA 13), Mark Sugarek (GMA 15) and Andy Garza (GMA 16) are appointed by their respected GMA's so they do not have to go through the nominations process. The RWPG must advertise for nominations 90 days before the terms expire. Mr. Pruski stated that he has the form for nominations and if a member's term is expiring, please take the form now, complete it and return it to him.

A motion to approve of the Nueces River Authority soliciting nominations for expiring terms was made by Carl Crull. A second to that motion was made by Steve Ramos. Motion passed.

Agenda Item 14 – Discussion item to review by-laws.

Chairman Bledsoe stated that this was added to the agenda as the by-laws have not been discussed since 2005. He stated that he will set up a committee made up of the members of the executive committee, Joe Almarez, and Steve Ramos to review the by-laws to see if any changes or updates are needed.

Agenda Item 15 – Administrative and other issues.

Kevin Smith told the group that there is a contract between TWDB and Nueces River Authority for the planning grant, and I hear there is one in the works between HDR, the technical consultant and Nueces River Authority. There are some guidelines on how that contract should be prepared. There is a link there and you need to make sure that all the regional planning provisions from that link and that document are included in the subcontract.

If there are any sub-consultants, the subcontract between the sub-consultant and the consultant (HDR) will not need the review of the TWDB, but there is still a requirement to send these to your planning reviewer and myself to add to the file.

There was a one-page document called the Certification of Procurement, those are not required anymore, but you should have procured through your appointment process when hiring or selecting.

There is going to be a Regional Water Planning Stakeholder Committee meeting on October 12th. The meeting is optional, however, there will be a lot of information.

Chairman Bledsoe stated that he had a letter that he was asked to read. The letter dated October 7th, 2021, stated Chairman and members of Region N RWPG, I have served on this committee for several years and I have been proud to serve and represent the people of South Texas on the vital water issues of the area. I represented South Texas when Governor Dolph Briscoe appointed me as a member of the Nueces River Authority at the time Choke Canyon Dam was built. I served the City of Alice as a member of the Alice Water Authority. My service was always to see that the people of South Texas would have adequate water and to conserve our natural resources. I have been impressed by the dedication of the men and women who served on these bodies.

It has been an honor to be a part of this work. On August 4th, I celebrated my 87th birthday. This has not been an easy year; my wife has inoperable cancer and I have had several surgeries and I have advanced Parkinson's. I have to have a driver for out-of-town drives, and I have had to give up the operation of our farm and ranch. It is with sadness that it is time for me to make room for another generation, therefore please accept this as my letter of resignation.

John H. Burris – Major General Retired, United States Air Force.

Agenda Item 16 - General Public Comment: There were no comments.

Agenda Item 17 – Confirm Next Meeting Date: January 20th, 2022, at 1:30 pm

Agenda Item 18 –Adjourn – A motion made to adjourn was passed unanimously.

Minutes prepared by: Mr. Travis Pruski

Minutes submitted by:

Lonnie Stewart
Secretary, Coastal Bend RWPG

Date