

**The Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group
for the Senate Bill 1 Regional Water Planning Program
will meet on October 12th at 1:30pm
The Meeting will be held at the Johnny Calderon County Building.
710 East Main St., Robstown, TX**

Minutes

1. Called to Order and Welcomed by Co-Chair Scott Bledsoe at 1:35 p.m.

2. Roll Call conducted by Travis Pruski

<u>Voting Members:</u>	<u>Representing Sector:</u>	<u>Attendance:</u>
Co- Chair Scott Bledsoe	Water Districts	Present
Co-Chair Dr. Pancho Hubert	Small Businesses	Present
Thomas Reding	River Authorities	Present
Secretary Lonnie Stewart	GMA 13	Present
Joe Almaraz	Industries	Present
Aron Baggett	Industries	Absent
Chuck Burns	Agriculture	Absent
Gene Camargo	Other	Absent
Teresa Carrillo	Environment	Absent
Carl Crull P.E.	Other	Present
James Dodson	Environment	Present
Bill Dove	Small Businesses	Absent
Lavoyger Durham	Counties	Absent
Gary Eddins	Electrical Generating Utilities	Absent
Andy Garza	GMA 16	Present
John Marez	Water Utilities	Present
Esteban Ramos	Municipalities	Present
Charles Ring	Agriculture	Present
Donna Rosson	Public	Present
Mark Scott	Municipalities	Absent
Mark Sugarek	GMA 15	Present

<u>Non-Voting Members:</u>	<u>Representing Sector:</u>	<u>Attendance:</u>
Michele Foss	Texas Water Development Board	Present
Nelda Barrera	Texas Department of Agriculture	Absent
Dr. Jim Tolan	Texas Parks and Wildlife	Present
Tomas Dominguez	USDA-NRCS	Absent
Rusty Ray	TSSWCB	Absent
John Byrum	Region L-South-Central Texas RWPG	Absent
	Nueces River Authority	
David Fuentes	Region M-Rio Grande RWPG	Absent
	Precinct 1 Commissioner, Weslaco	

Note: Quorum.

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Guest:

Representing Sector:

Kristi Shaw	HDR
Travis Pruski	Nueces River Authority
Lorie Flores	Nueces River Authority
Maria Corona	CCW
Deanna King	Nueces County
Royce Camera	Brush County GCD
Luis Pena	Brush County GCD
Robert Scholz	Halff
Jorge Gonzales	
Rachael Caballero	Community
Tom Yardley	San Patricio Co.
Brent Clayton	
Hua Zhang	TAMUCC
Bryan Williams	SPMWD
Kent Britton	Port of Corpus Christi
Adrien Hilmy	CBBEP
Ronnie Ramirez	TSSWCB
Autumn Hensiek	
Blanca Parcen	
Michael Esparza	City of Alice
Demetrio Duarte	City of Alice

3. ACTION ITEM: Consider Approval of May 18th, 2023, Minutes.

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2023, meeting, as submitted was made by Joe Almaraz and seconded by Esteban Ramos. Passed unanimously.

4. ACTION ITEM: Discuss and consider action to authorize Nueces River Authority to negotiate and execute an amendment to the TWDB contract to increase the total project cost and committed funds for the 2026 RWP.

Motion to authorize Nueces River Authority to negotiate and execute an amendment to the TWDB contract to increase the total project cost and committed funds for the 2026 RWP by Carl Crull and seconded by Andy Garza. Passed unanimously.

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5. ACTION ITEM: Discuss and consider action to authorize Nueces River Authority to negotiate and execute an amendment with HDR based on TWDB contract to increase the total project cost and committed funds for the 2026 RWP.

Motion to authorize Nueces River Authority to negotiate and execute an amendment with HDR based on TWDB contract to increase the total project cost and committed funds for the 2026 RWP by Carl Crull and seconded by Lonnie Stewart. Passed unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION ITEM: Present the proposed process to identify potentially feasible water management strategies.

The process of identifying potentially feasible water management strategies outlined below is proposed for development of the 2026 Region N Regional Water Plan (2026 Plan)1:

- The Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group (RWPG) recognizes that regional water planning is an evolving process and draws upon results obtained from previous planning efforts. A summary of water management strategies (WMSs) from the five previous planning cycles (2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021 Plans) will be discussed at a Region N meeting for consideration for the 2026 Plan. The Texas Water Code list of WMSs eligible for consideration in the Plan will be discussed, including TWDB Water Loss Audit Report, conservation best management practices, and drought management as required by TWDB guidance.
- The Nueces River Authority will host a workshop for water utilities located within the 11-county Region N area to discuss local plans and assess potential regional collaboration opportunities. Current local, on-going studies and future water plans, including specific WMSs of interest, will be solicited from Water User Groups (WUGs) and Wholesale Water Providers (WWPs).
- Considering information compiled from outreach, a draft list of potentially feasible WMSs will be discussed at a Coastal Bend RWPG meeting for public comment.
- HDR, technical consultant, will follow-up with WUGs and WWPs to confirm the list of water management strategies for development of the 2026 Plan.
- The Coastal Bend RWPG will consider forming a subcommittee to review potentially feasible strategies and prepare a draft scope of work for strategies to evaluate for the 2026 Plan. The scope of work subcommittee will review a preliminary list of potentially feasible WMSs and prepare a recommendation for Coastal Bend RWPG consideration given TWDB funding allocations.
- A scope of work for strategies to be evaluated will be considered and adopted at a RWPG meeting after receiving public comment. Subsequently, the Nueces River Authority will submit a letter request for TWDB consideration and approval.
- Based on the adopted list of potentially feasible water management strategies, potential water management strategies will be identified to meet needs for all WUGs and WWPs with identified needs. If no potentially feasible strategy can be identified for a WUG or WWP with a need, the reason for this will be documented in the Technical Memorandum, IPP and Final Plan.
- The list of potentially feasible water management strategies will be included in the Technical Memorandum, IPP, and Final Plan.

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- After TWDB approval of the scope of work for water management strategy evaluations, additional water management strategies may be considered and approved for inclusion in the 2026 Plan at WUG sponsor request and expense. These strategies will be brought to the Coastal Bend RWPG for consideration as potentially feasible WMSs and if approved will be included in the Initially Prepared Plan and Final Plan.

7. ACTION ITEM: Consider planning group and public comments on the proposed process for identifying potentially feasible water management strategies and take action to approve process. [public comments must be considered prior to action].

No Public Comment

In response to the approved process for identifying potentially feasible water management strategies, a request was made by the Region N chair for volunteers to serve on a scope of work (Task 5B) subcommittee to consider potentially feasible strategies and prepare a draft scope of work for strategies to evaluate for the 2026 Plan. Region N planning group members that volunteered to serve on the scope of work subcommittee include: Lonnie Stewart, Carl Crull, Joe Almaraz, John Marez, Andy Garza, and Esteban Ramos.

Motion to approve proposed process for identifying potentially feasible water management strategies and scope of work subcommittee by Lonnie Stewart and seconded by Co-Chair Dr. Pancho Hubert. Passed unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION ITEM: Process for determining infeasible water management strategies and water management strategy projects in the previously adopted 2021 Region N Water Plan (Task 4B)

A new requirement for this cycle of regional planning is to identify infeasible water management strategies and projects that were recommended in the 2021 Regional Water Plans. According to TWDB guidance, "At minimum, RWPGs must review the status of recommended strategies and projects with an online decade of 2020 in the 2021 RWPGs." A list of these recommended strategies and projects were provided to Region N in January 2023 in supporting data spreadsheets. RWPGs are also encouraged to review additional near-term strategies or projects with lengthy permitting or construction processes. RWPGs must document the region's process for determining infeasible WMSs.

In accordance with the Texas Water Code (§16.053(h)(10)), a strategy or project is considered infeasible if: "...the proposed sponsor of the water management strategy or project has not taken an affirmative vote or other action to make expenditures necessary to construct or file applications for permits required in connection with the implementation of the water management strategy or project under federal or state law **on a schedule that is consistent with the completion of the implementation of the water management strategy or project by the time the water management strategy or project is projected by the regional water plan or the state water plan to be needed.**" An infeasibility review is not required for strategies or projects that do not require a permit or involve construction (i.e. water conservation). TWDB recognizes that information may be difficult to obtain for some categories of water users, such as those projects associated with county-wide water user groups. A region may therefore not be able to determine infeasibility for some strategies or projects. If responses are not received from a WUG or sponsor regarding status of a WMS, it may still be considered feasible.

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In accordance with contract guidance for the 2021 RWPs, recommended strategies and projects with an online decade of 2020 was required to be online and delivering water by **January 5, 2023**. If any such strategies and projects are not currently implemented by this date **and** the project sponsor has not taken any affirmative steps towards implementation, the 2021 RWP must be amended to remove or revise the strategy or project to make them feasible. Affirmative steps by the sponsor may include but are not limited to 1) spending money on the strategy or project, 2) voting to spend money on the strategy or project, or 3) applying for a federal or state permit for the strategy or project.

Ms. Kristi Shaw then presented the list of potential projects considered through this process (based on planning decades of 2020 and 2030), reviewed project updates/responses from sponsors/Water User Groups (WUGs), and requested feedback and any comments or questions. Several RWPG members requested clarification regarding project status and amendment requirements if no response was received and/or if a sponsor no longer wanted to pursue the project due to rising construction costs. The Coastal Bend RWPG requests to keep strategies included in the 2021 Region N Water Plan if responses are not received from a WUG or sponsor regarding status of a WMS or the strategies are unable to be confirmed infeasible with the project sponsor. Based on this, the 2021 Region N Water Plan is not anticipated to be amended to remove or revise strategies.

9. ACTION ITEM: Consider planning group and public comments on the proposed process for determining infeasible water management strategies and water management strategy projects in the previously adopted 2021 Region N Plan

No Public Comments

Motion to approve the proposed process for determining infeasible water management strategies and water management strategy projects in the previously adopted 2021 Region N Plan by Carl Crull and seconded by Esteban Ramos. Passed unanimously.

10. DISCUSSION ITEM: Supply Availability- Groundwater

Ms Kristi Shaw presented draft information on modeled available groundwater for Region N counties, including current groundwater users and well capacity based on TCEQ Drinking Water Watch database for public municipal water supplies. There was no action item associated with this agenda item.

11. DISCUSSION ITEM: Schedule update on RWPG activities for 2026 Plan cycle

The TWDB schedule, dated March 6, 2023, was shared with the Region N RWPG.

12. DISCUSSION ITEM: Confirm meeting schedule for 2024 – Jan 25th, Feb 22nd, May 16th, and Oct 17th. Beginning in 2024, Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group Meetings will be held at the Nueces River Authority Office, 500 Highway 69, Suite 805, in Robstown, Texas.

13. DISCUSSION ITEM: Update on Desalination Projects

- City of Alice -Michael Esparza/ Demetrio Duarte
- Port of Corpus- Kent Britton CEO

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- City of Corpus Christi – Esteban Ramos

14. DISCUSSION ITEM: Update from TWDB

- Additional Funding for 2024 and 2025 (Region N will receive \$261,396.00)
- Schedule for TWDB acceptance of projections and water demands (November Board Meeting)
- Recap of RWPG Chairs Call 9/27
- Interregional Planning Council Meeting 11/30
- New Educational Material: Uncertainty in Regional Water Planning

15. RWPG/TWDB Administrative and Other Issues

16. General Public Comment Citizens may address the Planning Group concerning an issue of interest that is not listed on the agenda. Agenda item comments must be made when the item comes before the board. The planning group will place a time limit on all comments of 3 minutes.

Coastal Bend area residents Rachael Caballero, Blanca Parcen, and Autumn Hensiek all requested to make comments to the RWPG. All 3 of these citizens stated public disapproval of the proposed ocean desalination projects and urged RWPG members not to include those projects as feasible water management strategies in the Region N Water Plan. Co-Chair Scotty Bledsoe thanked them for their comments and welcomed them to participate in future meetings if they wished to do so.

17. Confirm Next Meeting Date: Jan 25th

Meeting adjourned by Andy Garza and seconded by Lonnie Stewart at 3:08 p.m.