

10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND PLAN ADOPTION

This section describes the plan approval process for the Region F Water Plan and the efforts made to encourage public participation in the planning process. During the development of the regional water plan, special efforts were made to inform the general public, water suppliers, and others with special interest in the planning process and to seek their input.

10.1 Regional Water Planning Group

As part of SB1, regional water planning groups were formed to guide the planning process. These groups were comprised of local representatives of twelve specific interests:

- General public
- Counties
- Municipalities
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Environmental
- Small businesses
- Electric generating utilities
- River authorities
- Water districts
- Water utilities
- Groundwater Management Areas

Table 10-1 lists the voting members of the Region F Water Planning Group, the interests they represent, and their counties. The Region F Water Planning Group also has non-voting members to represent counties that are not otherwise represented by voting members.

Table 10-2 lists the non-voting members. The Region F Water Planning Group held regular meetings during the development of the plan, receiving information from the region's consultants and making decisions on planning efforts. These meetings were open to the public, and proper notice was made under SB1 and Texas Government Code Chapter 551 guidelines.

Public Participation Elements:

- Outreach to the Public
 - RWPG meetings
 - Website: www.regionfwater.org
 - Opportunity to Review and Comment on Initially Prepared Plan
- Outreach to Water Suppliers
 - Surveys
 - Meetings and Teleconferences
 - Review of Published Planning Documents (Long Range Plans, Master Plans, Drought Contingency Plans, Water Conservation Plans)
- Outreach to Adjoining Regions
 - Regional Liaisons to Other Planning Groups
 - Inter-regional Coordination
- Adoptions Process
 - Public Meeting on Scope of Work
 - Initially Prepared Plans Sent to Each County
 - Hearing on Initially Prepared Plan
 - Solicit and Respond to Comments

10.2 Outreach to the Public

The public were given opportunities to participate throughout the regional water planning process, including the following:

Regional water planning group meetings held throughout the planning process presented opportunities for dissemination of information to the public and receiving public comments. Notices for the meetings were posted in accordance with TWDB rules and open meetings act.

A website specific to Region F was developed to provide information on the planning process to the public and planning group members. This website can be accessed at www.regionfwater.org.

Scope of Work, meeting minutes and other information were available on the Region F and TWDB websites.

Table 10-1
Voting Members of the Region F Water Planning Group

Name	Interest	County
Tom Arsuffi	Public	Kimble
Vacancy	Public	
Jerry Bearden	Counties	Mason
Raul B. Rodriguez	Counties	Reeves
Allison Strube	Municipalities	Tom Green
Merle Taylor	Municipalities	Scurry
Michelle Guelker	Municipalities	Mitchell
Jimmy Carlile	Industries	Midland
Kenneth Dierschke	Agricultural	Tom Green
Douglas Wilde	Agricultural	Tom Green
Don Daniel	Agricultural	Coleman
Gilbert Van Deventer	Environmental	Midland
Caroline Runge	Environmental	Menard
Tommy Ervin	Small Business	Ector
Tim Warren	Elec. Gen. Util.	Mitchell
Chuck Brown	River Authorities	Tom Green
Ava Gerke	Water Districts	Reeves
John Grant	Water Districts	Howard
Richard Gist	Water Utilities	Brown
Raymond Straub, Jr.	GMA 2	Martin
Ty Edwards	GMA 3	Pecos
Scott Holland	GMA 7	Irion

Table 10-2
Non-Voting Members of the Region F Water Planning Group

Name	County/ Agency
Tom Hoysa	Coleman
Winton Milliff	Coke
Tisha Burnett	Glasscock
Todd Darden	Howard
Billy Hopper	Loving
Leatrice Adams	Martin
David Huie	McCulloch
Sue Young	Mitchell
Dale Adams	Nolan
Michael McCulloch	Pecos
Cindy Weatherby	Reagan
Jon Cartwright	Schleicher
Diana Thomas	Sterling
Joe David Ross	Sutton
A. Ryland Howard	Tom Green
Elizabeth McCoy	Texas Water Development Board
Nathan Rains	Texas Parks and Wildlife
Russ Robertson	Texas Department of Agriculture

10.3 Outreach to Water Suppliers, Water User Groups and Adjacent Regions

The Region F Water Planning Group made special efforts to contact municipalities, water districts, and rural water supply corporations and others in the region and obtain their input in the planning process. Outreach included both questionnaires and meetings with selected water user groups and wholesale water providers. The questionnaires sought information on water use projections, current sources of water and supplies, drought planning, water quality issues, water management strategies, and other water supply issues. Particular emphasis was placed on receiving input from water user groups with water supply needs.

Region F continued to coordinate with adjacent regions that provide and/or receive water from Region F. This included regional liaisons who attended planning group meetings and coordination with the Llano- Estacado (Region O), Brazos G, Region J, Region K, and Far West Texas (Region E), regions.

10.4 Public Meetings and Public Hearings

As required by SB1 rules, the Region F Water Planning Group held an initial public meeting to discuss the planning process and the scope of work for the region on February 2, 2017. Presentations were made on the planning process and input was solicited from participants. Public meetings were held approximately three times per year throughout the planning process.

On March 3, 2020, copies of the Initially Prepared Region F Water Plan were mailed to Region F county courthouses and libraries for public review. Copies of the Initially Prepared Plan were also posted on the Region F website. Notices of the upcoming public meetings were sent to the Secretary of State, all voting and non-voting planning group members, county clerks, county judges, regional legislators, groundwater and irrigation districts, and regional newspapers along with a description of how to obtain copies of the draft plan for review.

On April 16, 2020, the Region F Water Planning Group will hold a public hearing in Big Spring to present the draft Initially Prepared Region F Water Plan and seek public input. Oral comments will be requested following the presentation and written comments will be accepted through June 15, 2020. Public comments received during the comment period will be documented in the Final Region F Water Plan. Where appropriate, modifications to the plan will be made and incorporated into the adopted Regional Water Plan. Responses to the public comments will be included in Appendix J of the Final Plan.

10.5 Comments from State and Federal Agencies

Comments from state and federal agencies will be included in the Final Plan. Responses to agency comments will be documented and included in the Final Plan. Where appropriate, modifications to the plan will be made and incorporated into the adopted Region F Water Plan.

10.6 Comments from Water Providers

As part of the region's outreach efforts, a survey on the recommended water management strategies will be sent to water user groups after the publication of the Initially Prepared Plan. Responses to this survey will likely result in changes to plans for some water providers.

10.7 Plan Implementation Issues

As part of the development of the 2021 Region F Water Plan, implementation issues were identified for some providers and specific water management strategies. These issues are documented in the descriptions and evaluations of the strategies (Chapters 5B through 5E and Appendix C). This section summarizes the issues for users in Region F. The implementation issues identified for the Region F Regional Water Plan include: 1) financial issues associated with paying for the proposed capital improvements, 2) additional studies associated with subordination of Colorado Basin water rights, 3) implementation of conservation measures that were assumed in this plan, and 4) groundwater issues.

10.7.1 Financial Issues

It is assumed that the entities for which strategies were developed will utilize existing financial resources, incur debt through bond sales and/or receive state-supported financial assistance. Most likely the funding of identified strategies will increase the cost of water to the customers. The economic feasibility to implement the strategies will depend on the economic burden to the customer base. Some strategies may not be able to be implemented without state assistance.

10.7.2 Additional Water Rights Studies in the Colorado Basin

The subordination strategy described in Chapter 5C was developed for regional water planning to better represent surface water supplies that are currently in use within Region F. The results are for planning purposes only and do not represent legal findings or recommendations. Should entities in Region F choose to enter into subordination agreements with downstream water right holders, additional studies will be required. Further study may still be needed to clarify water rights issues in the Colorado Basin.

10.7.3 Water Conservation

The water conservation plans and water loss audit reports were reviewed to help identify appropriate municipal water conservation measures and identify suggested Best Management Practices (BMPs). Water savings achieved through these BMPs can be difficult to estimate since there is little data over an extended time period. Also, entities normally implement multiple strategies at once making it difficult to estimate individual water savings. Savings associated with irrigation conservation are based on strategies that must be

implemented by the irrigator. There is no confirmation that irrigation water saved will be available for future use.

Experience during the recent droughts has demonstrated that significant savings can be made through water conservation and drought management. However, without specific data, it is difficult to quantify the potential long-term savings for water conservation activities and rely on these savings to meet future needs.

10.7.4 Groundwater Issues

The Modeled Available Groundwater (MAG) was considered to be a cap for allocating groundwater supplies in the current plan. For counties without a GCD, this limit is unenforceable and will likely be exceeded in reality. Furthermore, in some cases, a GCD has already issued permits that exceed the MAG. However, these strategies cannot be included in this plan if existing use exceeds the MAG. This makes these strategies ineligible for certain state funding programs until the MAG values are changed and may make implementation more difficult.

Also, desalination of brackish groundwater is becoming an increasingly popular water supply alternative for regions heavily affected by drought. Although brackish groundwater is plentiful in Texas, additional understanding about this historically underutilized source is needed. For example, no legal definition currently exists in the State of Texas for ‘brackish groundwater’. During the 86th Texas Legislative Session¹, House Bill 722 passed which created a separate GCD permitting system for the production of brackish groundwater in “Brackish Groundwater Production Zones”.

LIST OF REFERENCES

¹ Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts. 86th Legislative Session Wrap-Up, 2019.