



REGION E – FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP  
 MEETING MINUTES  
 June 8, 2023  
 1:00 P.M. (CDT)  
 1801 W Broadway Street

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Interest Category</u>	<u>Present (✓)/Absent ( X ) / Alternate Present (*)</u>
Chairman Scott Reinert	<i>Water Utilities</i>	✓, physically present
Vice-Chairman Dave Hall	<i>Public</i>	✓, physically present
Secretary, Teresa Todd	<i>Counties</i>	✓, physically present
Summer Webb	<i>Groundwater Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Albert Miller	<i>Water Utilities</i>	✓, physically present
Becky Brewster	<i>Municipalities</i>	X
Hailey Davis	<i>GMA #4</i>	✓, physically present
David Etzold	<i>Real Estate</i>	✓, physically present
Sterry Butcher	<i>Public</i>	✓, virtual
Rick Tate	<i>Agriculture</i>	X
Randy Barker	<i>Groundwater Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Jeff Bennett	<i>Environment</i>	X
Tim Leary	<i>Agriculture</i>	✓, virtual
Sean Woodard	<i>Industries</i>	✓, physically present
Gerry Grijalva	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, physically present
Arlina Palacios	<i>Public</i>	X
Avi Nash	<i>Counties</i>	✓, physically present
Omar Martinez	<i>Water Districts</i>	✓, virtual
Dan Dunlap	<i>Small Business</i>	X
<u>Van Horn, TX 79855</u> <u>Non-voting Member</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Present(✓)/Absent(X)/</u> <u>Alternate Present (*)</u>
Heather Rose	Texas Water Development Board	✓
Others Present:		
Annette Gutierrez, RGCOG, physically present	Temple McKinnon, TWDB, virtual	
Jennifer Herrera, WSP, virtual	Emma Jones, TWDB, virtual	
Andrew Feigenbaum, WSP, physically present	Sarah Backhouse, TWDB, virtual	
Juan Acevedo, WSP, physically present	Jon Albright, Freese & Nichols, virtual	
Peggy O'Brien, RGCOG, physically present	Kristal Williams, Freese & Nichols, virtual	
Michael Flores, Lower Valley Water District, virtual		

1. **Welcome –Chairman Scott Reinert**

Chairman Reinert welcomed the group and received confirmation that a quorum was present. The meeting started at 1:09 pm.

2. **Recognition of Guests and Designated Alternates**

Chairman Reinert welcomed all of those who attended.

3. **Review and approve the minutes for the General Meeting held on March 21, 2023**

Albert Miller made a motion to approve the Minutes from March 21, 2023. Dave Etzold seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

4. **Vice Chairman – Update on the RWPG Chairs’ Conference Call**

Chairman Reinert was advised that there hasn’t been a conference call since January so there was nothing to report. Heather Rose from TWDB will advise as to date of next call.

5. **Recommendations from Executive Committee on vacancies for voting members, by RGCOG**

Chairman Reinert relayed the recommendation of Oscar D. (Jay) Ornelas to represent El Paso County Water Improvement District #1. Annette Gutierrez advised that this was the only nomination that was received to fill the vacancy for Water Districts. Mr. Ornelas introduced himself to the group, gave a brief summary of his relevant background. Albert Miller made a motion to approve the nomination. David Etzold seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

6. **Consider reposting FWTWPG vacancies for voting members, by RGCOG**

Vacancies that remain are for Tourism, Electricity Generating Utilities, River Authorities and Economic Development. Annette Gutierrez requested permission from the board to re-post these vacancies. There was discussion about having 2 Economic Development positions on the board (one for rural, one for urban), with the idea of Omar applying for the urban Economic Development role, attracting a rural counterpart from the Tri-County and then perhaps Fabens WDD having representation on the board in Omar’s Water District spot. Omar will need to apply for the ED spot and be accepted by the board, then his former Water District spot can be posted as vacant. It was agreed that at the September meeting, it will be announced there will be the possibility of a water vacancy, Omar will step down, and then that spot can be posted. For now, the postings will be for Tourism, Electricity Generating Utilities, River Authorities and 2 for Economic Development. David Hall made a motion to approve the postings. Teresa Todd seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

7. **FWTWPG dues for Horizon Municipal Utility District, by RGCOG**

Annette conveyed the Executive Committee’s recommendation for FWTWPG to cover Horizon’s current dues of \$2,907 from the general fund balance, if Horizon does not agree to support FWTWPG for this cycle. They have not paid dues for 4 years. There was discussion about the importance of participation (give and take) by all to reflect the needs of the region and the need for data on new service connections, especially WSP’s report which is based on Texas Demographic Center (TDC)’s data. Getting Horizon’s participation will enable their needs to be included in the report and to support the trend of population growth and new water connections which is contrary to the TDC data. Annette also offered an option of approaching the Horizon EDC for their participation, if the MUD says no. Dave Hall made a motion to approve payment of dues

from the general fund if Horizon MUD declines to participate. David Etzold seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

**8. Memorandum of Understanding between Rio Grande Council of Governments and the Water Finance Exchanges on behalf of FWTWPG members, by RGCOG**

Annette Gutierrez informed the group that she will be asking the RGCOG board to enter into an MOU with Water Finance Exchange (WFX) which will allow RGCOG to be intermediary with WFX between any other water district that would like to receive services from WFX. Presidio County has been able to secure \$4.6 million for EDAP funds with WFX's assistance. Michael Flores with Lower Valley Water District has been conferring with WFX on recharge and water conservation, water purification systems from a waste water treatment plant – looking at partnering for funding possibilities and would be good networking possibility. LVWD was interested in having WFX assist with water rate study – they were concerned with cost. WFX will be paid from grants not from applicants' general funds. RGCOG can take the liability which will allow the smaller organizations to access revenue streams without taking control. Annette will report to the group of the RGCOG board's decision.

**9. TWDB General Updates, by Heather Rose**

Heather Rose updated the group on additional resources – 2021 digital policy recommendations, materials for liaisons to other regions, information on TCEQ membership, and identify major water providers.

**10. TWDB Presentation on Identification of Infeasible Water Management Strategies in 2021 Regional Water Plan, by Heather Rose**

Heather discussed the identify feasible and infeasible plans for 2021 and 2026 plans. Upcoming deadlines July 14 (deadline to request revision to draft non-municipal projections); August 11 (deadline to request revisions to draft population and municipal demand projections); Fall 2023 (TWDB staff present all projections to the Board for adoption); and March 4, 2024 (technical memorandum due to TWDB).

If any plans are infeasible, the 2021 plan needs to be adjusted or incorporate alternative strategy that replaces infeasible strategy. Amendments to plans are due June 5, 2024. If projects require construction, permits, involve reservoirs, brackish water, etc. with no activity to achieve, they are infeasible (e.g., WSP has started surveying all water user groups to see if there are any infeasible plans).

**11. Interregional Planning Council, by Heather Rose**

The last IRPC meeting was May 30, and reviewed Council's report and discussed report preparations; review implementation status of previous IPC recommendations to use as starting point for this cycle; started discussing recommendations. Survey was sent in January soliciting feedback from RWPGs on implementation of IPC's recommendations from last cycle. TWDB will follow up with regions that didn't respond soon. Next meeting August 15, with a virtual option. More info is available at: <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/ipc/20271PC.asp>.

There will also be an in-person meeting in Big Spring on July 20. Teresa Todd volunteered to attend as a liaison from Region E so there may be collaboration with Region F.

**12. WSP Presentation – Review, Discuss and Potentially Take Action**

Juan Acevedo (WSP) presented a draft of Population and Municipal Water Demand Projections for the 2026 Regional Water Plans. WSP held a workshop with TWDB projections staff on May 25, 2023, to verify their recommended approach using a more conservative (0.5 migration scenario)

planning style for all counties except for Jeff Davis, for which a 1.0 migration scenario was used. There was a long discussion concerned the veracity of the data that was provided by the Texas Demographic Center (TDC), which used 2020 Census to base their projection of decreased water need on projected population decline. There was much consternation expressed in reaction to this presented trend, which is a significant reversal from the projections stated in the 2021 plan. Concerns were shared about numbers needing to be accurate so that future funding for the region will not be at risk. Juan told the group they had reached out to all 30 RWP groups by email on May 17, with only 2 responses to date. Teresa Todd recommended reaching out again and gathering additional supporting documentation such as gallons used, active meter usage data, economic development data and other germane information to incorporate into these water demand projections. Jennifer Herrera (WSP) said there are other factors to consider to accurately project water demand (e.g., if more connections, more gallons per capita (GPCD) of active metered connections) can support a higher population data set and make it more reflective of what's happening in the region. Temple McKinnon (TWDB) said a Management Supply factor can also be used to address uncertain projections and check Exhibit C in their guidance materials. The group requested more time to obtain responses and WSP/TWDB extended the deadline from June 16 to June 26. To get the information processed and to TWDB in time for their August 11 deadline for population and municipal demand revision requests, with supporting documentation. The RGCOG will work with WSP to obtain accurate information. Teresa Todd made a motion to reject the numbers presented and encourage all of our Water User Groups to engage with our consultants to provide updated information so we will have accurate population and active meter connection data for our next meeting. David Etzold seconded. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved.

**13. Public Comment**

Omar Martinez said there is \$2 billion surplus in the State that can be used for flood and water supply so now is a good time to approach our elected officials about the results that TWDB brought to us because it will be difficult to apply for funding if the data shows declining population and water use.

**14. Consider and Discuss a date for the next regular meeting**

Based on a recommendation from WSP and TWDB, the group decided to meet on July 13th, 2023, at RGCOG offices, 8037 Lockheed, in El Paso, Texas at 1:00 pm., MDT.

**15. Adjourn**

Albert Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dave Hall seconded the motion. Chairman Reinert called for a vote and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm.

  
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Janet Adams

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Date